

14. COMMENTARY ON REVELATION

PART 2

Chapters 6 – 18

What happens later

The seals are opened	6 - 7
The trumpets are blown	8 – 11
The Beast	12 – 14
The bowls of wrath	15 – 18

A horseman goes forth to conquer (6:1-2)

Then I saw the Lamb open the first of the seven seals and I heard one of the four creatures say like a clap of thunder: Come! ²Then I saw a white horse whose rider held a bow. He was crowned, and he rode conquering and to conquer.

Zech 6:1-5 I looked up again and saw four chariots coming out from between two mountains, mountains of bronze. *The first chariot was attached to chestnut horses, the second to black horses, the third to white horses, and the fourth to dappled horses.* They were all powerful. I asked the angel who was talking to me: What are these, sir? And he answered me: These

are the four winds of heaven stationed in the presence of the Lord of the whole world, and they are going out.

The imagery of the four horsemen of the apocalypse is similar to a vision seen by the prophet Zechariah, who saw four chariots pulled by horses of various colors. All the latter Jewish prophets made predictions about the last days and the Messianic kingdom, especially Isaiah, Daniel, and Zechariah. The four chariots (Zec 6:1-8) represent four winds or destructive forces sent out by God into the world. They're agents of divine judgment, sent to punish the nations that oppress God's people. Behind the mysteries and judgments of life on Earth, the eternal, omnipotent, omniscient God is at work, and a closer look exposes evil rulers, false messiahs, and evil spiritual forces; the real cause of the problems. The four apocalyptic horsemen are personifications of war, bloodshed, famine, and death, which will characterize life during the Great Tribulation.

Some interpret the rider of the white horse as the Antichrist. Others see him as Christ, who goes out into the whole world to proclaim the gospel and save people from every nation, tribe, people, and language, but that seems out of context here.

The four horsemen fit better together as agents of divine judgment. The first horseman represents a victorious warrior or dictator, the second the wars he wages, the third famine and disease that follow, and the fourth the death of many people. They're given power over a quarter of the Earth to kill by sword, famine, plague, and the wild beasts of the Earth, a role that doesn't suit Jesus. A quarter of the Earth could refer to a quarter of the Earth's population, or more likely, a quarter of the Earth's land area, the territory of the Beast, the revived Roman Empire: Europe, North Africa, the Middle East, and Western Asia.

Each time the Lamb opens a seal, one of the creatures says: Come! This is a command for the horse and its rider to come. The creatures, representing the living creation, initiate the divine commands from the throne. Revelation 6 - 18 is a prophecy about the Great Tribulation, which occurs during the seven years preceding the return of the Messiah. The four horsemen represent the destruction and death that will occur initially, during the first half of this period, when the

Antichrist arises to rule a quarter of the world (Dan 7:23), an area larger than that of the previous kingdoms of Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome.

This is not yet Armageddon, when the kings of the whole world are gathered to attack Israel at the battle of Armageddon (Ezek 38:4-6, 14-16, 39:1-2, Rev 16:14-16).

Two horsemen bring war and famine (6:3-6)

When he opened the second seal, I heard the second creature say: Come! Then another horse came out, a fiery red one. Its rider was given the ability to take peace from the Earth so that men kill each other. He was given a large sword. When he opened the third seal, I heard the third creature say: Come! Then I saw a black horse whose rider was holding a pair of scales. Then I heard what sounded like a voice coming from among the four creatures, saying: One kilo of wheat for a day's wages, and three kilos of barley for a day's wages. Don't spoil the oil and the wine!

The color of the horses doesn't exactly match the four horses of Zechariah 6, but they have the same significance. The white horse represents conquest, the red horse bloodshed, the black horse famine, and the pale horse death. The word for pale indicates a yellowish-green color, which is used to describe the color of a sick person or a corpse. They represent destructive forces, and they put an end to world peace.

Wars have been waged continuously throughout the ages, at different times and in various places. Jesus said we shouldn't be alarmed when we hear about wars or rumors of wars. They'll happen, but it's not the end. There will be wars, earthquakes, and famines in different places, but that is just the beginning (Mk 13:7-8). The four horsemen forebode an increase in these sufferings under the rule of Antichrist, the last great dictator.

The pair of scales represents famine, which results in inflated prices for basic foodstuffs. The cost of grain is ten times the normal price. Famine often follows wars and earthquakes. As these sufferings are due to war, Satan and man are primarily responsible, but God will use

them to fulfil his purposes. The destiny of the world won't be disclosed until all the seals are opened, all the trumpets are blown, and all the bowls of God's wrath are poured out.

The fourth horseman represents death which ravages a quarter of the world (6:7-8)

When he opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth creature say: Come! Then I saw a pale horse whose rider was called Death, and Hades followed him, and they were given authority over a quarter of the Earth to kill by warfare, famine, plague, and wild animals.

Ezek 5:17 I'll send famine and wild animals against you, and you'll become childless. Plague and bloodshed will sweep through you, as I bring warfare against you. I, the Lord, have spoken.

The pale horse is a personification of Death and Hades, Hades being the underworld, the home of the dead. They have authority over a quarter of the world's landmass to kill by warfare, famine, plague, and wild beasts. This is intensified after the sixth trumpet is blown, when a third of mankind is killed (Rev 9:15), and after the blowing of the seventh trumpet (16:19), when the cities of the world collapse. Imagine all the skyscrapers and multi-story residential buildings collapsing and the carnage that would occur.

The quarter of the world's landmass that is conquered first is presumably contiguous, the area where previous world empires were established, the Middle East, North Africa, Europe, and perhaps Western Asia, as described by Daniel.

The first horseman *was given* a crown. God permits conquerors and dictators. The second and fourth horsemen *were given* the power to kill. Again, God permits war and bloodshed; we see it happening all the time. He even says he'll make mankind scarcer than pure gold (Isa 13:12).

We find it hard to understand why God allows evil. Nebuchadnezzar didn't have true faith, but he came to this conclusion about God:

His dominion is an eternal dominion,
his kingdom endures from generation to generation.
All the peoples of the Earth are regarded as nothing.
He does as he pleases with the powers of the heavens
and the peoples of the Earth.
No one can restrain his hand or say to him:
What have you done?

We naturally love God's kindness, but we don't like to talk much about his severity. Paul said we should consider both the kindness and severity of God (Rom 11:22). Part of the divine character may appear to us to be severe, hard, and even harsh. It's the opposite of his goodness, kindness, and grace. God is kind to those who take refuge in him, and he's severe with those who reject him. This is the wrath of God, wherein his deity manifests itself in merited punishment. God is just, and according to justice, evil must be punished. The Lord works out everything for his purpose, even the wicked for a day of disaster (Pr 16:4). God didn't make people wicked; he made them capable of wickedness, and they decided for it and will be punished. At the end of the age, the wicked are judged on the Day of the Lord, and those who die are held for punishment a thousand years later on judgment day (2 Pe 2:4, 9). Authority is given to Death and Hades over a quarter of the Earth to kill by sword, famine, plague and beasts. Because of God's sovereignty, the scriptures portray God as the cause behind all events. What he allows, he wills. At the same time, the Lord is being patient with us. He doesn't want anyone to perish; he wants everyone to come to repentance (2 Pe 3:9).

Martyrs for Jesus (6:9-11)

When he opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who'd been slain because of the word of God and the testimony they bore. They cried out aloud, saying: How long, Master, holy and true, until you judge the inhabitants of the Earth and avenge our blood? Then each of them was given a white robe, and they were told to rest a little longer, until the full number of their fellow servants, their brethren, were killed just as they had been.

Deut 32:43 Celebrate, you nations, with his people, for he'll *avenge the blood of his servants*. He'll take vengeance on his enemies and make atonement for his land and people.

Ps 119:84 *How long* must I, your servant, wait? When will you punish my persecutors?

The four apocalyptic horsemen have ridden forth, portraying the troubled times that precede the consummation of this present age. When Jesus opens the fifth seal, John sees a vision of Christian martyrs. Every year of every century, there have been faithful Christians sacrificing their lives for their Lord. Worldwide, each year, Christian martyrs number in the tens of thousands. According to a leading human rights watchdog, Open Doors USA, 100% of Christians in 21 countries around the world experience persecution for their faith in Christ, and over 215 million Christians faced high levels of persecution in 2016. Most of these countries are in the Middle East, but persecution also happens in North Korea, Vietnam, India, Kenya, and Nigeria.

In his vision, John saw the souls of Christian martyrs under the altar. In the Mosaic sacrificial rituals, the blood of the slaughtered animals was poured out at the base of the altar. It's a way of saying that their premature deaths on Earth are, from God's perspective, a sacrifice on heaven's altar because the life of a creature is in the blood (Lev 17:11).

It's a part of every Christian's calling to be prepared for martyrdom. Jesus said: If anyone wants to be my disciple, he must deny himself, take up his cross, and then follow me. If you're intent on hanging on to your life, you'll lose it. If you're prepared to lose your life for Jesus' sake, you'll save it (Mt 10:38-39). These martyrs were slaughtered because of the word of God and the testimony they bore. In other words, because they were Christians who believed in the Bible.

They were crying out to God to take vengeance on 'the inhabitants of the Earth,' a phrase which in Revelation always refers to mankind in its hostility to God. White robes are for believers who, through faith, have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb (Rev 7:14). They're usually referred to as the saints or God's servants. They're to wait patiently until the day when the number of martyrs is complete, when the full number of their fellow Christians has been

killed; the day when Jesus will return to Earth as a victorious king and God's people will be resurrected.

The martyrdom of the saints is also regarded as a judgment. Peter said, if we suffer as Christians, we should not be ashamed but praise God that we bear his name, for it's time for judgment to begin with the family of God (1 Pe 4:16-17). This judgment isn't a condemnation, but rather a separation, a separation of the sheep from the goats. Judgment day is coming for sinners and will be preceded by a great time of persecution for the Church. This will purify God's people as nominal Christians turn their backs on Christ and embrace the Beast, the False Prophet, and Satan.

How many Christians will be martyred? Theoretically, they should all be martyred, because the Beast will demand universal worship, and Christians won't be able to buy or sell anything unless they take his mark on their bodies. They'll have to choose between Christ and Antichrist, but for practical reasons, many will escape; otherwise, there could be no rapture. Our confidence is in God, who will give justice to his elect. But everyone should take note of the serious implications of Jesus' words when he said: When the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on the Earth? (Lk 18:8).

The Day of the Lord (6:12-14)

When he opened the sixth seal, I saw there was a great earthquake, and the sun turned black like sackcloth, and the whole moon reddened like blood, and the stars in the sky fell to the Earth, as figs drop from a fig tree when shaken by a strong wind. The heavens receded like a scroll being rolled up, and every mountain and island was removed from its place.

Isa 34:4 *All the stars will decompose, and the sky will roll up like a scroll. All the stars will fall like withered grapevine leaves, like shriveled figs from the fig tree.*

Ezek 38:19-20 *In my zeal and fiery wrath I declare that at that time there shall be a massive earthquake in the land of Israel. All fish, birds, wild animals, reptiles, and people on the face of the Earth will tremble at my presence. The mountains will*

crumble, the cliffs will collapse, and every wall will fall to the ground.

Joel 2:30-32 I'll show wonders in the heavens and on the Earth, blood and fire and billows of smoke. *The sun will become dark and the moon will redden like blood* before the great and dreadful Day of the Lord arrives.

When the Lamb opened the seventh seal (8:1), there was silence in heaven for half an hour. The final consummation of the world isn't revealed at this point, but we know that it involves the establishment of the Messiah's kingdom on Earth (Ch. 19 – 20). The opening of the sixth seal reveals the Day of the Lord as prophesied by many of the prophets. There have been various days of the Lord; times when God intervened in earthly affairs with judgment. But the final Day of the Lord is the great day of God's wrath on mankind at the close of this age.

When the Lamb opened the sixth seal, John saw a vision of cosmic catastrophes that happen before the Messiah descends from heaven in glory with his angels. Jesus described those days following the Great Tribulation. He said the sun would be darkened, the moon wouldn't reflect its light, the stars would fall from the sky, and the heavenly bodies would be shaken. It's at that time that people will see Jesus coming in clouds with great power and glory, and he'll send his angels and gather his elect from all over the Earth (Mk 13:24-27).

When Jesus opened the sixth seal, he revealed the turbulent events immediately preceding his return, the resurrection of the righteous, and the rapture of the living saints. Events associated with the seven trumpets and the seven bowls of God's wrath will enlighten us on what this cosmic disturbance is all about, but for now, the focus is on physical disturbances. There will be a great earthquake, the greatest the world has ever known (Rev 16:18), which causes the cities of the world to collapse (Rev 16:19). Ezekiel says that all the people on the face of the Earth will tremble (Ezek 38:20). The sun and moon will be obscured by smoke, and the stars will no longer be seen. John's vision shows us how people will see things in the sky; the heavenly bodies themselves won't be affected. The stars won't fall to Earth unless 50 kg asteroids are meant (Rev 16:23). The removal of mountains and

islands from their places would refer to landslides and the submergence of islands following the worldwide earthquakes with accompanying tsunamis, and volcanoes erupting and obscuring the light of the sun, moon, and stars. The passage from Joel speaks of blood, fire, and billows of smoke. Imagine the loss of life when cities collapse, with the resulting fires. It will be a day of darkness, fire, smoke, and chaos all over the entire world.

World leaders cower before the Messiah (6:15-17)

The kings and great men of the Earth, the generals, the rich, the mighty, and everyone else, both slave and free, hid in caves and among the rocks of the mountains. They said to the mountains and the rocks: Fall on us and hide us from him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb! For the great day of their wrath has arrived, and who can withstand it?

Ps 76:7 Who can stand before you when you're angry?

Isa 2:19 When the Lord rises to shake the Earth, *people will flee to bunkers and caverns from the fearful* splendor of his majesty.

Hos 10:8b *Then they'll say to the mountains: Cover us! and to the hills: Fall on us!.*

Zeph 1:14-15 The great Day of the Lord is near, near and coming quickly. The cry on the Day of the Lord will be bitter; even brave men will wail. That day is *a day of wrath*, a day of distress and anguish, a day of trouble and ruin, a day of darkness and gloom, a day of clouds and blackness.

Mal 3:2 Who can endure the day of his coming? When he appears, *who can stand* ?

The Day of the Lord may be only a single day. A mighty earthquake only needs a few minutes to wreak havoc. It's the day that the Messiah arrives in glory, the day of resurrection and rapture, the day when Jesus stands on the Mount of Olives. Nothing about Armageddon at this stage, we'll come to that later. Think here about meteorological disasters: earthquakes, volcanoes, tsunamis, and asteroids. There will be fire, smoke, poor visibility, no communication, and utter

destruction. Jesus' coming won't be pretty; the inevitable result of God descending into a sinful and wicked world. Who can stand when he appears?

After Jesus opened the sixth seal, John saw the reaction of the world population to these chaotic events and the coming of the Messiah. Influential people usually manage to escape from disasters, but not from this one. Kings and princes, political and military leaders, the rich and mighty, they'll all try to hide from God on that day, to save themselves from the wrath of the Lamb, who now arrives as king. They'll look for anywhere to hide. They'll even ask the mountains, hills, and rocks to fall on them, such will be their terror before the splendor of the Lord. Only the saints will stand tall on that day.

The Lamb has opened six of the seven seals, and they haven't revealed a pretty picture, but rather judgment and destruction. A similar but even more severe picture will be painted as the seven trumpets are blown and the seven bowls of God's wrath are poured out. It's the climax of the battle between God and Satan, between good and evil, between the rulers of the Earth and the servants of God.

144,000 tribulation saints sealed (7:1-8)

After this, I saw four angels standing at the four corners of the Earth, each holding a wind of the Earth to prevent any wind from blowing on land, sea, or tree. Then I saw another angel arising from the East and holding the seal of the living God. He called out in a loud voice to the four angels who'd been permitted to damage the land and the sea: Don't damage land, sea, or trees until we put a seal on the foreheads of our God's servants. Then I heard the number of those who were sealed: 144,000 from all the tribes of Israel. From the tribe of Judah 12,000 were sealed, from the tribe of Reuben 12,000, from the tribe of Gad 12,000, from the tribe of Asher 12,000, from the tribe of Naphtali 12,000, from the tribe of Manasseh 12,000, from the tribe of Simeon 12,000, from the tribe of Levi 12,000, from the tribe of Issachar 12,000, from the tribe of Zebulun 12,000, from the tribe of Joseph 12,000, from the tribe of Benjamin 12,000 were sealed.

Ezek 9:4 Go throughout Jerusalem and *put a mark on the foreheads* of those who grieve and lament over all the abominable things that are done in it.

Dan 7:2 In my vision at night I saw *the four winds of heaven* churning up the great sea.

The sixth seal brought us to the very end of this present age when the Messiah arrives. Chapter 7 goes back a few years, but still within the final years of tribulation. It concerns God's servants, some of whose souls John had seen under the altar when the fifth seal was opened. The word 'servants' occurs ten times in Revelation. Twice it refers to the prophets, and everywhere else it refers to believers in general to whom the book is written (Rev 1:1). Israel was God's nation before Pentecost and they'll continue to be his nation on Earth during the millennium after their conversion. However, there is no distinction between Israel and the Church in this present age of grace, through the Great Tribulation, and up until the day when Jesus returns. Jewish Christians are part of the Church. Chapter 14 tells us that the 144,000 servants of God spoken of here follow the Lamb wherever he goes; evidence enough that they're Christians.

Four angels are restraining destructive forces that will come from all directions. These 'four winds of the Earth' are the same as the 'four winds of heaven' that Zechariah spoke of (Zec 6:5), but these are a final and more destructive manifestation of the four horsemen. In anticipation of the judgments that will follow the blowing of the trumpets in ch. 8-9, God protects his servants, not by removing them from the Earth, but by sealing them (Eph 1:13-14), marking them with his name as the possession of the Lamb and the Father (Rev 14:1). When the destructive forces that are restrained by the angels are released, they destroy land, sea, and vegetation, and the trumpet judgments add rivers, springs, and heavenly bodies to the list of affected areas.

The number sealed is 144,000 and is a symbolic number (12 x 12 x 1000) and should not be taken literally. There are more than 144,000 saints on the Earth. They're sealed with the seal of the *living* God, who intervenes on behalf of his people. We're told they come from all the tribes of Israel, 12,000 from each of the 12 tribes. Most commentators

interpret them as the 'Israel of God', a symbolic term that Paul used to refer to all of God's people.

If you belong to Christ, then you're Abraham's seed and heirs according to the promise (Gal 3:29).

Peace and mercy to all who follow this rule - to the Israel of God (Gal 6:16).

For it is we who are the circumcision, we who serve God by his Spirit, who boast in Christ Jesus (Php 3:3).

The 144,000 are God's servants who are alive on Earth during the Great Tribulation. They are not raptured out of the world for protection, but they are sealed with the name of the Lamb and the Father as their property.

A multitude of saints before the throne (7:9-17)

After this, I saw a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people, and language, standing before the throne and before the Lamb. They wore white robes and held palm branches. They cried out in a loud voice, saying: It's our God who sits on the throne and the Lamb who save. All the angels were standing around the throne and the elders and the four creatures. They fell prostrate before the throne and worshiped God, saying: Amen! Praise, glory, wisdom, thanks, honor, power, and strength be to our God forever and ever. Amen! Then one of the elders asked me: These people wearing white robes, who are they, and where did they come from? I answered: Sir, you know. And he told me: These people have come out of the Great Tribulation. They've washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore, they're before God's throne and serve him day and night in his temple, and he who sits on the throne will shelter them. They'll never again be hunger or thirsty. The sun won't beat on them, nor any scorching heat. For the Lamb at the center of the throne will shepherd them and lead them to springs of living water. And God will wipe away all their tears.

Isa 49:10 *They'll never get hungry or thirsty again, and the sun or burning heat won't beat down on them, for he who has compassion on them will guide and lead them to springs of water.*

Dan 12:1b At that time, there will be *great distress such as has not happened from the beginning of nations*. But at that time, your people whose names are found written in God's book will be delivered.

The previous scene was on Earth and relates to saints during the Great Tribulation. This scene is before God's throne in heaven and relates to saints who have died, a great multitude of people, Christians from every nation, tribe, people group, and language. They wear white robes, being clothed in the righteousness that Christ provides. They're saints who have died, most of them probably martyrs. They hold palm branches in celebration of their salvation, and they sing praises to God and the Lamb who saved them.

The angel tells John that this multitude came out of the Great Tribulation, which has not been mentioned in Revelation before, but they may include the faithful of all times. The tribulation refers to Daniel's time of distress (12:1), and Jesus' words about the end of the age, when he says there will be *great distress unequaled from the beginning of the world* – and never to be equaled again (Mt 24:21)

Heaven isn't explicitly mentioned, but the scene is reminiscent of the heavenly throne room in ch. 4-5. Or, perhaps this is a vision of the resurrected saints in the heavenly Jerusalem; there are many parallels with Revelation 21 - 22. The saints are before the throne of God and serve him day and night (Rev 22:3). God wipes every tear from their eyes (Rev 21:4), and he leads them to springs of living water (Rev 21:6). There is no more suffering; the saints are protected and fully satisfied. They've entered eternal life. This passage assures the saints of their final victory.

The Messiah opens the final seal (8:1-6)

When the Lamb opened the seventh seal, heaven was silent for for about half an hour. Then I saw seven angels who stand

before God, and seven trumpets were given to them. Another angel came and stood at the golden incense altar. He held a golden censer and was given much incense to offer with the prayers of all God's people on the altar in front of the throne. The smoke of the incense, together with the prayers of God's people, went up before God from the angel's hand. Then the angel took the censer, filled it with fire from the altar, and threw it down to Earth. There came peals of thunder, rumblings, flashes of lightning and an earthquake. Then the seven angels who had the seven trumpets prepared to blow them.

When the seventh seal is opened, the contents are revealed. We've come to the climax of the world's destiny. There is silence in heaven for half an hour to mark its significance. We're not told anything yet; but the worship has ceased in anticipation of the climax, which of course, is the coming of the Messiah to establish his kingdom on Earth.

Meanwhile, seven angels are given trumpets to blow. Trumpets are used to make announcements. If the four horsemen represent the destructive forces of sword, famine, plague, and wild beasts, the first four trumpets announce the effect they have on the world, and the latter trumpets describe the effect they have on unbelievers, those who didn't have God's seal on their foreheads.

But the significance of prayer is made first. An angel with a golden censer, used for carrying hot coals, was given much incense, which he offered to God with the prayers of the saints. Then, in answer to those prayers, the angel hurls fiery coals down to Earth. Final judgment commences with the awe-inspiring presence of thunder, lightning, rumblings, and an earthquake.

Apart from God and his Messiah, the saints are the most important actors in this book. They're referred to 12 times as saints, 8 times as servants of God, and 9 times as people dressed in white robes, or fine, bright linen. They're the faithful from the churches from all time, of which the churches of Chapters 2-3 are examples. They're the overcomers, those who endure, the recipients of God's salvation. It's their prayers that ascend to God, and it's their shed blood that God will avenge. Many are martyrs, but they'll reign with the Messiah. They come from every nation, tribe, people, and language, and in their

millions, they'll constitute the population of New Jerusalem. They're the bride of Christ, and they'll reign with him forever and ever.

The first four trumpets announce environmental disasters (8:7-13)

The first angel blew his trumpet, and then hail and fire mixed with blood was thrown down to Earth. A third of Earth was burned, together with a third of the trees, and all the green grass. The second angel blew his trumpet, and something like a huge blazing mountain was thrown into the sea. A third of the sea turned to blood, a third of the sea creatures died, and a third of the ships were destroyed. The third angel blew his trumpet, and a great star, blazing like a torch, fell from the sky onto a third of the rivers and springs. The star's name is Wormwood. A third of the waters turned bitter, and many people died from drinking the poisonous water. The fourth angel blew his trumpet, and a third of the sun, moon, and stars was struck and turned dark, so that a third of the day and night was without light. Then I saw an eagle flying overhead and heard it calling out loudly, saying: Woe! Woe! Woe to Earth's inhabitants, because of the remaining trumpet blasts about to be sounded by the other three angels!

Ezek 38:22 I'll punish him (Gog) with plague and bloodshed. I'll pour down torrents of rain, *hailstones, and burning sulfur* on him and his troops and the many nations who are with him.

Use your imagination to interpret these apocalyptic visions. Visualize what John saw, and then imagine how it might unfold in the 21st century. We can compare the plagues with those that occurred in Egypt more than 3,000 years ago, or we can expand on what we learnt from the opening of the seals, the rise of the world dictator, and the wars that follow. Additionally, we can consider what the prophets said about the trying conditions in the last days.

The verbs are passive, and the subjects are not revealed. Is it God? Or is it modern warfare? The plague of hail, fire, and blood sounds like war, and it's the adverse effects on the environment that are in focus:

destructive fires, ocean pollution, water contamination, climate chaos, and darkness. This may be the result of nuclear warfare. When the seals were opened, a quarter of the Earth was affected, with the trumpets it's a third, and with the bowls of wrath, the destruction is more severe.

A third of the sea is affected. Something *like* a huge mountain, *not* a mountain, all ablaze, is thrown into the sea. This sounds like an asteroid. Asteroid 2023 DW is predicted to fall into the South Pacific Ocean in 2032! A third of the sea becomes blood, possibly the result of saltwater algae called 'red tide'. It has been on the increase with global warming, increased levels of carbon dioxide, and salinity, and it kills fish, even dolphins. The wholesale destruction of ships suggests tsunamis.

Then John sees a *big* star blazing like a torch falling from the sky onto rivers and springs, and people die from drinking the water. Its name is Wormwood. Is it a coincidence that the meaning of the Slavic word Chornobyl is black wormwood? The radiation from the nuclear power plant in Ukraine caused radiation sickness and death, and contaminated water and land over a large area.

The fourth trumpet is followed by a reduction of light of both day and night, as the sun, moon, and stars are blotted out, presumably by smoke. Poor visibility like that would be very frightening.

An eagle flying in the sky gives a warning about three more calamities. The birds of prey are going to have a feast. These latter woes fall upon the inhabitants of the Earth, unbelievers. The following verses only speak of two woes following the fifth and sixth trumpets. The seventh trumpet heralds the arrival of the kingdom and the resurrection of the righteous, which for unbelievers will be a time of terror and judgment, on realizing that they've taken the wrong way, the broad road that leads to destruction

Torturing unbelievers for five months (9:1-6)

The fifth angel blew his trumpet, and I saw a star fall from the sky to Earth. He was given the key to the shaft of the Abyss. When he opened it, smoke rose from it like the smoke of a great furnace. The sun and sky were darkened, and locusts came out

of the smoke and spread over the ground. They were given the ability to do as scorpions do. They were told not to harm grass or any plant or tree, but only people who don't have God's mark on their foreheads. They were not allowed to kill them but to torment them for five months. The agony they suffered was like that of a scorpion sting. During those days, people will want to die but won't be able to. They'll long to die, but death will elude them.

Joel 1:4, 2:10-11 What the locust swarm has left, the great locusts have eaten. What the great locusts have eaten, the young locusts have eaten. What the young locusts have left, the grasshoppers have eaten. ... *The ground shakes before them, the sky trembles, the sun and moon are darkened,* and the stars no longer shine. The Lord thunders at the head of his army, and his forces are beyond number. Mighty is the army that obeys his command. The Day of the Lord is great and dreadful. Who can endure it?

The star that falls from heaven to Earth may be Satan (Rev 12:9), or the angel of the Abyss known as Abaddon (Apollyon in Greek), which means Destroyer, or the destroying angel who's referred to several times in the OT. He's given the key to the Abyss, which in ancient cosmology was the dwelling place of demons (Lk 8:31, Rev 20:1) in the depths of the sea. As the Abyss and demons are not part of the physical creation, the actions described here are symbolic rather than literal, but no less real. Smoke pours forth into the world, and darkens the sun and the sky, probably from warfare, as the beast exerts his authority over every nation. The world during these final years will be a frightening place to live. Compare the fifth bowl that is poured out on the throne of the Beast (16:10), resulting in its kingdom being plunged into darkness.

Out of the smoke appear locusts, which are a symbol of destruction. Joel compares a large and mighty army with a swarm of destructive locusts. "Before them fire devours, behind them a flame blazes." They're not real locusts, they sound more like myriads of tanks leaping over the hills, with their firepower leaving destruction behind them. Nor are we told that they're demons; a bizarre interpretation. The pain

they inflict is like a scorpion sting, one of the severest pains known to man. This may be referring to modern non-lethal crowd-control weapons, like the Pulsed Energy Projectile (PEP), which produces a high level of pain. They're told to only harm people who don't have God's seal on them, and for only five months. Note that this means the saints are still there; they haven't been raptured. The unbelievers will long to die to escape the torment, but death will elude them. The sun and the sky will be darkened by smoke from the Abyss, which makes it sound like a volcano.

An army as numerous as locusts (9:7-12)

The locusts looked like horses prepared for battle. On their heads, they wore something like gold crowns, and their faces resembled human faces. Their hair was like women's hair, and their teeth were like lions' teeth. They had breastplates like iron breastplates, and the sound of their wings was like the thundering of many horses and chariots rushing into battle. They had tails with stingers, like scorpions. They had the power in their tails to torment people for five months. They had a king over them, the angel of the Abyss. His name in Hebrew is Abaddon, and in Greek, Apollyon. The first woe is past; two other woes are yet to come.

Joel 1:6 A nation has invaded my land, a mighty army without number. *It has teeth like a lion, fangs like a lioness.*

Joel 2:2-5a It's a day of darkness and gloom, a day of clouds and blackness. A large and mighty army spreads across the mountains like daybreak. Their strength has never been like this since ancient times, nor ever will be in ages to come. Fire devours before them, and flames blaze behind them. Before them, the land is like the Garden of Eden, behind them a desert waste. Nothing escapes them. *They have the appearance of horses*, and they gallop along like cavalry. They leap over the mountaintops *with a noise like that of chariots*, like the sound of a crackling fire consuming stubble, like a mighty army drawn up for battle.

Locusts don't have a king or leader; we're not talking about literal locusts, but an army of another kind. They look like horses prepared for battle. They have gold crowns, they're out to conquer, and human faces, they're controlled by men. They have long hair which maybe antennae, and teeth like lions; they're cruel and inhumane (Joel 1:6). In Joel 2:4-5, their iron breastplates and thundering noise fit the description of armored tanks. Their tails may be guns that cause destruction and inflict pain.

The army of locusts in Joel 2 is a harbinger of the great and dreadful day of the Lord (Joel 2:31) when the Lord gathers the nations to the Valley of Jehoshaphat to enter into judgment against them (Joel 3:2).

The final world empire is called the Beast that comes up from the Abyss (Rev 11:7) and the Beast that comes out of the sea (Rev 13:1). It was believed that the Abyss, or bottomless pit, was to be found in the depths of the sea. It seems that this angel of the Abyss, the destroying angel, will use the Beast's armies to bring about this torment on unbelievers.

As Satan gives his authority to the Beast, we can assume it'll be controlled by Satan who's rightly called the angel of the Abyss. The army of locusts may symbolize his effort to control an unstable empire, which God allows as judgment upon unbelievers.

The events following the fifth bowl (16:10) cover the same events that follow the fifth trumpet, but it's described differently. When the fifth bowl is poured out on the throne of the Beast, his kingdom is plunged into darkness. Men gnaw their tongues in agony, but it isn't stated what is the source of their pain. The common points are the presence of the Beast, the darkness, and the excruciating pain experienced by unbelievers.

An army of 200 million kills one-third of humanity (9:13-21)

The sixth angel blew his trumpet, and I heard a voice coming from the four horns of the golden altar that is before God. It told the sixth angel who had a trumpet to release four angels who were bound at the great river Euphrates. Then the four angels who'd been kept ready for this very hour, day, month, and year

were released to kill a third of mankind. I heard the number of the mounted troops; twice ten thousand times ten thousand. The horses and riders I saw in my vision looked like this: Their breastplates were fiery red, dark blue, and yellow like sulfur. The horses' heads resembled lions' heads. Fire, smoke, and sulfur came out of their mouths. A third of mankind was killed by the three scourges of fire, smoke, and sulfur that came out of their mouths. The power of the horses was in their mouths and in their tails. Their tails were like snakes, having heads with which they inflict injury. The rest of mankind who were not killed by these scourges still didn't repent of the things they were doing. They didn't stop worshiping demons, the idols of gold, silver, bronze, stone, and wood, that can't see, or hear, or walk. Nor did they repent of their murders, sorceries, immorality, and thefts.

The four angels who are bound at the Euphrates River, and are likely to be demons, as angels aren't bound (2 Pe 2:4, Jude 6), are to be released. This reminds us that there are demonic forces behind these events. The Euphrates River is in Iraq, and this passage should be compared with Revelation 16:12, where the sixth angel pours out his bowl on the great river Euphrates, and its water is dried up to prepare the way for the kings from the East. It's not the angels who kill a third of mankind; it's the kings of the world and their armies whom they incite (Rev 16:14).

After the blowing of the sixth trumpet, 200 million troops, mounted on horses, are released at the Euphrates River, and a third of mankind is killed by the fire, smoke, and sulfur that come out of the mouths of their 'horses.'

The red, blue, and yellow breastplates match the colors of fire, smoke, and sulfur coming out of the horses' mouths. John is seeing a vision of modern-day warfare; the horses and their riders may be tanks and their drivers. The lion's head symbolizes cruelty and destruction. The power in their mouths and tails comes from guns, fore and aft. The context fits that of Ezekiel 38 - 39, which describes an attack on a regathered nation of Israel by hordes from the North, descendants of Japheth (Gen 10:2-5), and what looks like a Muslim coalition from the South.

The pouring out of the sixth bowl (16:12-16) gives us more details of this battle. Demons are sent out by Satan, the Beast, and the False Prophet to gather *the kings of the whole world* for the battle on the great day of God Almighty. The place of the battle is identified as Armageddon in Israel. Many of these leaders come from the East, and they'll gather their armies under the Beast to make war against Jerusalem (Joel 3:2, Zec 14:2).

Daniel 11:36-45 is interpreted by many to refer to the Antichrist, and if so, the southern and northern kings will come not only to attack Jerusalem but also to rebel against the Antichrist. The world's Muslims are sworn enemies of Israel with a vehement desire to destroy the State of Israel. Over one billion Muslims live east of the Euphrates River, and many of them have traveled to fight in Iraq and Syria. There are reported to be radical Islamic cells in almost every province of Indonesia.

The Egyptian plagues at the time of the Exodus resulted from Pharaoh's oppression of God's people. God said: Let my people go! Here, rebellious mankind won't repent of their habitual sins, summarized as idolatry (false worship), corruption, shameless immorality, and murder of God's people.

An angel announces Messiah's rule (10:1-7)

Then I saw another mighty angel coming down from heaven. He was clothed in a cloud, with *a rainbow above his head*. His face was like the sun, and his legs were like fiery pillars, and he was holding a little unrolled scroll. He planted his right foot on the sea and his left foot on the land, and he gave a loud shout like the roar of a lion. When he shouted, the voices of seven thunders spoke. When the seven thunders spoke, I was about to write it down, but I heard a voice from heaven saying: Seal up what the seven thunders have said and don't write it down. Then the angel I saw standing on the sea and land raised his right hand up and swore by him who lives forever and who created the heavens, the Earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and said: There will be no more delay! In the days when the seventh angel is about to sound his trumpet, God's mysterious will be accomplished, just as he announced to his servants the prophets.

Gn 9:9-12 I make my commitment to you (Noah) and your descendants and all the creatures that were with you in the ark and that came out of it with you: birds, livestock, and all the wild animals that live on Earth. I commit myself to you. Never again will all life be extinguished by the waters of a flood. Never again will there be a flood to destroy the Earth. And God said: This is the sign of the commitment I'm making between me and you and every creature with you for all generations to come: *I've made my rainbow appear in the clouds, and it'll be a sign of my commitment to the Earth.*

We don't know the identity of this majestic angel; only that he's a messenger from God who announces that there will be no more delay. God's redemptive purpose as announced by the OT prophets is about to be fulfilled with the sounding of the seventh trumpet. After the trumpet is blown (Rev 11:15), we're told that the kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and his Christ, and he'll reign forever and ever. The Messiah will reign on Earth as announced by the prophets (Ps 2:6-9), Isa 9:6-7, Ezek 43:7, Dan 7:14, Zec 12:9, 16-17).

The rainbow is a symbol of God's faithfulness to his covenant with creation. He promised not to destroy creation again as he did with the worldwide flood. The angel's legs are like fiery pillars, which recall the pillar of fire that guided and protected Israel during their exodus from Egypt and their desert wanderings.

The little scroll is smaller than the scroll of the destiny of the world (5:1). It contains details of the final three and a half years of that destiny. The angel roars like a lion to make his awesome, terrifying announcement. It's an act of judgment as well as an act of redemption. He stands above sea and land, emphasizing the total creation. The sea can also represent the nations and the land, Israel. He swears by God who lives forever and who created everything. The seven thunders sound from God's throne (4:5, 8:5, 11:19, 16:18) and express a decree of God which John was told to seal up. Daniel was also told to seal up a vision he had, which concerned the Antichrist and his destruction of the holy people in the distant future (8:26). Thunder expresses a warning that God's anger is about to burst forth in judgment.

The majestic angel is announcing the end of the world as we know it. There will be great destruction, and a third of mankind will die, but important to remember, the world and God's people will survive. When the trumpet is blown, God's secret plan will be fulfilled. It announces the Day of the Lord, the Messiah's return, the resurrection, Armageddon, and Israel's conversion.

Glorification will follow suffering (10:8-11)

Then I heard the voice that I had heard from heaven speak to me again, saying: Go and take the scroll that lies open in the hand of the angel who's standing on the sea and the land. So I went to the angel and told him to give me the little scroll. He said to me: Take it and eat it. It'll be as sweet as honey in your mouth, but it'll turn your stomach sour. Then I took the little scroll from the angel's hand and ate it. It was sweet as honey in my mouth, but when I ate it, my stomach turned sour. Then I was told: You must prophesy again about many peoples, nations, languages, and kings.

Ps 119:103 Your words are so sweet to my taste, *sweeter than honey in my mouth!*

Ezek 2:8 – 3:3 As for you, son of man, listen to what I'm telling you. Don't rebel like those rebellious people. Open your mouth and eat what I give you. When I looked, I saw a hand stretched out to me holding a scroll, which he unrolled before me. Words of lament, mourning, and woe were written on both sides of it. Then he said to me: Son of man, eat what is offered you. Eat this scroll, then go and speak to Israel. When I opened my mouth, he fed me with the scroll. He said to me: Son of man, eat this scroll I'm giving you and fill your stomach with it. *So I ate it, and it tasted as sweet as honey in my mouth.*

At the beginning of his ministry, Ezekiel was offered a scroll to eat, and it wasn't a sweet coffee scroll! It contained words of lament, mourning and woe, but it tasted sweet to him because it was the word of God. John, on the other hand, ate a smaller scroll that tasted sweet to him, perhaps for the same reason, but afterward, he had a

stomachache. The sweetness was also because of the glorious outcome, the coming of the Messiah, and the establishment of his kingdom upon the Earth. But it resulted in a stomachache when he realized all the suffering God's people would go through before that glorious day. You can read through Revelation and rejoice that Jesus is coming back and that he'll have total victory over evil. But when you think about it more deeply, you'll notice that the saints are handed over to Antichrist for three and a half years. They're not taken out of the world before the trouble begins, and there will be many Christian martyrs. That's why John got his stomachache.

When Ezekiel ate his scroll, he was told to go and speak God's word to Israel. He was also told to enact a siege of Jerusalem, as a warning to Israel. That event will be repeated during the Great Tribulation, and John's visions of Revelation 11 - 12 relate especially to Israel and the people of Jerusalem.

John is told he must prophesy again about many peoples, nations, languages, and kings. This relates to the rest of the book of Revelation. Chapters 19 - 22 would have been very sweet to him, but Chapters 11 - 18 describe the persecution that the saints will undergo under the Antichrist and the destruction and suffering the world will suffer as God pours out his wrath. Christians who understand Revelation are the only people who know how the world will come to an end. We have an obligation, therefore, to study this book carefully and be witnesses to its teaching. People want to know the answers as the time draws near.

John measures the temple (11:1-2)

I was given a reed as a measuring rod and was told: Get up and measure God's temple and the altar, and count those worshipping there. Exclude the outer court; don't measure it, because it's been given to the nations, and they'll trample the Holy City for 42 months.

Dan 7:25 He (the Antichrist) will speak against the Most High and oppress the saints. He'll try to change God's set times and laws. The saints will be handed over to him for *a time, times and half a time*.

Dan 9:27 This ruler will make a covenant with many for seven years. *In the middle of those seven years*, he'll put an end to sacrifice and offering and erect *an abomination that causes desolation* in the temple, until the end that God has decreed for him is inflicted on him.

Dan 12:11 From the time that the daily sacrifice is abolished and *the abomination that causes desolation* is set up, there'll be *1290 days*.

Zec 1:16 Therefore, the Lord said he'll return to Jerusalem with mercy. The measuring line will be stretched out over Jerusalem and his house will be rebuilt there.

Lk 21:24 *The nations will trample Jerusalem* until their times (of domination) are fulfilled.

This vision continues from Chapter 10 and is about the nation of Israel, which became a nation on May 14th 1948, Jerusalem, which became the official capital in 2018, and the temple which will soon be rebuilt in the Holy City during the first half of the tribulation, after the Antichrist has made a peace deal with Israel. ***We're living in the last days!*** Paul prophesied that the Antichrist would set himself up in the temple, proclaiming himself to be God (2 Th 2:4). Jesus also spoke about the time when people will see the abomination that causes desolation, spoken of through the prophet Daniel, standing in the temple (Mt 24:15). Daniel said this would happen in the middle of the tribulation period (Dan 9:27, 12:11). The Antichrist will make a covenant with 'many' for seven years, and then break it halfway through. He'll invade it, put an end to sacrifice, and set up an image of himself in God's temple, proclaiming himself to be God.

Ezekiel saw a vision of a new temple for restored Israel and a man measuring it with a long measuring rod (Ezek 40:3-4). Now John sees a vision of a temple and is told to measure it and count the Jewish people worshiping there. He's told to exclude the outer court, because it'll be given over to the Gentiles, who under the Antichrist will trample the Holy City for 42 months, the second half of the Great Tribulation (Rev 13:5). Half the city will go into exile (Zec 14:2) and God will look after them in the wilderness (Rev 12:6, 14).

The 42 months allude to Daniel 7:25, where it's expressed as 'a time, times, and half a time'. During this period of three and a half years, otherwise given as 1260 days or 42 months, the Antichrist will slander God, his dwelling place, and the inhabitants of heaven and severely persecute the saints and conquer them (Rev 13:6-7).

Other Scriptures indicate that a temple will be built in Jerusalem at this time (2 Th 2:4, Mt 24:15). The Antichrist will take his seat in the temple as God, and he'll demand universal worship.

Two Christians preach in Jerusalem (11:3-7)

I'll enable my two witnesses to proclaim my word for 1,260 days, clothed in sackcloth. They are the two olive trees and the two lampstands that stand before the Lord of the Earth. If anyone tries to harm them, fire will come from their mouths and devour their enemies. If anyone tries to harm them, that is how he'll die. They'll have the ability to close up the sky so that it won't rain during the days of their preaching. They'll have the ability to turn water into blood and to strike the Earth with any calamity whenever they want. When they've finished their preaching their message, the Beast that comes up from the Abyss will attack them, overpower them, and kill them.

Ex 7:17b When you (Moses) strike the water of the Nile with the staff that's in your hand, *it'll turn into blood.*

1 Ki 17:1b As the Lord, the God of Israel, whom I (Elijah) serve lives, starting from this year, *there'll be no dew nor rain in unless I say so.*

Jer 5:14 As the people have said these things, *I'll put my words in your mouth as a fire, and these people will be the firewood that burns.*

Zec 4:3, 14 *Two olive trees* were beside it, one on the right of the bowl and the other on the left. ... *These are the two people who have been appointed to serve the Lord of the entire Earth.*

Mal 4:5 Listen! I'll send the prophet Elijah to you before the great and dreadful day of my coming arrives.

The two witnesses are Jewish Christians who proclaim God's word to their people in Jerusalem, where their Lord was crucified. They're metaphorically referred to as two olive trees and two lampstands. The olive oil used for anointing is symbolic of the Holy Spirit. The lampstands support lamps that burn oil, and here symbolize two men empowered by God's Spirit. In Zechariah 3 - 4 the lampstands refer to the civil and religious leaders: the governor Zerubbabel, and the high priest Joshua, *whose job was to complete the building of the second temple* in Jerusalem around 520 BC and were empowered by the Holy Spirit to do so (Zech 4:6). The two witnesses may be responsible for rebuilding the temple during the first half of the Great Tribulation, but their witness is during the second half when they'll be miraculously protected from harm until their ministry is finished.

The witnesses are modeled after Moses (Ex 7:17) and Elijah (1 Ki 17:1). They're empowered to do miracles throughout the time of their ministry, similar to the way Moses and Elijah ministered. They're dressed in sackcloth to symbolize their message of repentance. Fire comes from their mouths and kills their enemies. In Elijah's case, he called down fire from the sky (2 Ki 1:9-12). They prevent rain from falling during their ministry as Elijah did for three and a half years (Jas 5:17). They turn water into blood, as Moses did, and the effect of their ministry is felt worldwide as they strike the Earth with every kind of calamity at will. There'll be tension between these powerful, godly preachers and the powerful, godless Beast, who'll overrun Jerusalem for the final three and a half years of the Great Tribulation. When they finish their work, the Beast is permitted to kill them.

The two witnesses are brought back to life (11:8-14)

Their bodies will lie in the public square of the great city where their Lord was crucified, and which is figuratively called Sodom and Egypt. For three and a half days, people from every tribe, language, and nation will gaze on their bodies and won't be willing for them to be buried. The Earth's inhabitants will gloat over them and celebrate their death by sending each other gifts, because these two prophets had tormented them. After the three and a half days, the breath of life from God entered them, and they stood up, and terror struck those who saw them. Then the

witnesses heard a loud voice from heaven telling them: Come up here. Then they went up to heaven in a cloud, while their enemies stared at them. At that very hour, there was a severe earthquake, and a tenth of the city collapsed. Seven thousand people died in the earthquake, and the survivors were terrified and gave glory to the God of heaven. The second woe has passed and look, the third woe will quickly follow.

Isa 1:10a Hear the word of the Lord, you rulers who resemble the *Sodomites*.

The setting of Chapter 11 is Jerusalem, which is here identified as a great city, figuratively called Sodom (immoral) and Egypt (oppressive), where their Lord was crucified. The Beast finally kills the witnesses, but after three and a half days, they come back to life, stand up, and ascend to heaven. Unbelievers from every tribe and language will gaze at them, maybe on their mobile phones and televisions, if the internet is still functioning, and they'll gloat over their downfall. Then there is a severe earthquake, and a tenth of Jerusalem collapses, and 7,000 people are killed. This is presumably the same severe earthquake mentioned in other end-of-age prophecies (Ezek 38:19, Zec 14:4, Rev 6:12, 16:18).

The Jerusalem survivors give glory to God, an expression often bracketed with fearing and worshiping him (Rev 14:7) and accompanied by repentance (Rev 16:9). This prepares the way for Israel's conversion at the Messiah's return as predicted by Zechariah.

I'll pour out my Spirit on David's descendants and *the inhabitants of Jerusalem*, and they'll recognize my grace and pray to me. They'll look on him whom they pierced (crucified), and they'll mourn for him. ... On that day, a fountain will be opened for David's descendants and *the inhabitants of Jerusalem*, to cleanse them from sin and impurity (Zec 12:10, 13:1).

See also Isaiah 59:20, where the Redeemer comes to Zion to those in Jacob who repent of their sins, and Romans 11:26, where all Israel is saved, as the deliverer comes from Zion and banishes ungodliness from Jacob.

The second woe has passed; the third woe is imminent, and can be identified with the events following the blowing of the seventh trumpet: the arrival of the Messiah, his enthronement, and his victory over the armies that surround Jerusalem.

The arrival of the Messianic kingdom (11:15-19)

The seventh angel blew his trumpet, and there were loud voices in heaven, saying: The world kingdom has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Messiah, and he'll reign forever and ever. The twenty-four elders, who were seated on their thrones before God, fell down with heads bowed and worshiped him, saying: We give thanks to you, Lord God Almighty, the One who is and was, for you've taken up your great power and begun to reign. The nations were angry, and your wrath has come. It's time for you to judge the dead and reward your servants the prophets and the saints who revere your name, both small and great, and to destroy those who destroy the Earth. Then God's temple in heaven was opened, and within his temple was seen the Ark of his Covenant. There were flashes of lightning, rumblings, peals of thunder, an earthquake, and a severe hailstorm.

Ps 2:1-2 Why are *the nations raging*, and the peoples plotting in vain? The world's kings take their stand, the rulers gather together against the Lord and his Messiah.

Dan 2:44 In the time of those kings, the God of heaven will set up *an eternal kingdom that will never be destroyed*, a kingdom that will never be left to another people. It'll crush all the earlier kingdoms and bring them to an end, and *will itself endure forever*.

Zech 14:9 *The Lord will be king over the entire Earth*. On that day there'll be one Lord, and his name the only name (invoked).

After the seventh trumpet is blown, an announcement is made that the world kingdom has become the Messiah's kingdom. The Antichrist's world kingdom will be destroyed together with his armies, and the Messiah's sovereignty will be established. The details of the destruction are given in Chapter 18 when Babylon and all the cities

associated with it are destroyed along with those who are destroying the Earth; the armies who have gathered at Armageddon.

The 24 elders fall on their knees and worship the Lord because the Messiah has displayed his great power, conquered, and *begun to reign* on Earth. John sees this later in his vision of the victorious Messiah riding a white horse in the final conflict against the forces of evil on the Day of the Lord (Rev 19:11-21). The Lord God Almighty often refers to God, but here it's the Son of Man, the Messiah, who begins his rule on Earth be king. God always reigns on his heavenly throne and is described as he who is, and was, and is to come (Rev 1.4), but here he's the One who is and who was, and who has come at last.

Psalm 2 is Messianic and is frequently quoted in the NT. The Lord says he's installed his King on Zion, his holy hill. He'll make the nations his inheritance, the ends of the Earth his possession. There are three things mentioned in our reading that the Messiah will do, but not in chronological order: He'll judge the dead, as anticipated in (6:10), carried out in (19:11-21), and finalized after the millennium (20:11-15). He'll reward the saints, which he does at the beginning of the millennium, after the resurrection of the righteous. Thirdly, he'll destroy the destroyers of the Earth, the godless, destructive armies laying siege to Jerusalem (19:19, 21). People often ask why there is so much evil in the world. The obvious answer is that Jesus isn't yet ruling here. If he were, Satan and evil spirits would not be so prevalent, and the wicked would be judged immediately. Let's not belittle Jesus' authority by suggesting that he's now ruling the Earth.

God lives in a different realm from us, and references to his temple and the Ark of the Covenant are symbolic, not literal. They're what John saw in his vision. The temple symbolizes the fellowship God has with his people and the ark symbolizes his covenant. He'll fulfill all his promises. The thunder, lightning, earthquake, and hailstorm are on Earth when the seventh bowl is poured out (Rev 16:17-21).

The birth and ascension of the Messiah (12:1-6)

A great sign appeared in the sky: a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet and a crown of twelve stars on her head. She was pregnant and cried out in pain as she was having labor pains. Then another sign appeared in the sky: I saw an

enormous red dragon with seven heads and ten horns and seven crowns on its heads. His tail swept a third of the stars out of the sky and flung them to the Earth. The dragon was standing in front of the woman who was about to give birth, so that it might devour her child when he was born. She gave birth to a son, a male child, who'd rule all the nations with an iron scepter. And her child was snatched up to God and his throne. The woman fled into the wilderness to a place God prepared for her, where she might be looked after for 1,260 days.

Gen 37:9 Then Joseph had another dream, and he related it to his brothers. Listen, he said, I had another dream, and I saw *the sun, moon, and eleven stars* bowing down to me.

Ps 2:9 *Yo'll rule them with an iron rod, you'll dash them to pieces like an article of pottery.*

The cosmic drama, which involves God's plan for the world, is a spiritual battle in the heavenly realm between God and Satan. Satan gained power over humanity because of the sin of Adam and Eve. Understanding this drama helps us understand the spiritual significance of persecution. In the past, Satan set out to destroy the baby Messiah; in the future, he'll seek to abort Messiah's reign on Earth by destroying God's people, both Israel and Christians. There'll be many martyrs, but not a hair of their heads will perish.

In this vision, John sees a woman who gives birth to a child who will rule the nations with an iron scepter. An enormous red dragon planned to devour the child, but it failed. The ten horns and seven crowns on its heads symbolize its power and authority. The Beast of Revelation is the dragon's kingdom, so it also has seven heads and ten horns that are explained in Chapter 17. The woman flees to the desert to be protected by God for 1,260 days. The child is Jesus, the Messiah. It's he who will rule the nations rigorously with an iron scepter (Ps 2:9, Rev 19:15). The mother isn't Mary, but Israel, depicted symbolically, as in Joseph's dream (Gen 37:9-11). The sun represents Jacob, the moon his wives, and the eleven stars are Joseph's brothers. The red dragon is Satan, who, through the edict of Herod, tried to kill the baby Jesus. Jesus was taken up to God at the ascension. The 1,260 days are the last three and a half years of this age when Israel and the Church

will be oppressed by Satan and his deputy, the Antichrist, and his worldwide empire, the Beast.

The devil sweeps a third of the stars out of the sky to Earth. They're not literal stars; most commentators interpret them as fallen angels. Jesus said an eternal fire had been prepared for the devil and his angels (Mt 25:41). These 'angels' are what we'd call evil spirits or demons. They're angels who didn't keep their own sphere of influence and abandoned their assigned habitation (Jude 6). Cf. Isa 14:12-14, Lk 10:18.

God will protect Israel in an uninhabited place for 1260 days. This will happen in the last days, after Satan is thrown down to Earth, as described in the following section. It's the same 42-month period when the nations trample the Holy City and the Antichrist oppresses God's people (Rev 13:5).

Satan and his demons are driven out of heaven (12:7-12)

War broke out in heaven. Michael and his angels fought against the dragon, and the dragon and his demons fought back. But he wasn't strong enough, and they lost their place in heaven. The great dragon was thrown out, that ancient serpent called the devil, or Satan, the deceiver of the whole world. He was thrown down to Earth, and his demons with him. Then I heard a loud voice in heaven say: Now salvation has come; power and kingship from our God, and the authority of his Messiah. For the accuser of our brethren, who accuses them before our God day and night, has been thrown down. Our brethren overcame him because of the blood of the Lamb's shed blood and because of the word of their testimony. They didn't love their lives even when it meant death. So rejoice, you heavens, and you who dwell there! But woe to the Earth and the sea, because the devil has descended to you and he's furious, and he knows that his time is short.

Dan 12:1 At that time, *Michael*, the great prince who protects your people, will arise. *There will be a time of distress such as has not happened from the beginning of nations until then.* But at that time, every one of your people whose name is found written in the book will be delivered.

There is war in heaven! Victory over Satan in the heavenly realm will precede Israel's victory over her enemies on Earth. The archangel Michael, who's the protector of Israel (Dan 12:1), is at war against Satan, who's out to destroy Israel. The nation of Israel is loved by God because of the patriarchs, for God's gifts and his call are irrevocable (Rom 11:28-29). Satan is defeated and loses his place in heaven. This evil angel, who leads the whole world astray, is hurled down to Earth together with his demons three and a half years before the end. His time on Earth is short, and it'll result in the final deliverance of God's people, a great manifestation of God's power, and the establishment of his kingdom on Earth, under the authority of the Messiah.

Two-thirds of Jews will lose their lives (Zech 13:8-9) and an unknown, but far greater, number of Christians. However, in those final days, faith will be more important than life. Victory over Satan will be accomplished primarily because of the cross: Christ's blood shed on their behalf, but also because of the faithful testimony that Christians will bear in the face of persecution and martyrdom.

Jesus said there will be great distress, unequaled from the beginning of the world and never to be equaled again. He said, if those days hadn't been reduced, *no one would survive*, but for the sake of the elect, those days will be reduced (Mt 24:21-22). Knowing he only has a short time, Satan, in his fury, will bring much destruction to the land and the sea because of warfare that he instigates (Rev 16:13-14).

Satan persecutes Israel and the Church (12:13-17)

When the dragon saw that he had been hurled to the Earth, he pursued the woman who'd given birth to the male child. The woman was given the two wings of a great eagle, so that she might fly to the place prepared for her in the wilderness, where she'd be taken care of for a time, times, and half a time, out of the serpent's reach. Then from his mouth the serpent spewed water like a river, to overtake the woman and sweep her away with the torrent. But the Earth/ground helped the woman by opening its mouth and swallowing the river that the dragon had spewed out of his mouth. Then the dragon was enraged at the woman and went off to make war against the rest of her

offspring - those who keep God's commands and hold fast their testimony about Jesus.

Ex 19:4 You yourselves have seen what I did to Egypt, and how I carried you *on eagles' wings* and brought you to myself.

When Satan is banished to the Earth, his first inclination is to destroy Israel so that God's plan for the world would fail. The river of water that he spews in their direction is a wave of persecution, comparable to that of the Nazis. Some people interpret the woman as being the Church, but it wasn't the Church that bore Jesus. The eagle's wings give us a clue that she's Israel (Ex 19:4). The Lord brought Israel from Egypt into the Sinai desert 'on eagles' wings', and at the end, he's going to look after them again, during those 1260 days tribulation (Dan 12:6), the time of Jacob's trouble, a time, times, and half a time. It will be an awful time, especially for Israel, but Israel will be saved out of it (Jer 30:7). There is a place in the wilderness that God has prepared for Israel during the three and a half years of Satan's rage and Antichrist's oppression. Just where that might be, nobody knows.

The *Earth* helps the woman by opening its mouth and swallowing the river. Daniel 11:41 says the Antichrist will invade Israel, and many countries will fall, but Edom, Moab, and Ammon will be delivered from his hand. That is modern-day Jordan. Maybe this is Israel's place of refuge during the last 3 ½ years. This might also explain why the Messiah is pictured as coming from Bozrah in Edom after his victory over the nations (Isa 63:1).

When Satan fails in his effort to exterminate Israel, he turns on the other offspring of Judaism, the Church, those who obey God's commandments and hold to the testimony that Jesus bore. In other words, Bible-believing Christians who are committed to Jesus. We'll now see that he wages war against the saints.

The rise of the final world empire (13:1-4)

The dragon stood on the shore of the sea. And I saw a Beast emerging from the sea. It had ten horns and seven heads, with

ten crowns on its horns, and on its head were blasphemous names. The Beast I saw resembled a leopard but had feet like those of a bear and a mouth like that of a lion. The dragon gave the Beast his power, his kingship, and great authority. One of the Beast's heads seemed to have had a fatal wound, which had healed. The whole world was so amazed, and they followed the Beast. They worshiped the dragon because he had given his authority to the Beast, and they worshiped the Beast, saying: Who is like the Beast? Who can make war against it?

Dan 7:7 After that, as I was looking in my vision at night I saw a fourth beast, terrifying and horrifying. It was very powerful and had large iron teeth. It crushed and devoured its victims and trampled on whatever was left. *It was different from all the former beasts and had ten horns.*

Dan 7:23-24a The fourth beast is *a fourth kingdom that will appear on Earth*. It'll be different from the other kingdoms; it'll devour the *whole Earth*, trampling it down and crushing it. *The ten horns are ten kings who will rule this kingdom.*

The dragon, Satan, is seen standing by the sea because he's about to empower an international world government that will include all overseas countries. The Beast is resurrected from the Abyss (the underworld), which was believed to be in the deepest sea (Rev 11:7, 17:8). The Beast mentioned here isn't a man; it's a worldwide empire as described in Daniel 7. It resembles former empires. It's like a leopard (Greece), a bear (Medo-Persia), and a lion (Babylon). They're all the same beast whose dominion covered an area between Iran and Spain. This new appearance of the Beast from the sea is an international coalition of countries, a one-world government. Satanically empowered, it'll be overtly anti-Christian and anti-Jewish. It has seven heads and ten horns like the dragon that empowers it. The whole world will be deceived by its ideology. This empire will be oppressive, violent, blasphemous, and dictatorial. The crowns are on the horns rather than the heads, they're symbolic of power. The crowned horns are the leaders. 'Ten' may express the comprehensiveness of this global coalition. The seven heads are interpreted as seven mountains and also as seven kings (Rev 17:9-10).

Rome was known to have been built on seven hills, suggesting that the final world empire would be a revived Roman empire, which included parts of North Africa and the Middle East. But mountains are also symbolic of empires; it may refer to the previous empires.

One of the heads of the Beast had a fatal wound, which was healed; a way of saying that the empire ceased to exist for some time and then was revived (Rev 17:8). The statue that Daniel saw in Chapter 2 had legs of iron (Rome) and ten toes that were part iron and part clay. The legs and toes all represent the same world empire, but the ten toes symbolize the unstable confederation of the nations in the end times.

The final world empire will involve political, economic, cultural, and religious globalization, of which the UN will surely play a key role. The whole world will be full of wonder, which becomes worship. They'll embrace it, submit to its laws, and worship Satan. Just as the Father gave Jesus authority over the whole world, so Satan will give his power, kingship, and authority to the leader of this final empire. According to Daniel, this world government will be very frightening: powerful, violent, destructive, and despotic (Dan 7:8).

The Beast represents the deification of secular authority, so it's opposed to God. Only when the state acts within its limitations of its delegated authority can the believer freely submit to its regulations.

Antichrist opposes God and the saints (13:5-8)

The Beast was given a mouth to utter proud words and blasphemies and to exercise his authority for forty-two months. Then he began to blaspheme God and to slander his name, his dwelling place, and those living in heaven. He was allowed to wage war against the saints and conquer them. And He was given authority over every tribe, people, language, and nation. All the inhabitants of the Earth will worship the Beast, all whose names are not written in the Lamb's book of life, the Lamb who was slain from the creation of the world.

Dan 7:8 While I was thinking about the horns, there before me was another horn, a little one, which came up among them; and three of the first horns were uprooted before it. This horn had

eyes like the eyes of a human being and *a mouth that spoke boastfully*.

Dan 7:21 As I watched, this horn *was waging war against the holy people and defeating them*.

Dan 7:24b-25 After them, another king will arise, different from the earlier ones; he'll subdue three kings. *He'll speak against the Most High and oppress his holy people* and try to change the set times and the laws. The holy people will be delivered into his hands for a time, times, and half a time.

Dan 11:36 *The king will do as he pleases. He'll exalt and magnify himself above every god and will say unheard-of things against the God of gods.* He'll be successful until the time of wrath is completed, for what has been determined must take place.

The Beast in these verses refers to the final world empire, with the Antichrist as its infamous leader. Daniel 7:7 describes the empire as having ten contemporaneous kings, and the Antichrist is described as a little horn, who rises to power by uprooting three of the earlier kings. He's the 'mouth' given to the Beast, to utter proud words and blasphemies and to exercise his authority for 42 months. Daniel said the little horn had eyes (intelligence) and a mouth that spoke boastfully (Dan 13:8). He's described as a man of lawlessness who opposes and exalts himself above everything that is called God or is worshiped (2 Th 2:4). He even sets himself up in God's temple, proclaiming himself to be God. He'll lead this empire that will rule the world during the final years before the Messiah's return. He'll vehemently oppose all worship, except for himself and his empire (the Beast). He'll embody satanic evil and have great military and political power.

The Antichrist wages war against the saints for 3 ½ years (Dan 7:25) and defeats them (Dan 7:21, Rev 13:7). This will be the most intense and extensive persecution that the Church has ever undergone. If God hadn't informed us about what was to come, it would've been a very confusing time for Christians. But God has warned us and told us to be patient and faithful, even unto death. The Antichrist will be a world dictator, more powerful than Hitler. He'll have authority over every tribe, people, language, and nation. Only those whose names are

written in the Lamb's book of life will have the courage to disobey him, at the cost of their lives.

The phrase 'from the creation of the world' relates to the book of life, as it does in Revelation 17:8, rather than the Lamb that was slain. God decreed Jesus' death from eternity, but it happened in time when Jesus was crucified.

The saints will require endurance (13:9-10)

Whoever has ears, let them hear. If anyone is to go into captivity, into captivity he'll go. If anyone is to be killed with the sword, with the sword he'll be killed. This calls for patient endurance and faithfulness on the part of the saints.

Jer 15:2 And if they ask you: Where shall we go? tell them, this is what the Lord says: Those destined for death, to death, *those for the sword, to the sword, those for starvation, to starvation, those for captivity, to captivity.*

This call for patience, endurance, and faithfulness on the part of the saints is repeated in Revelation 14:12-13. It's one of the most important themes in the book. The elect are those who obey God. They're not ignorant of his eternal plan to save believers through their faith in Christ. When facing imprisonment or martyrdom in the final days, they'll find the courage and strength to be loyal to their Lord. After all, to turn from the Lord and submit to the Antichrist would in reality be to worship Satan.

If we're there, the Lord will expect us to be faithful and brave. That time will be extremely difficult, and only the elect will have the courage to disobey the Antichrist and be victorious. On that day, our faith will enable us to overcome. How could we submit to the instructions of the Antichrist or the Beast, who are both inspired by Satan? How could we bow down and worship him, or allow the number of his name to be stamped on our bodies? On dying, our spirits will go to be with the Lord (2 Cor 5:8), and a short time later, our bodies will be resurrected, and we'll rule the world with the Messiah. In the last years of the Great Tribulation, there will be no reason for Christians to remain in the condemned world; death will be preferable.

Suffering for Christ's sake and believing in him are both gifts or privileges that God has given us (Phil 1:29). As Christians, we can expect both an abundance of suffering for his sake and also an abundance of comfort (2 Cor 1:5). We share in his sufferings so that we can share in his glory (Rom 8:17). Paul said he wanted to know Christ better and his resurrection power, by sharing in his sufferings even to the point of death (Phil 3:10). We must go through many hardships to enter the kingdom of God (Acts 14:22).

The Antichrist (13:11-18)

Then I saw a second beast emerging from the ground. It had two horns like a lamb, but it spoke like a dragon. It exercised all the authority of the first beast on its behalf and made the Earth and its inhabitants worship the first beast, whose fatal wound had been healed. He performed great signs, even causing fire to descend from heaven to Earth in full view of the people. He deceived the inhabitants of the Earth with the signs he was allowed to perform on behalf of the first beast and ordered them to make an image of the Beast that was wounded by the sword and yet lived. The second beast was enabled to give breath to the image of the first beast, so that the image could speak and cause all who refused to worship it to be killed. It also made all people receive a mark on their right hands or their foreheads, whether great and small, rich and poor, free and slave, so that nobody could buy or sell anything unless they had the mark, which is the Beast's name or its name's number. This calls for wisdom. Let whoever has insight calculate the Beast's number, for it's a man's number. That number is 666.

Mt 24:24 For false messiahs and false prophets will appear and perform *great signs and wonders* to deceive, if possible, even the elect.

2 Th 2:9, 10a The lawless one will come in the way that Satan works with all power, *signs, and lying wonders*. He'll use all kinds of wicked tricks to deceive those who are heading for destruction.

John sees another beast coming out of the ground. Empires arise from the sea, but their leaders arise from the ground. This beast isn't an empire, but a man, a bestial man. He'll appear gentle like a lamb, but he'll speak like a dragon. He's a deceiver who will perform miracles with satanic power. He's the Antichrist, later called the False Prophet (Rev 16:13, 19:20, 20:10), and he'll instruct everyone to set up an image of the Beast, to worship it, and be branded with its mark, a sign of allegiance. He'll animate the image, so that it can speak. Anyone who refuses to worship the image will be executed, and he'll force everyone, whether rich or poor, to receive a mark on the right hand or forehead. Without the mark, nobody will be able to buy or sell anything. The mark is 666. Nobody can identify the name it represents yet. It's the Beast's name, but also a man's name, so the name and number of the Beast may also be that of the Antichrist. 666 is the sum of his name. Deriving numbers from names is a practice called gematria. As Revelation is written in Greek, we need to think in terms of Greek spelling. For example, Jesus in Greek is Ιησοῦς. Ι = 10, η = 8, σ = 200, ο = 70, ῡ = 400, ς = 200. The number of Jesus' name is 888.

Paul said the lawless one will set himself up in God's temple and proclaim himself to be God (2 Thess 2:4). This is the abomination that causes desolation standing in the holy place (Mt 24:15). The Antichrist will perform miracles and oppose all religions except his own. He'll exalt himself over everything that is called God or is worshiped, and he'll execute those who disobey his orders.

The word 'antichrist' doesn't occur in the book of Revelation. He's mentioned in John's letters (1 Jn 2:18, 22, 4:3, 2 Jn 7), where it refers to any religious deceiver or adversary of the Messiah. Paul calls him the lawless one.

The Messiah and the saints standing on Mount Zion (14:1-5)

Then I looked, and there before me was the Lamb, standing on Mount Zion, and with him 144,000 who had his name and his Father's name written on their foreheads. And I heard a sound from heaven like the roar of rushing waters and like a loud peal of thunder. The sound I heard was like that of harpists playing

their harps, and they sang a new song before the throne and before the four creatures and the elders. No one could learn the song except the 144,000 who'd been redeemed from the Earth. These are those who did not defile themselves with women, for they remained virgins. They follow the Lamb wherever he goes. They were purchased from among mankind and offered as first fruits to God and the Lamb. No lie was found in their mouths; they're blameless.

Ps 2:6 I've installed my King on *Zion*, my holy mountain.

Joel 2:32 Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved, for there will be deliverance on *Mount Zion* and in Jerusalem, as the Lord has said, even among the survivors whom the Lord calls.

Jer 2:3 Israel was holy to the Lord, the *first fruits* of his harvest.

Zeph 3:13 The remnant of Israel will do no wrong; *they'll speak no lies, and no deceit will be found in their mouths.*

Mount Zion was also called the City of David and became synonymous with Jerusalem. Here we have the victorious Messiah standing with the saints, those who'd been sealed with the seal of the living God (7:3). The 144,000 are Christians, not Jews, because Jesus' name is written on their foreheads. This scene contrasts the state of the saints with the unbelievers in Chapter 13, who received the mark of the Beast. The Messiah hasn't arrived on Earth yet; this vision takes place in the throne room of heaven, with the creatures and the elders. The Mount Zion John sees is the heavenly Jerusalem (Heb 12:22), the Holy City which will come down out of heaven, so that the Lamb might rule the world together with the victorious saints. There is loud, joyful music playing as the saints sing a new song. They're the overcomers who have successfully passed through the Great Tribulation. The words of the new song they sing may be the same as those sung by the creatures and the elders (Rev 5:9-10), or the words sung in Revelation 15:3-4.

The saints are described as virgins. This word picture distinguishes them as being morally pure and faithful. They didn't worship the Beast's image or receive his mark on their bodies. They follow Jesus,

the great Shepherd of the sheep, wherever he goes. They're honest and blameless. They're now perfected, and their sins are forgiven. Their way of life is in marked contrast to that of the evildoers described in Revelation 22:15. They've been purchased from among mankind and are offered to God and Jesus as a first-fruit offering via martyrdom. Revelation 14:14-16 describes the later harvest of the righteous via resurrection and rapture, while verses 17-20 describe the harvest of the wicked via the slaughter of the armies at Armageddon. The righteous have been redeemed with the precious blood of Christ (1 Pet 1:18-19).

The Gospel preached to all nations (14:6-8)

Then I saw another angel flying in midair. He had everlasting good news to proclaim to those who live on the Earth, to every nation, tribe, language, and people. He shouted: Fear God and give him glory, because the hour of his judgment has come. Worship him who made the heavens and the Earth, the sea and the springs of water. A second angel followed and said: Fallen! Babylon the Great, which made all the nations drink the intoxicating wine of her adulteries, has fallen.

Isa 21:9 She has fallen, *Babylon has fallen!* All the images of her gods lie shattered on the ground.

Chapter 13 informed us about the satanically inspired final world empire, the Beast, and the False Prophet who will force everyone to worship the Beast and submit to its government.

Chapter 14 started with an interlude about the Messiah and the saints, who didn't defile themselves with the pagan world system, and who are now in heaven.

This is followed by three angels who warn about impending judgment, before a symbolic description of the harvest of the Earth, both the righteous and the wicked. It's difficult to envisage three angels proclaiming the gospel in mid-air to unbelievers on Earth, but as John had been told to write what he saw (Rev 1:11), and is again reminded of that in verse 13, it may be his testimony in the Bible that proclaims these truths to the world, acceptance of which is the only way to escape

the impending judgment of the world. John saw the angels flying in mid-air, for all to see, proclaiming the gospel to every nation, tribe, language, and people. This is in fulfilment of the Lord's promise in Mt 24:14 that the gospel would be preached in the whole world, by the church, as a witness to all nations, and then the end would come.

The only way of escape is to fear God and give him glory, to recognize that he's the Creator of all things and that one day he'll judge everyone according to what they've done. Belief in the good news about Jesus Christ isn't explicitly mentioned. An everlasting good news that is mentioned is probably the news that Babylon is about to be destroyed.

The messages of the three angels are related. The first gives the invitation to all to believe in the gospel, the second announces the inevitable fall of the rebellious world system with its luxuries and moral decadence, and the third warns that everyone who worships the Beast will share in his judgment and suffer eternal punishment in hell. As many Christians are martyred during this period, the whole world will look on while the church proclaims these truths, while patiently surrendering to God's will.

The second angel announces the fall of Babylon. Historically, Babylon was the arch-enemy of Israel, the powerful empire that conquered Jerusalem in 587 BC, destroying Solomon's temple, and taking the Jewish people and their king into exile. The name is used here symbolically of the last world empire associated with the Antichrist. The angel, by quoting Isaiah's prophecy that Babylon has fallen, is announcing that God is about to overthrow this rebellious civilization that has intoxicated the world with her corruption and idolatry.

Beware of worshipping the Beast (14:9-13)

A third angel followed them and shouted in a loud voice: If anyone worships the Beast and its image and receives its mark on his forehead or hand, he'll drink the wine of God's fury, which has been poured full strength into the cup of his wrath. He'll be tormented with burning sulfur in the presence of the holy angels and of the Lamb. The smoke of their torment will rise forever and ever. Those who worship the Beast and its image or receive the mark of its name will have no rest day or night. This is the endurance needed by the saints who obey

God's commands and remain faithful to Jesus. Then I heard a voice from heaven say: Write down that the dead who die in the Lord from now on are blessed. Yes, says the Spirit, they'll rest from their labor, for their deeds will follow them.

Jer 25:15 This is what the Lord, the God of Israel, said to me: Take from my hand *this cup filled with the wine of my wrath and make all the nations to whom I send you drink it.*

The third angel warns people that if they worship the Beast or his image, or if they receive his mark on their bodies, they too will experience God's wrath. Those who worship the Beast are worshiping Satan. That is the choice everyone will be forced to make: Throw in your lot with Christ or with Satan. Refusing to worship the Beast won't be easy. The whole world will submit, and those who refuse will be out on a limb. No one will be able to buy or sell anything without the mark of the Beast on their hand or forehead. The image of the Beast will be able to speak, and it will order the executions of those who don't worship it. The saints will endure and be faithful.

The alternative is to be tormented in hell in the presence of the Messiah and his angels after the Last Judgment (Rev 20:15). This divine punishment is eternal (Rev 20:10). The language may be symbolic, but the torment is real. The passage gives a very graphic description of the horrors of hell. Jesus speaks about the dangers of hell more than anyone else (Mt 18:8); it isn't a doctrine that can be watered down.

The mark of the Beast could be a tattoo or an electronic device. It identifies people who agree to worship the Beast and is mentioned seven times (Rev 13:88, 16-17, 14:9-11, 16:2, 19:20, 20:4), usually with a warning against taking the mark. The Beast is the empire, not the emperor. The second beast, the Antichrist, orders people to set up the image of the first beast, which had the mortal wound.

The saints are given a clear warning. They're aptly described as people who obey God's commands and believe and trust in Jesus. If they undergo martyrdom, they'll be blessed. It's not a shame or even a disaster. They'll be relieved of their sufferings, and they'll be rewarded, as Jesus promised the overcomers in each of the churches in Chapters 2-3. They'll be rewarded for their devotion and service to

Christ over the years. Salvation is a gift, but believers will be rewarded for what they've done. Paul's advice is that we should always give ourselves fully to the work of the Lord because our labor in the Lord isn't in vain (1 Cor 15:58).

‘Only one life ‘twill soon be past,
only what's done for Christ will last.’

Salvation for the righteous and destruction for the wicked (14:14-20)

I looked and saw a white cloud, and seated on the cloud was one 'like a son of man' wearing a gold crown and holding a sharp sickle. Then another angel came out of the temple and called in a loud voice to him who was sitting on the cloud: Swing your sickle and reap, because the time has come, the Earth's harvest is ripe. Then he who was seated on the cloud swung his sickle over the Earth, and the Earth was harvested. Another angel came out of the temple in heaven, and he also had a sharp sickle.

Then another angel, who had charge of the fire, came from the altar and called in a loud voice to him who had the sharp sickle: Swing your sharp sickle and gather the clusters of grapes from the Earth's vine, because its grapes are ripe. The angel swung his sickle on the Earth, gathered its grapes, and threw them into the great winepress of God's wrath. They were trampled in the winepress outside the city, and blood flowed out of the press, rising as high as a horse's bridle for a distance of 1,600 stadia.

Dan 7:13 In my vision at night, I looked and saw *someone like a son of man, coming with the clouds of heaven.*

Joel 3:12-13 Let the nations be roused, let them advance into the Valley of Jehoshaphat, for I'll sit there to judge all the surrounding nations on every side. *Swing the sickle for the harvest is ripe. Come trample the grapes, for the winepress is full and the vats overflow, so great is their wickedness.*

The destiny of those on Earth is now depicted as two harvests that occur when the Messiah returns. The first one is a grain harvest which

the Messiah carries out. The second is a grape harvest, which two angels carry out, one with a sharp sickle and another who has authority over fire (hell). Jesus receives instructions from God via an angel who comes from the temple in heaven. Then he harvests the grain, which symbolizes the resurrection and rapture of the saints of all nations. The Son of Man passage in Daniel 7 is about the Messiah and the saints receiving the kingdom and reigning forever. Alluding to that, Jesus said that the nations would see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky with power and great glory. He'd send his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they'd gather his elect from all over the world (Mt 24:30b-31). Their destination isn't mentioned, but Daniel 7:18 tells us that the saints of the high places would receive the kingdom and possess it forever.

By contrast, the angel who has charge of the fire instructs the angel with the sharp sickle to gather the clusters of grapes from the Earth's vine, because they're ripe. The angel swings his sickle, gathers its grapes, and throws them into the winepress of God's wrath. This harvest doesn't refer to judgment day but to the slaughter of the wicked at the battle of Armageddon at Jesus' return. In Chapter 19, which portrays Jesus as returning on a white horse, he strikes down the nations and treads the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God Almighty (Rev 19:15). The bloodshed occurs outside Jerusalem, where the nations are gathered to fight (Zech 14:2). John sees the blood flowing for 300 km, the length of Israel, to the height of a horse's bridle. This is what John sees in his vision; it's not literal, but the slaughter of the rebellious armies will be enormous. John the Baptist spoke about the Messiah separating the wheat from the chaff in Matthew 3:13. In Matthew 25, Jesus spoke about the separation of the sheep from the goats, the righteous from the unrighteous. The righteous receive their inheritance, the kingdom prepared for them from the creation of the world, and the wicked go away to eternal punishment..

God's wrath and praise from the overcomers (15:1-4)

I saw another sign in heaven, great and astonishing: seven angels with seven calamities, the last ones, because with them God's wrath is completed. I saw something like a sea, smooth as glass

and blended with fire. Standing on/beside the sea were those who were victorious over the Beast and its image and the number of its name. They held harps that God had given them and sang the song of God's servant Moses and the Lamb, saying: Your deeds are great and astonishing, Lord God Almighty. Just and true are your ways, King of the nations. Who won't fear you, Lord? Who will refuse to praise you? For you alone are holy. All nations will come and worship you, for your righteous acts have been revealed.

Lev 26:21 If you continue to be stubborn and refuse to listen to me, I'll multiply your afflictions *seven times* as your sins deserve.

Ps 86:9 *All the nations you've made will come and worship you Lord; they'll all praise you.*

Isa 66:23 From one New Moon to another and from one Sabbath to another, *all mankind will come and bow down before me*, says the Lord.

Chapters 15-18 describe the punishment meted out by God on the Beast, the evil empire called 'Babylon', and on rebellious, unrepentant mankind who follow the Antichrist. It's depicted in a symbolic way as seven bowls of wrath are poured out on the Earth. These angels and their calamities are called a sign because they're a portent or foreboding of calamitous events that will happen in the last days. A plague in the Greek language is a blow or a stroke; figuratively, a blow of fate, or a calamity. These calamities are the final expression of God's anger and retribution to satisfy his justice. They fall specifically on the Beast's kingdom and on his followers, who have thrown in their lot with him. Chapter 16 will reveal the extent of these judgments, including the death of every living thing in the sea, intense heat from the sun scorching people, darkness over Beast's kingdom, and the battle of Armageddon.

Before the calamities arrive, John sees the martyred overcomers, those who have been victorious over the Beast and its image, in heaven before God's throne. They stand on or by a glassy sea mingled with fire. On is preferable, suggested by the solid, glassy sea. 'On' is the

usual meaning of the Greek preposition ἐπί. The sea is mingled with fire, symbolizing the bloody persecution they've been through. They have harps to praise God and are joyfully singing the song of Moses (Ex 15), which celebrates victory over an evil empire, which is also the song of the Lamb, who's responsible for their salvation. The title Lord God Almighty applies to both Father and Son. Both are universally worshiped. God said everyone will bow before him and everyone will swear by him (Isa 45:23), and Paul said that at the name of Jesus everyone will bow and confess that he's Lord (Php 2:10-11). The saints declare that all nations will come and worship God, just as Zechariah had prophesied about the Messianic reign (Zec 14:16).

Angels are given seven bowls of God's wrath (15:5-8)

After this, I looked and saw the sanctuary, that is the tent of testimony, open in heaven. Then seven angels came out of the temple with the seven plagues. They were dressed in clean, shining linen with golden sashes around their chests. Then one of the four creatures gave the seven angels seven golden bowls filled with the wrath of God, who lives forever and ever. The sanctuary was filled with smoke from the glory of God and his power, and no one could enter it until the end of the seven calamities that the seven angels brought.

Ex 40:34-35 Then the cloud covered the tent of meeting, and *the Lord's glory filled the sanctuary*. Moses couldn't enter the tent of meeting because the cloud covered it, and the Lord's glory filled the sanctuary.

What is about to happen on Earth is first determined by God in heaven. God is pictured in his sanctuary, called the Tabernacle of Witness, or the Tent of Meeting, that was constructed by the Israelites in the wilderness after the Exodus from Egypt. A sanctuary is a place to meet God, and the tabernacle was a portable tent, the place where Moses met with God. The stone tablets on which were written the Ten Commandments were placed in the Ark of the Covenant (a wooden box) in the Tabernacle. The word Testimony means a divine charge or code of law and refers to the Ten Commandments, God's moral law. God's wrath results from his unalterable opposition to sin; the

breaking of his commandments. Because of their stubbornness and unrepentant hearts, the bulk of mankind have rejected these commands and will experience the day of God's wrath when his righteous judgment is revealed (Rom 2:5).

The angels are dressed in white, symbolizing righteous retribution, with gold sashes, symbolizing their priestly function. The shallow bowls they were given were made of gold and were used for libations. In this symbolic way of expressing things, the bowls are filled with the wrath of the eternal God. The temple is filled with smoke or cloud, representing the power and glory of God. He's the all-powerful, absolute ruler. Nobody can enter his presence to intercede for the world. God has been patient, but now it's time for him to act. The coming judgments are inevitable; nothing can stop them.

Bowls of wrath are poured out on land, sea, rivers, and the sun (16:1-9)

Then I heard a loud voice from the temple telling the seven angels to go and pour out the seven bowls of God's wrath on the Earth. The first angel went and poured out his bowl on the land, and ugly, festering sores broke out on the people who had the mark of the Beast and worshiped its image. The second angel poured out his bowl on the sea, and it turned into blood like that of a corpse, and every living thing in the sea died. The third angel poured out his bowl on the rivers and springs of water, and their water became blood. Then I heard the angel in charge of the waters say: You're just in these judgments, O Holy One, you who are and who were; for they've shed the blood of your saints and prophets, and you've given them blood to drink as they deserve. And I heard the altar respond: Yes, Lord God Almighty, your judgments are true and just. The fourth angel poured out his bowl on the sun, and caused it to scorch people with fire. They were scorched by intense heat, and they blasphemed God's name, who had control over these calamities. They refused to repent and glorify him.

Ps 78:44 *He turned their river into blood, and they couldn't drink from their streams.*

Ps 79:6-7 *Pour out your wrath on the nations that don't acknowledge you, on the kingdoms that don't call on your name, for they've devoured Jacob and devastated his land.*

More severe than the calamities poured out on Egypt in the book of Exodus, these four bowls affect the whole world. It's God's judgment on the world of unbelievers, his wrath poured out on them.

- Festering sores on those who worshiped the Beast
- The sea turned to blood, with everything in it dying
- Rivers and springs turned to blood, leaving no water to drink
- People burned with intense heat coming from the sun

The wicked inhabitants of the world have shed the blood of millions of saints and prophets, and so God has given them blood to drink. He isn't unpredictable or capricious; these acts express his eternal justice and righteousness. They refuse to repent or glorify God; they're beyond salvation.

The Beast's kingdom collapses as kings and their armies gather at Armageddon (16:10-16)

The fifth angel poured out his bowl on the throne of the Beast, and its kingdom was plunged into darkness. Men gnawed their tongues in agony and cursed the God of heaven because of their pains and their ulcers. They refused to repent and give up their evil deeds. The sixth angel poured out his bowl on the great Euphrates River, and its water was dried up, preparing the way for the kings from the East. Then I saw three impure spirits that resembled frogs, coming out of the mouths of the dragon, the Beast, and the False Prophet. They're miracle-performing demonic spirits that were going out to the kings of the whole world, to gather them for the battle on the great day of God Almighty. Look, I'm coming like a thief! Blessed is the one who stays awake and remains clothed, so he won't go naked and expose himself. Then they gathered the kings to the place that in Hebrew is called Armageddon.

Isa 11:15 The Lord will dry up the gulf of the Egyptian sea, and *with a scorching wind he'll sweep his hand over the Euphrates River*. He'll break it up into seven streams so that one can cross over in sandals.

Zeph 3:8 Wait for me, declares the Lord, until the day I'll stand up to testify. For I've decided to assemble the nations, *to gather the kingdoms and to pour out my wrath on them* – all my fierce anger. The fire of my jealous anger will consume the entire world.

Satan gave the Beast his power and his throne, but now his throne and kingdom, which seemed so invincible, are plunged into darkness. The victims of God's wrath and judgment gnaw their tongues in agony and curse him. Daniel said the kingdom would not remain united (Dan 2:43). Kings are rebelling against the Antichrist, and he has lost his grip on power.

The sixth catastrophe is the battle of Armageddon, which is referred to again (Rev 17:14, 19:19) and will be the greatest day in the history of our planet. It's the battle of the great day of God Almighty involving the armies of nations from all over the world. The Euphrates River was mentioned (Rev 9:13-16) when the sixth trumpet was blown and 200 million mounted troops were released to kill a third of mankind with scourges of fire, smoke, and sulfur. Modern warfare will involve nuclear weapons of mass destruction. This preparation precedes Jesus' return and its mention here explains how the armies are gathered for the battle on the great day of God Almighty.

In his vision, John saw demons that looked like frogs emanating from the mouths of the dragon (Satan), the Beast (the empire), and the False Prophet (the Antichrist). They perform miracles and deceive the world leaders into gathering their armies for the battle.

Verse 15 is significant because the speaker is Jesus. He has not spoken since Chapter 4:1, and he doesn't speak again until Chapter 22:7, but we must keep in mind that the whole book is a revelation given by him. He gives a warning that he'll come unexpectedly like a thief. This is a parenthesis that doesn't interfere with the course of events.

Christians aren't in darkness that that day should surprise them like a thief (1 Th 5:4). They're blessed because they're awake and clothed, whereas unbelievers are sleeping naked and will be exposed.

The world leaders and their armies gather in Israel. They've been deceived into fighting God. Satan, the Beast, and the False Prophet are the deceivers. Satan, ejected from heaven and in great anger, is trying to prevent the divine rule of the world.

The prophets Ezekiel, Daniel, Zechariah, and John all talk about this battle. The False Prophet, the Antichrist, has set himself up in the temple, proclaiming himself to be God, and he has authority over all nations. However, his kingdom is unstable, and there is rebellion.

The Lord will gather all nations to Jerusalem to fight against it. The city will be captured, the houses ransacked, and the women raped (Zech 14:2). The Antichrist will wage war against his enemies (Dan 11:40-45). The southern king (Egyptian coalition) engages him in battle first, then the northern king (Gog) storms out against him with chariots (tanks), cavalry, and a great fleet of ships. The battle moves into Israel. Reports from the East and the North alarm him, and he sets out to annihilate many, but he meets his end at the beautiful holy mountain (Zion).

A severe earthquake causes the cities of the nations to collapse (16:17-21)

The seventh angel poured out his bowl into the air, and a loud voice came from the throne in the temple, saying: It's done! There were flashes of lightning, rumblings, peals of thunder, and a severe earthquake. No earthquake like it has ever occurred since mankind has been on Earth, so tremendous was the quake. The great city was split into three parts, and the cities of the nations collapsed. God remembered Babylon the Great, making her drink the cup filled with the wine of his furious wrath. Every island disappeared, and the mountains couldn't be found. Huge hailstones fell on people from the sky, each weighing about a hundred pounds. And they cursed God because of the hail disaster, for it was so terrible.

Ezek 38:20b All the people on the face of the Earth will tremble at my presence. The mountains will be overturned, the cliffs will crumble, and every wall will fall to the ground.

Dan 12:1 There will be a time of distress *such as has not happened from the beginning of nations until then.*

Mt 24:21 For then there will be great distress, *unequaled from the beginning of the world until now* – and never to be equaled again.

The pouring out of the seventh bowl signals the final great catastrophe that is inflicted on the world. It has already been described at the opening of the sixth seal, where there was a great earthquake, cosmic disturbances, and the disappearance of every mountain and island (Rev 6:12-16). Earthquakes will be felt worldwide. The cities of the nations collapse; their populations are decimated. The angel pours his bowl of God's wrath into the air because it's from the air that this destruction comes. Maybe the hailstones of a hundred pounds are bombs or ballistic missiles. 'It's done,' expresses the fact that God's visitation in judgment on the world is now finished.

The great city that splits into three parts is 'the great city that rules over the kings of the Earth' (17:18). In other words, the leading city of the Antichrist's empire, which is symbolically referred to as Rome and Babylon. Chapter 17 shows that these cities of the world are civilizations that have deliberately rejected God's will, and Chapter 18 describes their destruction. The apostle Peter said the day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar, the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the Earth and everything in it will be laid bare (2 Pet 3:10). And he adds that that day will bring about the destruction of the heavens by fire, and the elements will melt in the heat. But in keeping with God's promise, we're looking forward to a new heaven and a new Earth, the home of righteousness (2 Pet 3:12-13). Islands fleeing away and mountains not being able to be found indicate their complete disappearance, or at least, that they won't be recognizable. This is the Day of the Lord, not only devastating destruction on Earth, but also the appearance of the Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ. Fall on us, the inhabitants of the Earth cry to the mountains and the rocks, hide us from the face of God and

his Messiah (Rev 6:16). The destructive earthquakes have been triggered by the feet of the holy Son of God as he descends to the Mount of Olives (Zech 14:4).

The inhabitants of the world, who are now past repentance, can only curse God. This is the end of God's judgment on the world. The next two chapters describe the great city and its downfall in more detail, and that is followed by a description of the coming of the Messiah.

A great prostitute sits on a scarlet Beast (17:1-6)

One of the seven angels who had the seven bowls came and said to me: Come, I'll show you the punishment of the great prostitute, who sits by many waters. The kings of the Earth committed immorality with her, and the inhabitants of the Earth were intoxicated with the wine of her prostitution. Then the angel carried me away in the Spirit into a wilderness. There I saw a woman sitting on a scarlet beast that was covered with blasphemous names. It had seven heads and ten horns. The woman wore purple and scarlet clothes and gold jewelry with precious stones and pearls. She held a golden cup filled with abominable things and the filth of her immorality. The name written on her forehead was a mystery:

Babylon the great,
the mother of prostitutes,
and the abominations of the Earth

I saw that the woman was drunk with the blood of the saints; those who bore testimony to Jesus.

Gen 11:4, 9a Then they said: Come, let us build ourselves *a city*, with a tower that reaches to the heavens and make a name for ourselves, so that we won't be scattered over all the Earth. ... It was called Babel.

Jer 51:7 Babylon was a gold cup in the Lord's hand. She made the whole world drunk. *The nations drank her wine and have become foolish.*

This chapter is about Rome, that city which in the first century had dominion over the kings of the Earth. Rome was built on seven hills.

She's called Babylon the Great because she symbolizes all centers of empire which are inevitably characterized by opulence, pride, greed, corruption, and the persecution of God's people. The final world empire under the Antichrist will be centered on a great city or all cities, and it will have control over all nations: the population of the whole world. The city is called a prostitute, because of her inhabitants' desire for vice and self-gratification.

Genesis 11 records the building of the tower of Babel, which symbolizes the pride of man in wanting to make a name for himself. God confused their language so that the building was stopped, and the population dispersed. In recent decades, a reversal has taken place. Half the world's population now lives in urban areas. All global population growth between 2017 and 2030 will be absorbed by cities. The largest cities, Delhi and Tokyo, have populations approaching 40 million each. Global cities are being increasingly linked together through telecommunications, industry, trade, banking, education, entertainment, and politics. That is why we see the woman riding on the Beast, the final empire, which will include all the great cities of the world.

Since 2008 the tallest building has been the Burj Khalifa in Dubai, standing at 828 meters with 163 floors. There are over 50 buildings taller than 350 meters, half of them in China, and many more are under construction, including the one-kilometer-high Jeddah tower in Saudi Arabia. We may think that these buildings are marvelous feats of engineering, but God sees them as symbols of man's pride and arrogance. All the cities of the world and their majestic towers will collapse when the angel pours out the seventh bowl of God's wrath.

God judges all these mega-cities of the world to be immoral and their inhabitants unfaithful to him, their Creator. The angel told John to come and he'd show him the punishment of the great prostitute who sits on many waters: many cities with multitudes of people of different nations and languages. The fall of Babylon is God's punishment on all the cities of the world.

The inhabitants of the world are intoxicated by city life; the wine of her adulteries. They're attracted by universities, jobs, entertainment, sporting facilities, casinos, hotels, and restaurants, and especially the opportunity to make money and get rich. Regarded as necessities of

modern life, these facilities lead to greed, materialism, the love of the world, and godlessness.

The woman sits on a scarlet Beast covered with blasphemous names. The Beast is that arose from the sea in Chapter 13. It's covered in blasphemous names because it's the deification of secular authority. That is her religion. When civil authorities don't acknowledge their role as a service to God, they become proud and arrogant and see themselves as the ultimate authority. They see no value in the spiritual and spurred on by an atheistic, evolutionary ideology, they oppose God and his people. They're obsessed with the economy and embrace anything that will make money.

City mentality is intoxicated with wealth, symbolized by expensive clothes and jewels. The inhabitants desire freedom from all restraint. They turn their backs on God and his law. The woman is described as drunk with the blood of the saints, the blood of those who bear testimony to Jesus. Rome was known for its persecution of Christians who refused to deny their Lord and worship the emperor. The Antichrist's government will follow that example.

The Beast's kingdom (17:7-11)

When I saw her, I was greatly astonished. Then the angel asked me: Why are you astonished? I'll explain to you the mystery of the woman and the Beast she rides, which has seven heads and ten horns. The Beast, which you saw, once was, and isn't, and yet will come up out of the Abyss and go to its destruction. The inhabitants of the Earth whose names haven't been written in the book of life from the creation of the world will be astonished when they see the Beast, because it once was, now isn't, and yet will come. This calls for a mind with wisdom. The seven heads are seven hills on which the woman sits. They are also seven kings. Five have fallen, one is, the other has not yet come; but when he does come, he must remain for only a little while. The Beast who once was, and now isn't, is an eighth king. He belongs to the seven and is going to his destruction.

The angel explains the mystery of the woman (17:18) and the Beast she rides. The Beast, which once was, will have a time when it doesn't

exist, and then it'll come up from the underworld as a revived world empire before finally going to its destruction. This last time, the world empire will have ten horns, a confederation of states, or even a global government. The whole world will be astonished and support this globalization because it once was, there was a time when it didn't exist, and now it's back. In other words, one of the Beast's heads had a fatal wound and the wound was healed (Rev 13:3). The saints will have discernment and won't follow him, or worship him, or take his mark on their bodies.

The seven heads are interpreted as seven mountains that also represent seven kings: seven empires and their emperors. The seven heads can be interpreted as world empires, those of Egypt, Assyria, Babylonia, Medo-Persia, Greece, Rome, and that of the Antichrist. When Antichrist comes, he must remain only for a little while. Satan is the power behind them all (1 Jn 5:19, Rev 20:3), so when the angel said that the Beast was an eighth king who belongs to the seven, but isn't one of them, he may have been referring to Satan.

World rulers give their power to the Beast (17:12-18)

The ten horns you saw are ten kings who haven't yet received a kingdom, but who for one hour will receive authority as kings along with the Beast. They have one purpose and will give their power and authority to the Beast. They'll make war against the Lamb, but the Lamb will triumph over them because he's Lord of lords and King of kings - and with him will be his called, chosen, and faithful followers. Then the angel said to me: The waters you saw, where the prostitute sits, are peoples, multitudes, nations, and languages. The Beast and the ten horns you saw will hate the prostitute. They'll bring her to ruin and leave her naked; they'll eat her flesh and burn her with fire. For God has put it into their hearts to accomplish his purpose by agreeing to hand over to the Beast their royal authority, until God's words are fulfilled. The woman you saw is the great city that rules over the kings of the Earth.

The ten kings, who represent the global leaders (Rev 16:14), will for a short time, maybe seven years, share their authority with the Antichrist. They'll make war on the Lamb (the Messiah) by opposing and killing Christians, and by invading Jerusalem and God's temple. However, when the Messiah returns, he'll conquer them, and with him will be his resurrected saints, his called, chosen, and faithful followers. Jesus told his disciples they did not choose him; he chose them and appointed them to go and bear fruit (Jn 15:16).

Paul said that God is the blessed and only Ruler, the King of kings and Lord of Lords (1 Tim 6:15). Here in Revelation 17:14, it's the Messiah who's King of kings and Lord of lords. The early Church believed in the full deity of Christ.

The Beast and the global leaders will hate the prostitute; the alliances between military powers and trading blocs and the economic system will disintegrate. We know from Daniel 2:41-42 that this final world kingdom will be a divided kingdom. The toes of iron mixed with clay symbolize instability. The nations won't remain united. After the pouring out of the seventh bowl, the great city will split into three parts, and the cities of the nations will collapse, presumably due to the great earthquake, but nuclear warfare is also a possible cause.

The southern and northern confederations will turn against the Antichrist, and storm out against him with chariots and cavalry and a great fleet of ships (Dan 11:40-45). The Antichrist will then set out in a great rage to destroy and annihilate many, but will come to his end in Israel. Cities will be destroyed in the process, as described in Chapter 18. It's God who caused the world leaders to make this bad decision of giving their power and authority to the satanically inspired Beast, to accomplish his will (Rev 17:17).

The destruction of Babylon (18:1-5)

After this I saw another angel coming down from heaven. He had great authority, and the Earth was illuminated by his splendor. With a mighty voice he shouted: Destroyed! Babylon the Great is destroyed! It's become a dwelling for demons and a haunt for every impure spirit, the home of every unclean bird, and every unclean and detestable animal. For all the nations

drank the intoxicating wine of her immorality. The Earth's kings slept with her, and the Earth's traders grew rich from her excessive luxuries. Then I heard another voice from heaven, saying: Come out of her, my people, so that you don't participate in her sins and suffer from the disasters that will be inflicted on her; for her sins are piled up to heaven, and God has remembered her crimes.

Jer 51:37, 45 *Babylon will be a heap of ruins, a haunt of jackals, an object of horror and scorn. No one will live there. ... Come out of her. My people!* Let each one escape with his life from the Lord's fierce anger.

We shouldn't confuse Babylon (a city) with Babylonia (an empire). The reference here is the capital of the Beast's empire, which may involve the destruction of all the world's cities.

A mighty angel announces the fall of Babylon, which has become the symbol of worldly glory and the high point of satanic influence. The vocabulary of desolation comes from the prophets. All the nations have been intoxicated by the self-gratification of city life, and the worship of money, which is idolatry. The politicians and billionaires benefited from her commerce through corrupt dealings with the wealth of her banks, trade, and share markets. Babylon constitutes the political, commercial, and banking systems of the world, all centered in the big cities of the world.

The cities will never be rebuilt. Like a scene from *The Matrix*, they'll become a haunt for demons and unclean birds. The riches and splendor of the cities will vanish forever, never to be recovered (Rev 18:14).

Christians are advised to leave the city and the evil system that it embodies. They should not be yoked together with unbelievers. Righteousness and wickedness have nothing in common. Light and darkness can't have fellowship. There is no agreement between Christ and Satan, and a believer has nothing in common with an unbeliever. So, they should be separate and not touch unclean things (2 Cor 6:14-15, 17). The last generation of believers is advised to leave the cities of Babylon, not to escape the destruction because they'll be raptured

immediately before it happens, but so that they don't participate in her sins and get caught up in worshipping the Beast.

Judgment on corrupt world commerce (18:6-10)

Render to her as she has rendered to others, pay her back double for what she has done. Mix her a double portion of what she mixed for others in her cup. Give her as much torture and grief as the glory and luxury she gave herself. For in her heart she boasts, saying: I sit enthroned as queen. I am not a poor widow; I'll never suffer. Therefore, in one day, these disasters will overtake her: death, suffering, and famine. She'll be consumed by fire, for mighty is the Lord God who judges her. When the Earth's kings who slept with her and shared her luxury see the smoke of her burning, they'll weep and mourn over her. Terrified at her torment, they'll stand far off and cry: Woe! Woe, great city, you mighty city of Babylon! In one hour, your doom has come!

Ps 137:8 *Daughter Babylon, doomed to destruction, happy is he who repays you for what you did to us. Happy is he who catches your children and dashes them against the rocks.*

Isa 47:7a, 8b, 9 You said: I'll continue forever as *the eternal queen!* ... *I'll never be a widow or suffer the loss of children.* Both of these will overtake you in a moment, on a single day: loss of children and widowhood. They'll come on you in full measure, in spite of your many sorceries and all your potent spells.

Jer 50:29 Gather archers against Babylon, all those who draw the bow. Encamp all around her; let no one escape. *Repay her for her deeds; do to her as she has done to others.* For she has defied the Lord, the Holy One of Israel.

Babylon is to be paid back double for her sins, for her pride, for her extravagance, and for the murder of prophets and saints and all unjust killings. Her doom will occur in one day, when she'll be consumed by earthquakes, hail, bombs, missiles, and fire.

Babylon boasts that her soldiers are always victorious, but they'll die on the battlefield. Now she'll experience death, mourning, famine, and destruction.

When the world leaders who shared in her wealth see her destruction, they'll be horrified and terrified as they mourn her doom. Political leaders, merchants, and seamen will all mourn for her.

Isaiah's prophecy against Babylon is primarily concerned with its defeat by Cyrus, king of Persia, in 539 BC, but he also foresaw the fall of the last great empire of Babylon (Isa 13:4-13). The global extent of this prophecy suggests that it refers to the final great Day of the Lord Almighty. This final battle becomes universal as the nations of the world mass together. It's a time of great destruction on Earth, and few will survive (Isaiah 13:4-12).

The collapse of the world economy (18:11-24)

The world's traders will weep and mourn over her because no one buys their cargoes anymore – containers full of gold, silver, precious stones, pearls, fine linen, purple and scarlet clothes; silk, wooden items, ivory items, valuable wood, bronze, iron, marble, cinnamon, spice, incense, myrrh, frankincense, wine, oil, flour, wheat; cattle, sheep; horses, vehicles, and bodies and souls of men.

They'll say: The good things you longed for are gone from you. Your luxury and splendor have vanished, never to be recovered. The traders who bought and sold these things and became rich through her trade will stand far off, terrified by her condition. They'll weep and mourn and cry out: Woe! Woe, great city! You used to be dressed in fine linen, purple and scarlet, and bejeweled with gold, precious stones, and pearls! In one hour, such great wealth has been brought to ruin!

Every ship owner, and all sea travelers and sailors, and all those who earn their living at sea, will stand far off. When they see the smoke of her burning, they'll cry out, saying: What city was like this great city? They'll throw dust on their heads and weep and mourn and cry out: Woe! Woe to you, great city, where all who

had ships on the sea became rich through her wealth! In one hour, she's just ruins!

Rejoice over her, you heavenly beings, saints, apostles, and prophets! For God has taken vengeance on her. Then a mighty angel picked up a boulder the size of a large millstone and threw it into the sea, saying: With such violence the great city of Babylon will be thrown down, never to be found again. The music of harpists, musicians, pipers, and trumpeters will never be heard in you again. No craftsman of any trade will ever be found in you again. The sound of a millstone will never be heard in you again. The light of a lamp will never shine in you again. The sound of a marriage celebration will never be heard in you again. Your traders were the world's important people. All the nations were deceived by your sorcery.

In her was found the blood of prophets and saints, and all who have been slain on the Earth.

Traders and businessmen can only stand far off and feel terror at the sight of the destruction of the world's great cities. All the great cities will be linked together in the great empire, symbolically called Babylon. The world's great businessmen will mourn because they can't carry on as they had before. The whole world will be in a state of destruction and ruin. It'll be up to the Messiah to rebuild the world, and he may do that without cities. The lament is based on Ezekiel's lament of Tyre in Ezekiel 27, where the inventory of imports is similar.

With the end of the city, world trade has come to an end; the ports function no longer. All those involved in trade and commerce will mourn the loss of the great cities. The industry is finished, the banks and stock markets are gone, the shopping malls are destroyed. Gone are the casinos and nightclubs. A significant item of trade was the bodies and souls of men, slaves.

But the saints will rejoice, as they do in the Hallelujah chorus in Handel's Messiah. That great song of praise is a response to the fall of Babylon. The great cities are destroyed forever (Rev 19:3), and there will be no more music there, no tradesmen, no light, no marriage. Babylon is especially condemned for her sorceries and the death of

God's people: saints and prophets, and all righteous people who have been killed on Earth.

In Chapter 6, when the fifth seal was opened, the martyrs were crying out to God for vengeance. They were told to wait a little longer until the number of their fellow servants and brothers was complete (Rev 6:11). The saints's prayers were offered up on the altar before God's throne (Rev 8:3-4), prayers for God's will to be done, prayers for justice and judgment on their persecutors, and prayers for Messiah's kingdom to come, and now they're told to rejoice, because God has judged the evil empire for the way it treated them. The Messiah is about to make his glorious appearance, when the saints will be glorified in him, and he in them.