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Learn to Read the Bible Effectively

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The compilers of this seminar have undertaken this work with earnest prayer and enthusiasm but are only too aware of its weaknesses. They are indebted to the many writers listed below, whose works have been used freely in compilation of this manual. The Book of Revelation is vast in scope and its depths infinite - by necessity the seminar is an overview. Great benefit and strength will be obtained by looking into the symbols in more detail, especially the visions of future glory. The list below contains many helpful works - each writer adds differing emphasis and insight.

Having invested one and a half hours a week attending this Seminar, the reader is encouraged to spend a similar amount of time during the ensuing week in re-reading the material and comparing it to the Scriptures.

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KEYS TO UNDERSTANDING
THE BOOK OF REVELATION

WELCOME!

We no doubt all start this session with a feeling of excitement and awe as we begin to unravel this last enigmatic book of the Bible.

The basic principles are simple and can be demonstrated from the rest of Scripture. The basic message is the same as the gospel and there are also important warnings for us.

The word Revelation means uncovering, manifestation.
It is almost always used for the second coming of Christ - eg. 1 Peter 1:7,13.
1 Cor.1:7 translates the same word as coming.

Thus the thrust of the message of the book is the same as the gospel message - the climax of the second coming of Jesus. He will then be openly revealed to all men. The book deals with a wide span of human history from John’s day to beyond our own. This is shown to be under God’s control and leading inexorably up to Jesus’ return.


“... I will shew thee things which must be hereafter” (ch.4:1)

“... and the Lord God of the holy prophets sent his angel to shew unto his servants the things which must shortly be done” (ch.22:6)

This is called the continuous historic principle. It is God’s narrative of history given in advance, from the first century to the Kingdom.

This principle is consistent with the prophecy of Daniel. It is God who decides who rules; all is under His control and leads to His pre-determined end of the return of Jesus:

“... to the intent that the living may know that the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will, and setteth up over it the basest of men” (Dan.4:17)
Four thousand years of witness
For approx 4000 years up to the birth of Jesus, God had made a witness in the earth by various means. To the worthies of old his angels had appeared with messages of future glory. Through the great leaders like Moses and Joshua God had chosen his people and given them the written word to learn of Him. When His nation was in the Land the Kings were expected to learn His word and teach it.

As the nation grew away from him God sent the prophets and further revelations of the coming of His Son. In due time that Son was born and immediately the paean of Praise was heard from heaven anticipating that future time:

“Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.” (Luke 2:14).

So Jesus with all his preaching and teaching came on the scene. His message was recorded; the Apostles were attracted and gathered together. In due time that unforgettable day of Pentecost dawned. From Jerusalem the word of the gospel exploded out and was carried to all corners of the Roman Empire by the tireless efforts of Paul and the other Apostles.

As those with the Spirit died out and those on whom the hands were laid fell asleep, after all that activity of God on the earth it became quiet. All that was left was that which is perfect - the preserved words of the scriptures.

But still at the end of this remarkable period in about AD 96 the final book was placed in the hands of the people. After 4000 years the open witness and words and works were finished.

Witness since the time of Christ
This Book was to contain sufficient to witness to those things which were to take place down through those long ages since Jesus and beyond our times. They are writings to give succour and sustenance to those who were to live through days never experienced before. The risen Lord at the right hand of the Father was now in control through the army of the angels to bring the Kingdoms of men to that time when Jesus himself would return.

Time Periods
In general, the Bible principle is a day for a year and we shall be looking at this in more detail later. The Bible tells us they are symbolic times and gives us clues. For instance, 1260 days, 42 months, a time, time and half a time – all represent a period of 1260 years.

Each day would represent an actual year of time and this is indicated by Numbers 14:33-34 and Ezekiel 4:3-4:-

“And your children shall wander in the wilderness forty years, and bear your whoredoms, until your carcases be wasted in the wilderness. After the number of the days in which ye searched the land, even forty days, each day for a year, shall ye bear your iniquities, even forty years, and ye shall know my breach of promise” (Num.14:33,34).
Another example is the 70 week prophecy of Daniel 9:24 - 70 weeks = 490 days = 490 years from the
decree to rebuild Jerusalem to the first coming of Messiah.

“And as the people were in expectation and all men mused in their hearts of John, whether
he were the Christ, or not” (Luke 3:15)

The Jews understood this and were looking for Messiah on the basis of that prophecy!

**Variants**

There are two or three occasions - such as in ch.11:11 where the days are taken as lunar days instead
of earth days. A lunar day of 30 earth days x 3½ = 105 years.

1000 years as prophetic time periods are always fulfilled literally.
This occurs in ch.20:4,6,7. If the prophecy is expressed in years then take it as literal years. This is
consistent and reasonable. Eden was 6000 years ago, and soon will follow the 1000 year reign of
Christ. This will equal a complete week.

The symbology is the six days of creation followed by a seventh day of rest. So in the prophecy of
Revelation the seventh day has already been amplified to the 1000 literal years and is therefore taken
as it stands (Rev.20:4).

**Overview (see chart W1.1)**

Cycles of sevens is the framework which all leads to the Kingdom of God on earth.

- a) AD312 affairs of ecclesias - then “Christianity” becomes the state religion
- b) Seals - God’s judgments on Roman Empire to weaken it
- c) Trumpets to the fall of the Roman Empire
- d) Vials - the last stage of judgments on Rome.

Overall Scripture (Luke 21:24) refers to this period as The Times of the Gentiles and their ending is
heralded by the Jewish return to their Land - when the four cycles have almost run their course. The
climax is almost upon us.

**Symbols**

These are not loose and free but are on the basis of what Scripture tells us.
The Book itself claims this:
ch.1:1 *signified*
ch.1:13 *like unto* (a figure of speech, simile)
ch.12:1-3 *a wonder* (AV margin *sign*)

It is usually self evident - ch.13:1,2 would be nonsense if taken literally!

God has given this Revelation to John for our benefit and the above are not our claims.
We look for the meaning, how shall we proceed?

**Symbols**
Scripture usually interprets its own symbols.

- Revelation contains around 600 quotations from and allusions to the Old Testament
- “seas” are wicked nations eg Isa.57:20
- “heaven”, “stars” are political authorities and ruling bodies eg Isa.13:10, 14:13

We shall be looking into these aspects in more detail later on.

The whole book is rooted in the Old Testament and the key to it is set out there. For instance, just as the sun and moon in heaven exercise their control of the earth and the tides etc, so the heavens as a symbol of ruling bodies is very apt.

The Book refers to Daniel extensively and it is crucially important to put both side by side. For instance, the origin of the strange animals in Revelation is in Daniel.

Daniel ch.7 speaks of a lion, a bear, a leopard and a fourth beast. We find that these represent the ruling kingdoms of Babylon, Persia, Greece and Rome and we shall be putting evidence before you shortly for this. Daniel saw Babylon and Persia and the Apostle John saw Rome, the fourth beast at the height of its pagan Roman Empire strength.

In the Book of Revelation, the beast of the sea etc. all have to do with Rome - the others have gone into history by the time John sees the vision. He is told to write of “the things which are” - Roman and onwards in history. They all refer to different phases of the Roman Empire.

**Truth versus Apostacy**

The book reveals a series of stark contrasts, exact opposites:

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<td>v New Jerusalem, the saints ruling in the Kingdom of God.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Heaven, political authorities before the Kingdom of God is established</td>
<td>v New heavens, political authorities of the Kingdom of God.</td>
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The great consummation comes in ch.11:15 - this is the heart of the gospel message:

“...The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever.”

There is also a personal side to the message - the hope held out to all:
“...Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes: and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away” (ch.21:3,4)

This carries an obligation ch.22:14 - to respond to God’s commandments:

“Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city”.

In v.17 the spirit word of God appeals to each to respond:

“And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.”

The Bride too, the community of believers, has an obligation to preach - each one who has found the Truth, in their turn has to preach it. We must take the warning and not assume the day of opportunity will be here for ever - Jesus will return.

SECTION 2

WHY STUDY THIS BOOK?

The most important reason must be that it is the last personal message from the Lord Jesus Christ to his servants and so it is unique and precious.

One of the proofs of the authority of the Bible is that personal study in itself confirms that it is divine. In the study of the historical interpretation of the Revelation, we see the amazing and revealing
manner in which the themes of different chapters inter-lock and support one another; the multiplicity of detail providing the clues which confirm the old adage:

“Prophecy is the mould into which history is poured.”

These things, of themselves, indicate the divine authority of this book. It is also very revealing to see how the symbols in the book are used elsewhere in Scripture. In this Book, all the threads are drawn together and are consistent with God’s purpose.

Why signs and symbols?

We have now the opportunity of studying The Book of Revelation and probably think we will be bemused by all the symbols! We know that the Lord “sent and signified it by his angel to his servant John” and we therefore expect signs. To have given these without any explanation would not have been a revelation but a concealment. Diligent search will unearth the clues, if we are prepared to look.

The use of sign or symbol is not confined to this book; the New Testament explains to us that the Mosaic system was one elaborate system of symbol. Prophets such as Ezekiel even acted out symbols such as digging through walls! Nebuchadnezzar’s dream image and the stone in Daniel ch2, as well as the four beasts in ch7 are further examples. They also show God’s plan working out in the unfolding sequences of history.

This feeling is well understood by others:

“At first sight it might seem a matter of regret that symbol should be employed at all. It might seem so much better that all matters should be set forth plainly ... Purely literal talk lacks the colour and the zest of communication spiced with figure and concealed meaning ... The effect of symbols after understanding is attained, is to make the matter set forth much more vivid and striking than it would be in a merely literal presentation. The symbols of the Book of Revelation are very graphic but it is necessary to realise that they are only symbols. Thus John when he saw seven candlesticks, saw something that had no actual existence ... He saw a drying river, three frogs, a seven-headed dragon. But there was no literal river or frogs or dragon. These were the signs of something else.” (Robert Roberts, Thirteen Lectures on The Apocalypse 4th Edn.1921 p.4).

The Lord Jesus warned that immediately prior to his return:

“there shall be signs in the sun, in the moon, and in the stars ... men’s hearts failing them for fear.” (Luke 21:25 - the word signs is the noun of the verb signified in Rev.1:1).

His exhortation to his friends was:

“Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man” (v36).

What are the signs?

Would the Lord Jesus Christ warn us to watch for signs and then not tell us what they were? In the same prophecy he said: “And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your
heads; for your redemption draweth nigh” (v28). What things? Rev.1:1 gives us the answer to these questions: “The Revelation of Jesus Christ which God gave unto him, to shew unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass.”

Thus a Christadelphian writer, John Thomas could write:

“Knowing the signs, they (believers) are enabled to discern the times; and while consternation and dismay cause men’s hearts to fail, they are courageous, and rejoice in perceiving the approach of the Kingdom of God” (Elpis Israel Section 3)

We can see from Scripture that we could well be living in the last days of Gentile times. Six ‘days’ of God’s work are nearly complete; the last day, the Millennium, could be very near. If this is true, then if ever a generation needed to know the significance of the signs and symbols of Revelation, it would be ours!

**Blessings**

The Book sets out seven blessings for those who make the effort to understand this last personal message of the Lord Jesus to his own servants. The sixth is in ch.22:7:

“Behold, I come quickly (suddenly); blessed is he that keepeth the sayings of the prophecy of this book.”

This would seem to presuppose that in order to be kept or treasured up, and observed, that they need to be understood.

**Warnings**

Noah is an example of a faithful man who was galvanised into action by prophecy, and many benefits resulted:

“By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith” (Heb.11:7).

The Lord Jesus tells us that wisdom and understanding are necessary in order to properly identify the threat of the Beast portrayed in the Book of Revelation (13:18 and 17:9). God’s anger is shown as being poured out on everything associated with ‘the Beast’:

“...If any man worship the beast and his image, and receive his mark in his forehead, or in his had, the same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God...and he shall be tormented...in the presence of the Lamb” (Rev.14:9,10).

and victory given to those who separate themselves from ‘the Beast’.
“And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them...which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image...and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years” (Rev.20:4).

So another vital reason for studying the Book is the need to properly identify ‘the Beast’ so as to keep separate.

**Faith Strengthened**

Prophecy is designed to help us. As Jesus explained:

“And now I have told you before it come to pass, that, when it is come to pass, ye might believe” (John 14:29)

The apostle Peter knew that to understand prophecy was to be strengthened and prepared for the future:

“This second epistle, beloved, I now write unto you...that ye may be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets...seeing ye know these things before, beware lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own steadfastness.” (2 Pet.3:1,2,17)

John Thomas comments:

“... as the Lord has also revealed what is to come to pass in these latter days, it is both our duty and our privilege to make ourselves acquainted with it, that our faith may grow and be strengthened; that our affections be detached from the fleeting present and set more firmly on things to come; that our minds may be fortified against error; and that we may be prepared to meet the Lord as those who have kept their garments, and shall not be put to shame” (John Thomas, Elpis Israel 1848)

**Summary of Benefits**

Conviction of the truth and divine authorship of the rest of Scripture
A greater vision of the future
Blessings
Warnings
Faith is strengthened


**SECTION 3**

**CLUE**

**THE MEANING OF EKKLESIA**

* A Separated & Dedicated People

What the Authorized King James Version calls “the Church” (an expression commanded by King James in his orders to the translators of that time), is a rendition of the Greek word *ekklesia*, which literally means “a calling out of” (Vine). So rather than a building or an ecclesiastical institution, the word conveys the meaning of a group of people and is best expressed in English as “congregation,” which is how William Tyndale translated it.

This word *ekklesia* echoes the fact that God is taking out of the Gentiles “a people for his name” Acts 15:14. They are “called out” by the gospel message, and in obedience to it they come out of the world and disassociate themselves from its religious and political institutions - see 2 Cor. 6:14-18.

This process of separation, or coming out, is expressed also by the word “sanctify”. Young’s concordance gives the meaning of the Greek word *(hagiazō)* as “to set apart”. Parkhurst’s more detailed Lexicon gives the meaning of the word as follows:

“To separate, set-apart, consecrate, or sanctify, from a common to a higher or sacred use or purpose.”

The apostle Paul tells us that:

“Christ also loved the ekklesia, and gave himself for it, that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word” (Eph.5:25,26)

So he is clearly indicating the call to separation and dedication. And he explains that this process is achieved by, or with “the washing of water by the word”.

*The chaste virgin*
Paul describes the *ekklesia* as being “espoused” to one husband, that it may be presented “as a chaste virgin to Christ” (2 Cor.11:2).

This beautiful idea describes the relationship of a young woman to her betrothed husband. Christ’s bride must be set apart from the evils of the world and dedicated to the things of God - and this is attained by “the washing of water by the word.” The believer absorbs the word of God and it has an effect - the mind is cleansed. The ugly and false is removed and the beauty of a godly character is developed. The mind of the believer is thus “transformed” - as Paul expresses it in Romans 12:2: 

> “And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind...”

The wonderful result of this is that believers are united so that they become of “one mind” (see 1 Cor 1:10; 2 Cor. 13:11). They are also of one mind with the Lord Jesus Christ (see 1 Cor.2:16). It is this unity of mind which makes a good “marriage” between Christ and his bride.

*A community of believers*

The *ekklesia* is made up of men and women who grow into a community - a society, or as it is expressed in the symbolic language of this book, “the holy city, the new Jerusalem.” (Rev.21:9,10). Here is the city which we remember Abraham looked for:

> “For he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God”  
> (Heb.11:10).

It is also described as follows:

> “But ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels. To the general assembly and church (ekklesia) of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect.”  
> (Heb.12:22,23)

Thus John, in symbolic vision, looks forward to that future time when these things will become a reality:

> “And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea. And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.”  
> (Rev.21:1,2)

So “the bride, the Lamb’s wife” is described as the holy city (see Rev.21:9,10). We could think of it as “The Holy City Community”; a society that is built upon Divine values. The gospel invites us to become part of this community through the means God has provided in the Lord Jesus Christ.
In the 4000 or so years during which God revealed his word to successive people, there was a common hallmark. The prophets were not only given the words from God but often had accompanying signs which would vindicate that these were indeed special utterances.

As an overall test of what a prophet said, Moses gives this advice:

“How shall we now the word which the Lord hath not spoken? When a prophet speaketh in the name of the LORD, if the thing follow not, nor come to pass, that is the thing which the LORD hath not spoken, but the prophet hath spoken it presumptuously…” (Deut.18:21,22)

It is worth noting that prophecy in this sense - forecasting of future events - necessitates linkage to “history” in the sense that the prophetic word when fulfilled, passes into what we call history. We see immediately therefore, that, in testing the prophecies of God in this seminar, we must be intimately involved with history in particular aspects.

One of the most notable prophecies/history in the Bible is to be found in Daniel ch.2. The great Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar had dreamed a dream which he claimed to be unable to recall. He asks his advisers and soothsayers, who were practised in magic arts, to remind him not only of the content of the dream, but also of its meaning. This great king in the very first year of his reign 605 BC had taken into captivity some of the Jews living in Palestine in Israel and some of the wiser ones of these he had kept in his court and amongst these was a young man Daniel. Daniel worshipped the God of Israel and under threat of death which Nebuchadnezzar placed on all his wise men if they failed to tell him the dream, Daniel is taken before Nebuchadnezzar and tells him his dream.

_Nebuchadnezzar’s Dream_

He had seen a great image (Dan.2:31-49) which was bright and threatening. It was composed of various materials - the head of gold, breast and arms of silver, belly and thighs of brass, legs of iron and its feet part of iron and part of clay. As Nebuchadnezzar looked in his dream, he had seen a terrifying thing happen to his image. A small stone appeared and hit the image on its feet of iron and
clay and broke them in pieces and successively and progressively. So the whole image and all of its constituent metals “was broken to pieces together”.

We can be sure that Nebuchadnezzar’s attention would be riveted on this young man Daniel as, recognising the detail of the description, he awaits the second part, the object of his quest; what did this terrible dream mean? And so Daniel tells him, “Thou art this head of gold” (v.38). Then Daniel goes on to show that there would follow after Nebuchadnezzar other kingdoms, less glorious than his and having their own characteristic qualities as indicated by the metal which stood for them. He showed that only four such great empires would exist in God’s eyes. Whereas each of the four kingdoms was to have its moment of ascendancy, they would fall. In contrast, however, the answer to Nebuchadnezzar’s question “what shall be in the latter days?”, is to be the intervention by the God of heaven to set up a kingdom, which would never be destroyed.

“And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms and it shall stand for ever” (v.44).

We can imagine that the king was so moved by what he had seen that he raised this young man Daniel to be a great ruler as chief of the governors.

A Thousand Years of History!
This narrative in such simple language encompasses the major section of the history of Europe and the world. When we consider the kingdoms which are referred to, knowing that the first was the kingdom of Babylon, we then have to turn to history to see that following on was the Medo-Persian empire which was succeeded by the Greeks, and finally by Rome. In all a period of a thousand years.

Though couched in simple language, the terms of the prophecy nevertheless have some puzzling aspects. The first is contained in v.28

“But there is a God is heaven that revealeth secrets and maketh known to the king Nebuchadnezzar what shall be in the latter days.”

So in fact although in some way linked directly to king Nebuchadnezzar himself, the prophecy concerns the “latter days”. This puzzling aspect is further highlighted in v.35 which in describing the eventual fall, indicates a whole erect image with all the constituent pieces in place

“then was the iron, the clay, the brass, the silver and the gold, broken to pieces together and became like the chaff of the summer threshing floors.”

So we see that this prophecy covers a large period of time. The first stage which lasted 1000 years resulted in four Kingdoms being identifiable up to the days of Jesus. In addition there would be a final phase in which, as it were, all of the constituents of the original image, which represent the Kingdom of men, would be raised up again during that time designated “the latter days.” It will be signified by a great drawing together of many nations to form an empire even greater in extent and influence than the empire of Nebuchadnezzar in 650 BC. How is this to occur? We hope to find out in later considerations in our Seminar.
If we were to view this prophecy in the light of the words of Moses with regard to the test of a prophet, most would conclude that the first phase of the prophecy was indeed very literally and progressively fulfilled. *The New International Version Study Bible* indeed shows the successive great empires of the world in line with this prophecy of Daniel. But the interpretation of the second part of the prophecy may be more problematic. We have not been left to speculate, as further writings of Daniel show.

**Daniel’s Dream**

Daniel ch.7 contains a record of a great dream which Daniel himself had some years later when Nebuchadnezzar had passed off the scene. In this dream he saw four great beasts or animals of very different types come out of the sea as a result of the winds blowing on it. He describes these successive beasts as they emerge; the first being like a lion and the second like a bear, which was raised up on one side; and the third which was in the form of a leopard, and finally a fourth beast, of which no description is given but simply that it was “dreadful and terrible”. There are many additional details given, all of which describe in amazing detail the kingdoms, for such they were, represented by the beasts emerging from the sea.

The fourth beast “which was diverse from all the others, exceeding dreadful, whose teeth were of iron, and his nails of brass; ...” (7:19) gives a positive linkage to the fourth metal of Nebuchadnezzar’s image and indicates the iron of Rome as being the fourth kingdom referred to in both dreams. Notice that the fourth beast also bears nails of brass which relate it to the previous brazen nation, i.e. the kingdom of Greece and indicate that Rome was to have taken in many features of the collapsing Greek empire.

**Are the two dreams related?**

A few moment’s reflection will show us that there are such distinctly similar features between the two dreams. By reading them together we may obtain a more complete understanding of what the prophet is indicating.

The idea of reading various chapters etc. in parallel as appropriate is not by any means new or unfamiliar to a Bible scholar. It is by reading side by side the four Gospel records of Jesus that apparent anomalies and omissions become entries to thrilling discoveries.

**Who are the four great beasts?**

We know that the lion was a pre-eminent symbol of Babylon and that statues of the lion are everywhere found in ancient Babylon. The second beast, a bear raised up on one side, would be an excellent description of Medo-Persia, which was in itself, a divided rulership with one in ascendancy. The characteristic of the leopard with four heads, and as being a fast-moving, hunting animal would be an excellent description of the Greeks, especially in their expansionist phase under Alexander the Great. When he died his kingdom was divided indeed amongst his four generals. And the fourth beast, of which no description is offered, having iron teeth, is firmly identified as the fourth iron kingdom of Nebuchadnezzar’s image, commonly accepted to be Rome

“The fourth beast shall be the fourth kingdom upon earth, which shall be diverse from all kingdoms and shall devour the whole earth, and shall tread it down and break it in pieces” (ch.7:22,23).
We could say that these are allusions rather than certainties but they give us a working basis to continue to examine the chapter, which will reveal more. Daniel sees that one of the characteristics of the fourth beast was that it had ten horns - this links it with the ten toes of Nebuchadnezzar’s image. Horns are often symbols of national power and as Daniel considers in his dream, he sees that another little horn emerges and three of the existing horns are plucked out by the roots. And here we next have some of the most significant verses in the chapter, because in describing this horn, Scripture says that

“And, behold, in this horn were eyes like the eyes of man, and a mouth speaking great things” (7:8).

What is the significance of this peculiar symbol?

“And of the ten horns that were in his head, and of the other which came up, and before whom three fell; even of that horn that had eyes and a mouth that spake very great things, whose look was more stout than his fellows. I beheld, and the same horn made war with the saints, and prevailed against them; until the Ancient of Days came, and judgment was given to the saints of the most High; and the time came that the saints possessed the kingdom.” (7:22).

After the demise of the fourth Kingdom (Rome) an identifiable power was to arise out of it which would endure all down through the centuries until being eliminated by the setting up of the fifth Empire by “the God of Heaven.”

**We may well conclude that this power must be in existence and identifiable in these days.**

To what does the prophet refer? During our future searches in our Seminar we shall be attempting to put forward convincing answers to this and other questions and to seek for a more complete understanding of the events of the “latter days” which will give rise to the complete fulfillment of these great prophecies.

**Summary**

1. Only four kingdoms of men in the area with which God was especially concerned.
2. Huge images of lions found in Babylon
3. Second kingdom is divided Medo-Persia
4. Common symbols, brass and iron in both chapters
5. Third beast’s 4 heads links to Greece the third metal in the image
6. Fourth kingdom exceedingly strong - corresponds to the iron of the image
7. The ‘little horn’ out of the fourth kingdom lasts until Judgment
8. Leads to fifth unending kingdom
9. Portrays end of human rule on earth

We commenced this section by citing the wise and inspired advice of Moses as to the choice of what we should believe:

“How shall we know the word which the Lord hath not spoken? When a prophet speaketh in the name of the LORD, if the thing follow not, nor come to pass, that is the thing which the LORD hath not spoken, but the prophet hath spoken it presumptuously...” (Deut.18:21,22).
With the evidence of history, the very detailed writings of such historians as Gibbon and of more modern commentators, for example Bryce, it is indeed hard to dismiss these great prophecies of the inspired Daniel if we faithfully compare them against the facts.

You may wonder how it can be in a seminar purporting to be a consideration of the book of the Revelation that we have spent a significant proportion of time thinking about the book of Daniel. As we progress in the course, the close ties and symbology between the book of Daniel and the book of the Revelation - and as far as that goes, the whole of the rest of the Scriptures - will become clear.

But just as an initial taster of what is to come, look at Revelation ch.13. The beloved apostle John now in his vision sees: “a beast rise up out of the sea, having seven heads and ten horns ...”. And again, John sees a beast to whom was given “a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies ... and it was given unto him to make war with the saints and to overcome them ...” (Rev.13:4-7). Remarkable linkages indeed with Daniel’s prophecy.

We hope we have given enough information to stimulate your interest and to begin to gain confidence in these inspired writings, which we can test for ourselves through the predictions which they contain.
SECTION 5

STRUCTURE & BLESSINGS
Chapter 1:1-9

The Author
We see that the Revelation was written by the beloved apostle John under the Inspiration of the Holy Spirit. We are familiar with John’s writings in his gospel record. In the first verse of the Revelation John claims that Jesus was given the details of the book “which God gave unto him.” This raises the interesting point that before God gave the knowledge to Jesus of what was to take place, Jesus did not know. This is in line with Jesus’ statement in Mark’s Gospel:

“But of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the father only.” (Mark 13:32; cf Acts 1:7).

This indicates the true Father-son relationship and the superiority of the Father “who only hath immortality” (1 Tim.6:16).

The beloved disciple John describes himself as a servant (Gk doulon, a bond servant or slave - used 14 times in the book). His gospel and epistles show him to be a man of deep spiritual insight particularly conscious of the manifestation (apocalypse) of the Father in His Son.

“Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; that they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us; that the world may believe that thou hast sent me.” (John 17:20,21).

This final message from the Lord Jesus Christ completes John’s understanding. He is shown the ultimate glory reserved not only for the Lord, but for all who are one in him. This concept of ‘God Manifestation’ is at the heart of much of John’s thinking.

The Name of the Book
The word Revelation is Apocalupsis in the Greek from:

apo away
kalupto cover or conceal

Thus the word means “an uncovering.”

The Book of Revelation
The word occurs 19 times in the New Testament and is applied to the “manifestation” of the sons of God (Romans 8:19) and “appearing” (1 Peter 1:7) of the Lord Jesus Christ as well as the personal “coming” (1 Cor.1:7). The related verb apokalupto - “to unveil, to reveal, to manifest” occurs 26 times.

We may therefore expect to find in the book the unfolding or revealing of a certain course of events which will culminate in the “coming of our Lord Jesus Christ”.

**The Book**

When we turn to open John’s book itself we must be careful that we do not place a false barrier around it so we fail to see it in the context of believers living in those times. If it was written around AD 96, as seems likely, it would have followed on, some decades later, the work and letters of Paul written to ecclesias in the same Roman world. Here we have the apostle John, by now a very old man, writing to those believers, and their offspring, who had heard Paul. He continues and adds to the great message which the Holy Spirit through Paul had given.

From earliest Christian times, (eg the writer Iranaeus 1st Century AD) the book was accepted as being written in approx. AD 96. This was near the end of the reign of the Roman Emperor Domitian (AD 81-96), the last of the twelve Caesars, who in AD 95 renewed the horrors of Nero’s persecution of AD 64.

Some, however, argue for an earlier date – for example around AD 70.

When writing Revelation John was a very old man, banished to the Isle of Patmos and probably condemned to labour in the mines. It was a time of persecution and the book was intended to comfort the Christians in their sufferings, to help them in their patient waiting for Christ, and at the same time to warn them of the dangers to which they were exposed.

Jerusalem, together with its Temple, had been destroyed in AD 70 as Jesus had predicted (Luke 21:6). So the prophecies in the book are for the 2nd century and onwards - “Things which must shortly come to pass” v2. The main subject of the Apocalypse, like that of Daniel’s prophecy, is the future of the saints in their tribulations in the world. It reveals signs to enable them to have a general awareness of the times in which they lived in relation to the fulfillment of God’s purpose. It also contains assurance of their ultimate triumph at the return of the Lord Jesus Christ according to his promise; if they hold fast and “overcome”.

Throughout the book Christ has injected personal messages to his brethren of every age. For example, his messages to the seven Ecclesias in chapters 2 and 3, though directed primarily to the brethren of the first century. His encouraging comments also give succour to those following. For example the faithful of the Middle Ages who had to endure bitter persecution.

: “If any man have an ear, let him hear. He that leadeth into captivity shall go into captivity: he that killeth with the sword must be killed with the sword. Here is the patience and the faith of the saints” (ch.13:9,10).

The proclamation of ch.6:15:
“Behold, I come as a thief. Blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame”

is directed to those living at the epoch of his return.

Above all else, the Revelation directs attention to the future time when the tragedy of the Garden of Eden will be reversed and the way re-opened to the tree of life.

“God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain; for the former things are passed away” (Rev.21:4).

Structure

Although there is no reference in the book itself which comments on its own structure, we can see that the overall structure of the book is comprised of a series of sevens and is shown in the Chart (W5.1).

The second Chart (W5.2) shows another helpful way of considering how the book is written. This imagines that the prophecy is rather like a closed telescope of seven portions, which gradually opens up as history progresses. (See also W 5.3).

More detailed charts of the book will be included later in the Course.

Importance of Understanding Signs and Symbols

It is very sad that the book is so misunderstood and often considered unknowable, even amongst religious people. It was however, given for the enlightenment of the friends and servants of the Lord Jesus (verse 2), so it is not surprising if it remains unintelligible to others. It is also true that the book deals with God’s plan for men and nations upon earth as already revealed in Scripture. If people approach the book with pre-determined ideas as to God’s plan, not based on Scripture, then the book will remain closed to them.

Some religious people take the things seen by the apostle John as literal. But ch.1:2 tells us unmistakably that it is a book of sign and symbol. How very interesting that John’s gospel record is also gathered around the eight signs of Jesus’ work. This approach is similar to that of the Lord Jesus in his consistent use of parables in teaching the people.

We must not be put off by the symbols. Many wonderful clues, both within Revelation and in the background of Scripture will help us to understand. These symbols are valuable because they help the meaning to be more vivid and memorable. We need to remember they are only symbols. John saw a drying river, 3 frogs, a 7 headed dragon. But there was no literal river or frogs or dragon - these were the signs of something else. If we carefully remember this, we shall not be bewildered but enlightened.

In all of these writings the principle of the Father in revealing His will is shown in Proverbs 25:2:

“It is the glory of God to conceal a thing: but the honour of kings is to search out a matter.”
An example of the use of symbols together with the interpretation is given in the first chapter v 12 - 20. John sees seven stars in the right hand of Jesus and seven golden candlesticks. What could John have meant? Actual stars in Jesus right hand? Why golden candlesticks?

The record does not leave us in doubt for long. Jesus tells him that the seven stars are the angels (or messengers) of the seven ecclesias and the seven candlesticks (or lampstands) are the seven ecclesias themselves.

*Is there anything difficult or mysterious about the use of such symbols?*

The idea of the body of believers shedding the light of truth through their message in the darkness of the world around them, is dwelt upon in the whole of scripture and especially the book of Psalms. It is exactly consistent with Jesus words in the Gospels :-

“Ye are the light of the world...Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works...” (Matt 5 v 14,16)

*To answer the question - No!* These symbols can be readily understood if we look to scripture to work out the meaning. When we find such symbols and signs used in our future studies, therefore, we shall use this ‘worked example’ for our guidance and examine first the background use in scripture.

In the particular case of the letters to the ecclesias, which we shall consider in greater detail later, many of them had lapsed and were no longer effectively continuing in this great work of witness by shedding the light abroad. To stir them up was one of the great purposes in writing the book.

**Why Bother?**

You might by now be thinking - “This all seems to be extremely complicated and I’ve never heard anything like it in my life before; why should I spend my time in trying to dig into such brain teasers?”  The Holy Spirit through John’s writings already preempts the question by a series of sublime encouragements.

1 v 3 encourages us that our time will not be wasted - there is a blessing for those who read and understand and the blessings are repeated 7 times throughout the book.

Another wording based on the original Greek meaning of the verse could be :

“Blessed is he that knows accurately, and they who give heed to the words of the prophecy, and observe narrowly the things which have been written in it.”

A Blessing pronounced upon the accurate study of its message  ch.1:3
A Blessing pronounced upon those who will be resurrected to help fulfill it  ch.14:13
A Blessing upon those who watch and walk in the light of its teaching  ch.16:15
A Blessing upon those who partake of the marriage supper of the Lamb  ch.19:9
A Blessing upon those who attain unto life eternal  ch.20:6
A Blessing upon those who keep the sayings of the book  ch.22:7
A Blessing upon those who keep the Lord’s Commandments  ch.22:14
The word *blessed* is from the Greek *makarios* and signifies to pronounce *happy*. It is used in relation to the Beatitudes.

“Blessed are the meek for they shall inherit the earth” (Matt.5 v 5)

The faithful are truly happy because they are enabled to look beyond their present sufferings, to the glory of the Kingdom of God. The Book of the Revelation sets forth that hope as a reality.

*Is there anything in this present life that can make us permanently “blessed?”*

The object of the book is to reopen and uncover the way in which men and women are to become blessed if they are faithful.

We have seen that the book also provides a warning and defence against the possibility of:

“worshipping the beast ...”

which if any man worship,

“the same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God ...” (Rev. 14:10).

But it gives instruction to the wise:

“which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image nor had received his mark upon their foreheads ... and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years” (Rev.20:5).

In view of the blessings and warnings contained in Revelation, the one thing we cannot afford to do - if we are wise – is to *ignore* it.
OLD TESTAMENT BACKGROUND

We have previously learned of the dream which King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon had in the time of the prophet Daniel. We concluded by a consideration of Daniel ch 2 & 7 that there was to arise a fourth wild beast in history, which is clearly the Roman empire.

This beast is to continue its existence as horns until thrones were cast down, and the Ancient of days did sit (Daniel 7:9) to give judgment against it and until its body is finally slain (vs.10,11; also 26,27). The Roman beast must continue in some form therefore, until the coming of the great judge, Jesus Christ (Acts 17:31). The implication of this is that as Jesus Christ has not yet come, and judgment has not yet been given to the saints (Dan.7:22), this dangerous power must still exist.

Having told us the meaning and significance of a particular symbol, the Scripture does not repeat the explanation every time that symbol is referred to. We have seen in Dan.7:19,20 that the beast with ten horns represents the fourth kingdom upon earth that is, the Roman empire. This helps us to recognize it when it appears again in the Book of Revelation - the crucial fact is that the foundation of the book of Revelation is to be found in the book of Daniel.

We shall follow the career of the ten-horned beast as it appears in several different forms - but it is always recognizable by these ten horns. So the Roman system is seen throughout the book of Revelation, yet at different stages of its career. This explains the good reason why it is not described in detail in Daniel – because it changes its appearance. We shall deal with the details in later sections but the chart (W6.1) shows the different forms in which the ten-horned beast continues right up until the coming of the Ancient of Days.

This helps us to understand what the book of Revelation is all about - it contains the continuing story of Daniel’s fourth, or Roman beast and outlines the career of this Roman beast system. It is as if a series of photographs were being taken as the beast grows up – first as an embryo, then as a child, a teenager, a young adult. As the person matures and grows old, there is a photograph in old age – it
bears little resemblance at first sight to the earlier ones – yet it is the same person. The Apostle John lived in the time of the Roman Empire and his prophecy ends when the system is overcome and destroyed by war between it and the Lamb and his followers. Thus history is spanned to beyond our own times.

Daniel wanted to know the full explanation of all that he had seen but was told that this would not be given until the time of the end, for the words would be closed up and sealed (Dan.12:9) This needs qualifying - the time of the end of what? It could mean the time of the end of all things - the end of Gentile times - but by then it would have lost the point; of which Jesus reminds us on several occasions:

“And now I have told you before it come to pass, that, when it is come to pass, ye might believe” (John 14:29)

i.e. it would be too late for the hearers to have time to develop their belief.

Jesus himself expected his listeners to be familiar with Daniel’s prophecies:

“When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (whoso readeth, let him understand:)” (Matt.24:15)

After AD 70, however, which was the “end of all things” so far as the Jewish world was concerned, we find the sealed scroll reappears in Jesus’ message to believers:

“And I saw in the right hand of him that sat on the throne a book written within and on the backside, sealed with seven seals” (Rev.5:1).

So we discover that this knowledge was going to remain sealed from Daniel’s days until the Revelation given to John - we see how the Bible interprets itself. At the time of the end of the Jewish dominions, after AD 70 - God’s time of the end had arrived. The sealed scroll is about to be opened at last. This is a wonderful tie-up of the OT & NT

The scroll is given to Jesus, as he has gained the authority to now at long last, unseal it.

Those things that were hidden from Daniel are now shown to us in symbol as Jesus unseals them.

Many of Daniel’s prophecies had been fulfilled - for some six hundred years after his time kingdoms had succeeded each other as predicted. Now the Lord Jesus Christ himself had been revealed and his victory opened up the means by which God’s purpose would be brought to a completion. The next stage in the Father’s plan could now be developed and we see this happening as the seals in Rev.ch.6 pick up the history of the times from this point as the scroll is unrolled.
SECTION 7

VISION OF THE MULTITUDINOUS CHRIST

Chapter 1

Introduction vs.4-9

In ch.1:4 John begins his message with a greeting to the seven ecclesias or churches in the Roman Province of Asia, comprising what is now known as Turkey and having Ephesus for its capital. Almighty God is shown as being manifested at that present time in the Lord Jesus (as is still the case), as having been proclaimed in the past to Moses through the angels (Ex.3:14) and as indicating a future when His glory will be revealed in a multitudinous company of the redeemed (Rev.3:12). The perfection of this glory is symbolised in “seven Spirits”. This does not indicate a quantity but rather quality, in the sense of perfection in wisdom, knowledge and power of the one Spirit (Eph.4:4). It is expressed as the seven eyes of Jesus (ch.5:6), and thus he who was slain is now a perfect manifestation of Almighty God, omniscient, all seeing and all powerful. This title is used of the Lord in his letter to Sardis (ch.3:1).

John gives glory and praise to their common Saviour and Lord (v.5,6) and looks forward to his return in power and glory (v.7). Jesus is seen to be the centre of God’s creation and plan of salvation (v.8). The terms Alpha and Omega are very apt as they are the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet of twenty four letters; Jesus is described as the “author and finisher of our faith” (Heb.12:2). God Himself has no beginning nor ending. But His manifestation in man began in the birth of Jesus. The ending will be when “death is swallowed up in victory” (1 Cor.15:54) and a multitude will then share the divine nature (2 Pet.1:4, Col.3:4). This is foreshadowed in Isaiah 41:4 where ‘first’ is singular and ‘last’ is plural. This title is used in the letter to Smyrna (ch.2:8). Some of these titles used of the Lord Jesus are also repeated in his letter to the ecclesia at Laodicea (ch.3:14).

The Vision

In verse 10 John says I was in the spirit on the Lord’s day - or as Weymouth says “In the spirit I found myself present on the day of the Lord”. His spiritual meditations on the glorious future were used by God as an opportunity of giving him a vision of that time and details of the intervening history.

What did John mean by the day of the Lord?

The Book of Revelation
This is referred to many times in Scripture eg Acts 17:31:

“he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained ...”.

which reminds us of the promise in Daniel 2:44:

“And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed ...”.

It is suggested therefore that this is a vision of the latter day kingdom.

In the visions which follow everything appears very real to John, being based upon the Temple in Jerusalem, which was very familiar to him, its courts, altars and furniture. For instance in the opening vision he sees golden candlesticks or lampstands. He then sees a glorious personage described as one like unto the Son of man (v.13)(see W7.1). This therefore cannot be of Jesus himself as the book of Revelation is in symbolic form of things “to come to pass.”

What is to come to pass which is like unto the Son of Man?

“12 For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: 13 Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ:” Eph 4

Hence the vision is of the glorified body of Christ after the Resurrection prepared for dominion and rulership with Jesus and not simply of Jesus alone - that is, Yahweh Elohim - He Who Will be Mighty Ones. This description of the son of man reminds us not only of his glory but of the fact that he is coming to judge the world and to the time when “the kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign for ever and ever”. (Rev.11:15). This is associated with a time when “nations are angry, and God’s wrath is come, and the time of the dead that they should be judged” (verse 18).

So the description in vs.14-16 of flaming eyes, glowing burnished feet and the two-edged sword which proceeds from his mouth are fitting accompaniments of One who is to reduce an unwilling and hostile world to His sway. The golden girdle and the whiteness of His head and hairs speak of righteousness and victory over evil - see Isaiah 11:4,5.

John was overcome by the majesty of this vision. Like Ezekiel and Daniel before him, who had received similar visions, he fell down as if dead. But he was strengthened and encouraged to write all he was to see on a scroll of parchment or papyrus - no doubt many copies were made as it circulated around the ecclesias.

Seven Stars and Candlesticks

This vision is designed to catch the imagination - it is vivid to elicit questions. The mystery is not so that it cannot be understood - it is going to be explained.

We have met this vision already in Section 5.

“seven golden candlesticks” stands for people who are burning the oil of God’s word and bringing light to those around. As Jesus says:-

“Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.” Matt.5:16.
A congregation of such people together is termed an ecclesia.

Verse 20 reveals and explains the seven stars as being the angels of the seven ecclesias, that is to say the inspired elderships of the ecclesias in those days who were ‘sent of God’ as the apostles were, for the work of preaching the gospel and edifying the ecclesias. We may remember the apostle Paul giving the young man Timothy this task in Ephesus some years earlier.

“The mystery of the seven stars which thou sawest in my right hand, and the seven golden candlesticks. The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches: and the seven candlesticks which thou sawest are the seven churches.” (v.20)

The point to notice here is that the meaning is not left to our imagination; we are not left to guess - we are told. We can take this as a guide as to how we should approach this book. Scripture claims to be the inspired word of God - how much more this book, which purports to be the last message from the Lord Jesus himself to his servants. So we shall be trying to see what is being shown to us and not trying to ‘read into’ the prophecy anything which our own human ‘wisdom’ might suggest.

Verses 12-16 of chapter 1 give a good example of how the imagery used reflects other parts of Scripture.

“And in the midst of the seven candlesticks one like unto the Son of man, (symbolic representation of the saints glorified with Christ - the Body with its Head Eph.4:13) clothed with a garment down to the foot, (a robe of righteousness to cover sin, Rev.19:8,14) and girt about the paps with a golden girdle. (a breast band as priests wore, truth & mercy as well as the eyes of fire Isa.66:11; gold signifiess tried faith 1 Pet.1:7)

His head and his hairs were white like wool, as white as snow; (the head of the body is Christ (Eph 4:13), and his saving work has washed it from sin Isa.1:18. The hair further represents the multitude at one with the head) and his eyes were as a flame of fire; (symbol of intelligence, flashing with anger Isa.30:27, used in letter to Thyatira ch.2:18)

And his feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace; (brass is flesh purified by fire Num.31:22, these feet then bring discipline to the nations Malachi 4:1-3, Rev.19:15, used in letter to Thyatira ch.2:18)

and his voice as the sound of many waters. (a multitude of people Rev.17:15, 14:2,3) and he had in his right hand seven stars: (stars are teachers Dan.12:3, so Spirit endowed elders Acts 14:23, used in letter to Ephesus ch.2:1 and Sardis ch.3:1)

and out of his mouth went a sharp twoedged sword: (the power and teaching of the Spirit Heb.4:12, used in letter to Pergamos ch.2:12,16) and his countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength” (the whole appearance as in the Transfiguration 2 Pet.1:16, 1 John 3:2).

We can compare many of the above thoughts with Daniel 7 which provides us with a symbolic picture of the saints in judgment (the faithful believers of all ages):

“I beheld till the thrones were cast down, and the Ancient of days did sit, whose garment was white as snow, and the hair of his head like the pure wool: his throne was like the fiery flame, and his wheels as burning fire.” (Dan.7:9)

“Until the Ancient of days came, and judgment was given to the saints of the most High; and the time came that the saints possessed the kingdom.” (Dan.7:22)
We can see other reflections in Daniel 10:5,6:

“They lifted up mine eyes, and looked, and behold a certain man clothed in linen, whose
loins were girded with fine gold of Uphaz; His body also was like the beryl, ad his face as the
appearance of lightning, and his eyes as lamps of fire, and his arms and his feet like in colour
to polished brass, and the voice of his words like the voice of a multitude.”

Why is the voice of this One described as being the sound of many waters? (v.15)
We may gain further understanding from Rev.14:2,3 where the same phrase is used:

“And I heard a voice from heaven, as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of a
great thunder: and I heard the voice of harpers harping with their harps: And they
sung as it were a new song before the throne, and before the four beasts, and the
elders: and no man could learn that song but the hundred and forty and four
thousand, which were redeemed from the earth.”

We can see that these are the words of the multitude of people redeemed from the earth.
We are thus introduced to the idea that the multitude of believers form the ‘body of Christ’ (Eph.4:13;
1 Cor.12:13). The apostle Paul says that Christ is the head of the ecclesia and as such he is the
saviour of the Body (Eph.5:23). So it is suggested that this symbolic vision of a being like unto the
Son of man stands for the multitude of the redeemed saints finally at one with their head – the Lord
Jesus Christ. The lamb of God has washed them from their sins through baptism and made them
white (Isa.1:16-18; Dan.7:9). The snow white wool of the head (v14) becomes the emblem of the
purity of the whole body in Christ:

“That he might present it to himself a glorious ecclesia, not having spot or wrinkle, or any
such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish” (Eph.5:27).

The symbolic vision shows the saints from all down through the ages, in glory with Jesus at their head, ready to
take and possess the kingdom. This vision can be conveniently referred to as the Multitudinous Christ.

The book shows that Jesus is not only alive in heaven, interested in his believers on earth and also having a
standard of perfection towards which he is actively leading them. The Letters to the Churches which follow, are
thus seen to be as it were, a comparison of actual saints in their lives with this ultimate benchmark standard.

Why are these things revealed? They are there to remind saints in all ages, that their Master is compassionately
watching over them and striving for their ultimate salvation, but that also they themselves have to overcome the
world.
NEW TESTAMENT WARNINGS OF APOSTACY

Acts 20:29,30

"For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them."

These words were spoken on the shore at Miletus, where Paul had hurriedly met with the elders of Ephesus and the occasion was a poignant one. The now elderly Paul was on his way to Jerusalem for the feast of Pentecost and then he planned to visit Rome and Spain - he did not expect ever to see Ephesus again.

He was anxious that they look after and feed the Ecclesia with sound teaching because he foresaw a time not far distant when it would be in danger. From among their own brethren would arise ones whose main motivation was human pride and envy in wanting a following. To achieve this, they would speak ‘perverse’ things - i.e. not the truth, but lies (Gk means - distort, turn aside from right path).

Paul thought this to be such a matter of vital importance that he had warned them unceasingly of it already - with tears - for the three years he had been with them!

A reasonable conclusion might be that he really thought truth versus error mattered.

What was his remedy? To direct their attention back to the Scriptures as the bedrock of truth.

“Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn everyone night and day with tears. And now brethren I commend you to God and to the word of his grace which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified.” (Acts 20 v 31,32)

Echoes of 2 Timothy 3:15-17?
"All Scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof... that the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works”.

Other warnings of the same expectation of developing error in the Christian church are found in Paul's later epistles:

1 Timothy 4:1

“Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils...”

2 Timothy 2:16-18

“But shun profane and vain babblings: for they will increase unto more ungodliness. And their word will eat as doth a canker; of whom is Hymenaeus and Philetus; Who concerning the truth have erred, saying that the resurrection is past already; and overthrow the faith of some.”

2 Timothy 4:3

“For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears;  And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables.”

Could words be any clearer? “...they shall turn away their ears from the truth” “...they will not endure sound doctrine.”

The true teaching of God’s word was going to be abandoned - it would be rejected in favour of ‘fables’, that is mythology. The Apostle John himself had similarly warned of the undermining of the truth which was already happening

2 John verse 7

“For many deceivers are entered into the world, who confess not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an antichrist.”

Deceit is a virulent mixture of truth and lies.

This had happened previously to God’s word to the Jews. By the time of Jesus they had changed and corrupted a large proportion of what God had given them, and indeed had added volumes of the teachings of the Rabbis to God's Law through Moses. The anger of Jesus was especially directed at those who had led the people astray; those 'blind leaders of the blind' (Matthew 15:14).

Because of this it is dangerous to look at Jewish thought and practice to discover what God had really wanted the Jews to be like.
Similarly, we must be careful in looking at modern Christianity and assuming it must have remained unchanged since the days the Apostles preached it. Indeed, we can see that the Apostles expected significant change.

The history of the development of the Christian Church is another subject. It is worth noting that probably few today, in these very different times, would claim to be teaching the unchanged original New Testament belief.
Introduction
The Brotherhood of Christians when John wrote was a relatively small community, persecuted by powerful foes. The glory and power of the risen Lord is emphasised in the opening vision to encourage them and there are many indications in this first chapter of the care of this majestic one for his people. The love of Jesus was not shown once for all in his sacrifice but continues throughout life. Here, in the midst of the ecclesias, is the Lord with power far greater than that of their adversaries and they will not be moved. He cares for them and watches over them. Even though they may have to suffer and die for his name, but:

“I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death” ch.1:18.

If they died, their Lord was able to release them from death and the grave at the appropriate time. Therefore John was to write to the seven ecclesias to tell them of this care and power, to show them their condition in the sight of their Lord and to watch events to come, so that they too might overcome and share his glory.

Background and Culture
The seven Ecclesias to which messages were sent, were situated in large towns in one of the most prosperous, populous and intellectually active of the Roman provinces (see map W9.1). In this area oriental, Greek, Jewish and Roman religions and cultures met. In Ephesus was centred the worship of the goddess Diana in the world-renowned temple, which involved ceremonial prostitution. The festivals were thronged by pilgrims from Asia and contributed greatly to the wealth of the city.

It has been observed that the age in which the New Testament was written was highly materialistic. Not only had the old Graeco-Roman religion failed but views of the cosmos provided by Greek science had been introduced.
“The new scientific world-view, which placed emphasis on transcendence, universal law and cosmic order, pushed religion into a phase of pessimism and despair. Scientists had given an important place to the stars and planets in their systems. Astrologers made capital of this by teaching that everything in this world - including the lot of humanity - was determined by astral powers indifferent to the individual ... and the particular constellation or conjunction of the stars or planets under which a person was born was of decisive importance - determined ‘the entire course of our lives, and ... nothing can enable us to escape’” (Professor Martin, *New Testament Foundations*, 2, 1968, pp.31-32).

It was therefore, a multiracial, materialistic society in which there was sexual licence, a conflict of science and religion and a concern with astrology. There are indeed many similarities between the first century and our own age. Believers today can be equally influenced by the spirit of the age in which they live.

**The Letters**
The seven Ecclesias are representative and not the only ones in the area. They were not perfect - true and false disciples mingled together. Some in the Ecclesia would hear and respond and others would not.

Each letter ends with the urgent appeal of the Lord Jesus:

> “He that hath an ear, let him hear what the spirit saith unto the ecclesias”.

Do we hear an echo of the emphatic comment at the end of much of Jesus’ teaching in the gospels? - “He that hath an ear, let him hear.”

This shows the messages, which are in the present tense, are relevant to his servants in all ages – including today!

This book of Revelation containing the letters is unique - it is the only communication from Jesus after he has been elevated to the right hand of God in heaven. In Rev.22:16 no time limit is suggested for their relevance:

> “I Jesus have sent mine angel to testify unto you these things in the ecclesias”.

In fact individual believers are ‘called out’ and together they constitute the Ecclesia of God. This is made up of local ecclesias in different places.

**General Structure**
The letters are beautifully constructed, not in a haphazard way but are complete, symmetrical and uniquely fitted to each Ecclesia.

1. Each is introduced by a different attribute of the Son of Man commencing with the opening vision which bears directly on the circumstances of the Ecclesia addressed. The symbols used are always in harmony with subjects referred to later in the prophecy, so the unity of the whole book is emphasised.
2. Each begins with the declaration that “I know thy works”.

3. Each contains commendation of the good characteristics of the believers - here Jesus is shown to be encouraging and caring, for he places these positive aspects first. These are followed by rebuke for the evil aspects in each ecclesia.

4. In each, great promises, which relate to the opening title of the Lord Jesus, are held out “to him that overcometh”.

5. Each ends with the gracious invitation “He that hath an ear let him hear what the spirit saith unto the Ecclesias.” This could also be said to be an emphatic command.

**Overall Message**
The overall message is “to overcome” as mentioned in each letter.
A clue to this is found in Rev.3:21 where Jesus himself said that he too overcame:

“To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne.”

**Overcome What?**
What is it that Jesus believes is such an obstacle which needs to be overcome?
John 16:33 tells us:

“These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world”

The same apostle John wrote of how to overcome the world in his first letter:

“For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith. Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?” (1 John 5:4,5).

The Greek word for world is ‘kosmos’ meaning - this arrangement of things, social, political, religious, the world, the environment (Strong no.2889).

John had already told the believers that all things in the world were to be avoided, all that the world appeals to in our weak human nature:

“Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and lust of the eye, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world.” (1 John 2:15-17).

Each Ecclesia had to overcome the world so conflict is anticipated. John explains that false prophets are part of this:

“Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world.” (1 John 4:1).
They are referred to in the Letters to the Ecclesias, for example the Nikolaitans and Balaamites. But each believer is encouraged to repent and go forward. Neither our problems nor our weaknesses are sufficient for us to give up. (See notes and analysis of letters W9.2, W9.3, W9.4).

**Is there any significance in the order in which the ecclesias are presented?**
The answer is yes, they are presented in the order in which a messenger from Patmos and landing at Ephesus would reach the seven ecclesias. We can see that there is therefore a timescale being indicated such that the last ecclesia has had the longest period of coping with the world and significantly enough, being the ecclesia at Laodicea, is the one which had most strayed from the Truth. Indeed it could be said that there is a general decline as we read through these letters.

This is an appropriate foretaste of the rest of the book itself, which shows a progressive departure from the truth of God as time proceeds. Thus people down through the ages are prepared in advance for what is going to happen. It forms one of the major warnings of the whole of the book of Revelation, which is one of decline in the Truth which is held, until the time comes when the Lord returns.

This is not a concept which is unexpected. The apostle Paul and John in their letters both warn of dangerous times of watering down of the Truth that would come. Paul whilst at this same ecclesia at Ephesus, personally warned them:

“For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them.” (Acts 20:29,30).

The letters show a progressive decline from true belief, which mirrors the growing apostacy of the ecclesia in the world. However, Jesus’ appeal is always to individuals to overcome their surroundings through faith and they will be rewarded when:

“The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever” (Rev.11:15).

**Are the Letters separate from the remainder of the Book?**
Many maintain they are. At first sight it might appear that the letters to the ecclesias form a separate part from the rest of Revelation. This cannot be the case as the last chapter of the book states that all of its contents are for the warning for the whole of the church:

“I Jesus have sent mine angel to testify unto you these things in the churches. I am the root and the offspring of David, and the bright and morning star” (Rev.22:16).

This then is a book for the believers in the church for all times, to keep them from the world outside:

“For without are dogs, and sorcerers, and whoremongers, and murderers, and idolaters, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie.” (v15).
Ephesus  Ch.2:1-7  Leading city in area. Jesus not only knows but walks among them and is able to influence them. It was even possible for the Spirit-endowed elders to fail their Lord. They were sound in doctrine and active but had ceased to be emotionally stimulated by the Word of God, had failed to grow in it and therefore the true sacrificial love was lacking (1 Cor.13). Nothing could compensate for the absence of this love. The ecclesia was prepared to recognise and act against error (see notes on Nicolaitans below) but had lost the spirit and love of the Truth in a positive sense and so the lampstand was not shining to glory of God. Jesus required a *patient continuance in well doing* (Rom.2:7) in works of faith (John 6:29; Eph.2:10; James 2:20). The Promise reminds us that Jesus is the only source of eternal life — all men are mortal and die; nature gives no hope of renewal of life for animal organisms. Tree of life in Eden links to Rev.22:17.

Smyrna  Ch.2: 8-11  Believers in danger from Synagogue of Satan (see notes below). The devil who would cast saints into prison was the civil authority (1 Pet.5:8,9, 2 Tim.4:16,18). The 10 days could refer to persecutions of Trajan AD98-117. Later Polycarp was burnt at the stake there in AD 155 because he would not call Caesar ‘Lord’ and sacrifice to his divinity. First mention of principle of “a day for a year” (as in Num.14, Eze.4 - see Section 1) Crown of life for faithful promised – links to gold crowns of the 24 elders in Rev.4: 4. The promise of safety from the second death is linked to the title of Christ as he that is now alive from the dead.

Pergamos  Ch.2: 12-17  Headquarters of Roman government in Asia in John’s time. Had been great centre of old Babylonian sorcery and idolatry. Antipas means *against all* - a fit symbol of Christ’s witnesses against the world (see notes on Balaamites & Nicolaitans below). The warning shows Christ will judge and kill at his return. The Promise reminds us of John 6:63. A pot of manna was hidden in the Ark with the Law (Ex.16:33). The white stone marked acquittal in a judicial trial and also of victory in the Games. Symbolises favourable verdict to join the Holy City and bear the new name as borne in the foreheads of the victorious 144,000 who have overcome the influences of the world (Rev.14:2).

Thyatira  Ch.2: 18-29  Symbol of Jezebel based on wife of King Ahab (1 Kings 16:31). She led Israel astray into Baal worship and was renowned for whoredoms (2 Kings 9:22). Ecclesia tolerated this teacher and let her paganise the Truth (Jude 4,Titus 1:10). Philosophical corruptions of the Truth lead to spiritual fornication. The fate of such spiritual whores is shown in Rev.17:10. The depths of Satan were speculations as of Hymenaeus and Philetus etc. (2 Tim.2:17; 1 John 4:1) whose teaching Paul said would *eat as doth a canker* (2 Tim.2:27). The Promise is amplified in Rev.19:14,15 where we see the saints sharing in the Lamb’s future work in the world to smite and rule the nations.
Sardis  
Ch.3:1-6

Christ was *all-seeing* and knew the ecclesia was spiritually *dead* yet still cared for the few - it was possible to remain faithful and please him by *perfect works*. The warning that he will come as a thief echoes Luke 21:35 and is repeated in Rev.16:15. Believers put on Christ as a robe of righteousness in baptism, by which they are purged from their sins. If they walk in disobedience and uncleanness they defile their garments (Jude 23). The Promise is confirmed in Rev.7:9; 19:8,14 where the redeemed and the Bride wear white robes as they appear with Christ in glory (Col.3:3). The rest are to be *blotted out* - a terrible end but irreconcilable with ideas of hell as an eternity of conscious suffering.

Philadelphia  
Ch.3:7-13

Jesus is *holy* (Gk. *hagion* same as *saint* in ch.5:8; 8:3 etc) and thus separate from sinners as he manifests God (Isa.1:4; 43:3). *Key of David* taken from Isa.22:22 - thus Jesus directly associates himself with the throne and kingdom to be set up. The *open door* is for preaching about this gospel of the kingdom which was effectively denied by the teachings of the Synagogue of Satan (see notes below). Christ is able to protect faithful bre & sis - encouragement based on history of Hezekiah (2 Kings 18). Symbolical rewards are of an immortal place in the spiritual Temple City of the *Bride, the Lamb's wife* (Rev.21:9). The new name contrasts with that impressed on the foreheads of the worshippers of the Beast (Rev.13:16).

Laodicea  
Ch.3:14-22

Ecclesia in desperate condition. Christ introduces himself as in Rev.1:5,18 by contrast to their unfaithfulness and false witness of him. They were self-satisfied with their piety and wealthy with no awareness of need – they therefore had no zeal as he had shown (John 2:17). He shows amazing patience with such self-deception. If they could open the eyes of their understanding, they would begin to contend earnestly for the faith, to be zealous (Greek *zeloo* - to have warmth of feeling, from *zeo* - to be hot) and would change or repent. This would bring tribulation from the world without and from the lusts of the flesh within - but would result in the gold of a tried faith - the fruit of zeal. The Promise to feast with them (John 14:21) is the opposite of v.16 where Christ can only spue them out of his mouth. The most frequently quoted Old Testament passage, Psalm 110, underlies the promise to share his throne (Heb.8:1).

Notes

Nicolaitans - Ephesus & Pergamos - not easy to find specific details of actual deeds which Jesus hated. Greek meaning *victory over the people* Strong 3531. More than just corrupters of the Truth, deeds a special feature. Paul had warned in letter to Ephesians of two problems - Judaism, which taught *justification by works* and Gentile Philosophy, such as the Epicureans who condoned *indulgence in fleshly desires*. Early sects mention Nicolaus who taught a doctrine of the *community of wives* among Christians. If such a doctrine and sect existed in ecclesias can see such promiscuous intercourse of the sexes would powerfully demoralize and disrupt ecclesias and corrupt individuals. This is merely a copying of the evil practices prevalent in society around them, which has been a major cause of error down through the centuries.

Synagogue of Satan - Smyrna, Sardis & Philadelphia - literally a *congregation of the adversary*. Symbolic of false professors of Christianity - claimed to be Jews by adoption, to be Abraham’s seed of faith in
re-establishment of David’s throne. However, the true Hope of Israel centred on resurrection at Christ’s return to be part of this kingdom (Acts 28:20) rather than present power or wealth. A false claim meant blasphemy.

**Balaamites** - Pergamos - Balaam deliberately led Israel into immorality and idol worship and became a traitor for the rewards of the world (Num.22:17,37; 2 Pet.2:14) - symbolic name for would-be leaders who seek a following & have the *lusts of the world* eg Diotrephes (3 John 9). The corrupting influence of such false teachers *wasted the people* as Balaam means.

**The seven ecclesias show a process of deterioration. It is a first century example of future decline over centuries as demoralizing influences already at work found complete development as pagan beliefs and practices were brought in and the simplicity of the gospel was lost**

- **Ephesus** Hated the philosophy of the Nicolaitanes and contended with false teachers, but left their first love.
- **Smyrna** Were persecuted by false ‘Jews’ who were called the Synagogue of Satan.
- **Pergamos** City was the headquarters of the Satan and so the doctrine of the Nicolaitans had crept in, together with the doctrine of Balaam derived from it.
- **Thyatira** The Jezebel class of people taught and encouraged the doctrine of Balaam, designed to corrupt and eventually destroy the Truth.
- **Sardis** Jezebel had been so successful that there were only a few names which had not defiled their garments.
- **Philadelphia** The faithful tried to keep separate from the Synagogue of Satan, but only the coming of Christ could heal the damage.
- **Laodicea** Shows the end process which *changed the truth of God into a lie* (Rom.1:25) - the final result of apostacy and failure to contend against error. Christ saw none to encourage without a fundamental change of heart.
## LETTERS TO THE ECCLESIAE - REVELATION 2 & 3

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>He that holdeth the seven stars in his right hand, who walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks.</td>
<td>The First and the Last, which was dead, and is alive.</td>
<td>He which hath the sharp sword with two edges.</td>
<td>The Son of God who hath his eyes like unto a flame of fire, and his feet are like fine brass.</td>
<td>He that hath the seven Spirits of God, and the seven stars.</td>
<td>He that is holy, he that is true, he that hath the key of David, he that openeth and no man shutteth; and shutteth, and no man openeth.</td>
<td>The Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>TITLE: “These Things Saith ...”</strong></td>
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<td><strong>APPROVAL: “I Know thy Works ...”</strong></td>
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<td>... and thy labour, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil; and thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars: And hast borne ... and laboured not fainted. ... Thou hastest the deeds of the Nicolaitans.</td>
<td>... and where thou dwellest, even where Satan’s seat is: and thou holdest fast my name, and hast not denied my faith, even in those days wherein Antipas was my faithful martyr, who was slain among you, where Satan dwelleth.</td>
<td>... and thy charity, and service, and faith, and thy patience, and thy works; and the last to be more than the first.</td>
<td>Thou hast a few names even in Sardis which have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with me in white: for they are worthy.</td>
<td>... behold, I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it: for thou hast a little strength, and hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name.</td>
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<td><strong>DISAPPROVAL:</strong></td>
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<td>Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love.</td>
<td>... and where thou dwellest, even where Satan’s seat is: and thou holdest fast my name, and hast not denied my faith, even in those days wherein Antipas was my faithful martyr, who was slain among you, where Satan dwelleth.</td>
<td>Thou hast there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam ... to eat things sacrificed unto idols and to commit fornication. So hast thou also them that hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, which thing I hate.</td>
<td>Thou sufferest that woman Jezebel which calleth herself a prophetess to teach and to seduce my servants to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed unto idols.</td>
<td>Thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead.</td>
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<td><strong>WARNING:</strong></td>
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<td>Remember therefore from whence thou art, and后悔 from thee quickly and</td>
<td>I will cast her into a bed ... I will kill her</td>
<td>If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come on Behold, I come quickly: hold fast that which</td>
<td>I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire,</td>
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The Book of Revelation
Learn to Read the Bible Effectively

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<tr>
<th>fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place.</th>
<th>ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.</th>
<th>will fight against them with the sword of my mouth.</th>
<th>children with death. To the rest who have not this doctrine hold fast till I come.</th>
<th>thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee.</th>
<th>thou hast, that no man take thy crown.</th>
<th>… white raiment, … and eye salve. As many as I love I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent.</th>
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<tr>
<td>will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God.</td>
<td>… shall not be hurt of the second death.</td>
<td>… will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it.</td>
<td>… will I give power over the nations; and he shall rule them with a rod of iron; as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken … and I will give him the morning star.</td>
<td>… shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father and before His angels.</td>
<td>… will I make a pillar in the temple of my God and he shall go no more out: and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God … which is New Jerusalem.</td>
<td>… will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne.</td>
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ENCOURAGING PROMISE: “To Him That Overcometh ...”
Scripture and in particular Revelation uses the word Heaven in a number of ways and a grasp of this fact is essential in order to come to any meaningful understanding of the book.

We may summarise these approaches under four main headings and expand them as follows:

1. Reference is made to the created heavens
2. On occasions Heavens is used symbolically to describe the rulers in power on the earth.
3. Revelation use of ’Heaven’ / ’Heavens’
4. Heaven also refers to the place where God the Creator dwells.
5. Heavens or the heavenlies sometimes refers to the dwelling place now of God’s people.

1 Scriptural references to the created heavens
which God made, as for example:

“In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth ....” (Gen 1:1)

This is confirmed in many places in Scripture. A good example is Job 38 where the mighty creative power of God is described and also the fact that he continues to be intimately involved with His creation to control the elements and sustain all the creatures.

2 Scriptural use of heavens as referring to ruling powers of the earth

In considering the above, we are reminded that in the Old Testament the most important heavens were concerned with God’s people, the nation of Israel which was formed under their leader Moses.

“Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth: for the LORD hath spoken, I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me .... Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider. Ah sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity ... they have forsaken the LORD ...” (Isa.1:2-4).

The physical heavens and earth have no ears. The appeal of the prophet in the context of the chapter, is to God’s people, rulers and subjects alike who had disobeyed the laws and commands of God.
So they could be called *Israelitish* heavens (or Mosaic) because the Jewish Kingdom and their rulers was in control. One could say that these heavens ended in AD 70 when the Romans overthrew Jerusalem and scattered the Jews and Rome assumed control.

Other nations during Old Testament times had their own ruling powers, so we can read of:
- the Idumean heavens in Isaiah 34:4-10
- the Egyptian heaven in Ezekiel 32:7,8
- the Babylonian heaven in Isaiah 14:4,12

Luke describes the time following AD 70 as the *times of the Gentiles* (Luke 21:24) so they are the Gentile heavens and all current nations are encompassed in this heading.

So if we can see that heavens may be applied to present rulership then we can probably find what scripture means in the following:

“For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth ... for, behold, I create Jerusalem a rejoicing, and her people a joy” (Isa.65:17,18)

“Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness” (2 Pet. 3:13)

We interpret these new heavens as being an entirely new means of rulership. If heavens refers to the rulers and Kings, then we could suggest that earth refers to the mass of the people who are the subjects. If this is accepted than this passage refers to a new rulership of the earth and a general populace motivated in a totally different way from the present.

**To what time then could these new heavens refer?**

Scripture tells us that the old heavens are to pass away

“But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up” (2 Pet.3:10).

**An aside**

Sometimes people read this passage liturally instead of figuratively and then conclude that the physical earth itself is to be burnt up. But scripture assures us that this is not the case. God has a great purpose with the physical earth and people who will glorify Him by living according to His precepts:

“For the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea” (Habakkuk 2:14)

**Returning to the new heavens:**

When are these new heavens to come about? When are the old patterns of oppressive rulership to be removed from the earth and the knowledge of the God’s glory to replace man’s thinking? This is to happen in the day of the Lord (2 Pet.3:10 above) that is, at the return of the Lord Jesus Christ who is to become world King and reign from Jerusalem (Acts 1:11).
This approach to scriptural symbols and figures of heaven and earth is not new. It was certainly advocated by Sir Isaac Newton in 1733:

“For understanding the Prophecies, we are, in the first place, to acquaint ourselves with the figurative language of the Prophets. This language is taken from the analogy between the world natural and an empire or kingdom considered as a world politic. Accordingly, the whole world natural consisting of heaven and earth, signifies the whole world politic, consisting of thrones and people ... For the heavens, and the things therein, signify thrones and dignities, and those who enjoy them ...”

(Observations upon the Prophecies of Daniel and The Apocalypse).

3 Revelation use of the word ‘Heaven’/ ‘Heavens’

Heaven is referred to over 50 times in the Book and in the majority of cases it is again applied symbolically to the political heavens though in unfamiliar situations. As we have already noted, the Scriptures generally refer to two kinds of political heavens - the Israelitish and the Gentile.

As far as Revelation is concerned, John was told the prophecy was to do with the ‘hereafter’ ch.4:1 (i.e. after his time) so it cannot be the Old Testament Israelitish heaven to which it refers.

Examples of great upheavals in the rulership of the Roman world as predicted by Revelation:

- the heavens depart ch.6:14
- a woman gives birth to a son in heaven ch.12:1
- war flares out between Michael and the dragon in heaven ch.12:7
- a temple is seen in heaven ch.14:17 (compare Acts 17:24)
- armies march to war in heaven ch.19:11,14
- the heavens flee away ch.20:11

It is suggested if we fail to appreciate the symbolic use of the word heavens in such references as those above, that we shall come to irreconcilable conclusions regarding the true meaning.

Chapter 11 actually uses the language of the death, resurrection and ascension of the Lord Jesus and applies it to people described as Two Witnesses:

“And after three days and a half the Spirit of life from God entered into them, and they stood upon their feet; and great fear fell upon them which saw them.

And they heard a great voice from heaven saying unto them, Come up hither. And they ascended up to heaven in a cloud: and their enemies beheld them.” (Rev 11 v 11,12)

From the rest of Scripture, such as 1 Cor. 15:23 we know this cannot be a literal ascension to heaven where God dwells, for these people. By understanding heaven as the ruling political sphere, however, these puzzling verses can be explained and we are not faced with enemies being able to see into the very presence of God. We shall consider more of this when we come to a later section.
4 **Heaven as referring to the dwelling place of God the Creator**

A realisation of the symbolic use of this word helps us not to confuse the above symbolic political visions of heaven with the **actual heaven where God dwells**. The Lord Jesus Christ tells us in his prayer that this is where God’s will is done. As we know from John 3:13:

> “And no man hath ascended up to heaven...”

not even David:

> “For David is not ascended into the heavens...” Acts 2:34

But the exception is the Lord Jesus Christ after his resurrection:

Jesus ...“shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven...” Acts 1:11

> “The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool.”

Psalm 110:1 and quoted by the apostle Peter in Acts 2:34,35.

Jesus is only in heaven at God’s right hand until:

> “And he shall send Jesus Christ ... Whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things...” Acts 3:21

5 **Heaven or heavenlies as referring to the dwelling place now of God’s people.**

**The Present ‘Heavenlies’**

The obedient follower of Christ does not inhabit the present political heavens - is not to be part of the ruling powers of the earth. Jesus himself said, “My Kingdom is not of this world”. Its source and authority is not to be derived from the present ‘heavens’.

Scripture pictures Jesus in heaven now, as already in authority over his friends, who are to be the rulers of his future Kingdom. The call of the gospel is to ascend now into “the heavenlies in Christ”. This means to voluntarily be subject to his dominion and become “in Christ” by repentance, confession and baptism into his name.

> “For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ”. (Gal 3 v 27)

> “Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son” (Col. 1:13)

> “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenlies in Christ” (Ephesians 1:3).

> “Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together, and made us sit together in heavenlies in Christ Jesus” (Eph. 2:5,6).
These believers, with their new allegiance, are spoken of as waging a war of doctrine and principles against the wicked Gentile “heavenlies”:

“To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God” (Eph.3:10).

“For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.” (Eph.6:12).

This is in anticipation of the time when the saints shall eject wicked rulers from their seats of power to assume power over the nations as king-priests with Christ:

“...for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God ... And hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth.” (Rev.5:9,10).

**Earth**

In Scripture ‘earth’ represents the common people:

“The earth also was corrupt before God, and the earth was filled with violence” (Gen.6:11).

It is plainly the people living on the earth who were violent. This is confirmed in the next quotation. Note that features of the earth such as grass are expected to respond and praise God - they are again obviously people:

“Give ear, O ye heavens, and I will speak; and hear O earth, the words of my mouth. My doctrine shall drop as the rain, my speech shall distil as the dew ... as the showers upon the grass: Because I will publish the name of the LORD: ascribe ye greatness unto our God.” (Deut. 32:1)

Isaiah writes in the same way of the Jewish people:

“Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth: for the LORD hath spoken, I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me .... Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider. Ah sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity ... they have forsaken the LORD ...” (Isa.1:2-4).

The final picture of renewal is expressed by the same prophet:

“For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth ... for, behold, I create Jerusalem a rejoicing, and her people a joy” (Isa.65:17,18).

This is explained more fully in a wonderful passage in Isaiah 66:18-23 detailing the future Kingdom of God to which the book of Revelation looks. Here the Lord confirms His everlasting and unchanging purpose with His people of Israel:

“For as the new heavens and the new earth, which I will make, shall remain before me, saith the LORD, so shall your seed and your name remain” (Isa.66:22).
Earthquakes

It can therefore be readily seen that when Scripture speaks of an earthquake it can indicate a great physical event but also on occasions may refer to a great social upheaval among the people. Sometimes in the media around us we hear such upheavals called ‘political earthquakes’.

It has been noted that sometimes a physical earthquake will take place before a political one. An example of this is the one prophesied by Zechariah in ch 14 on the Mount of Olives - this will usher in the period when there will be one King over all the earth (verse 9).

Revelation introduces four earthquakes which come in the category of: great social upheavals among the people:

1. ch.6:12  - AD 312-324 when Paganism was overthrown
2. ch.8:5   - when Julian tried to overthrow Christianity
3. ch.11:13 - AD 1789-95 The French Revolution
4. ch.16:18 - still future, in which ‘the kingdoms of this world’ are all finally overthrown to make room for the Kingdom of God.
We will remember from our studies in Daniel’s prophecy that the empire of Greece was to be superseded by a development from itself which would be the fourth and last great kingdom. History shows this to have been Rome and the details of its origins are interesting indeed and remarkably true to the prophetic details.

As God’s Kingdom of Israel began to wane, Italy emerged into the light of history about 700 BC and was already inhabited by various people of different cultures and languages.

The earliest settlement of Rome itself in the 10th or 9th century BC consisted of a simple village of thatched huts on one of the seven hills eventually occupied by the city of Rome. Expansion into the valley followed around 670 BC and the town was called Forum Romanum. Transformation into a real city with its own temple and vigorous trade and culture soon emerged influenced by the higher civilizations surrounding it.

**Summary of Systems of Roman Rule**

The *Revelation* gives significant detail of the systems of rule over Rome so this aspect of history is particularly worth noting. Between 753 BC, reckoned as the founding of Rome, and 509 BC seven Kings reigned called the *Regal* system. There followed a Republic, so that between 509 BC and 264 BC four different systems of government ensued: *Consular* (11 years), *Dictatorial* (15 years), *Decemviral* and *Tribunitial*.

Eventually, in 45 BC Julius Caesar became the first Emperor and the sixth - the *Imperial* system, ensued (see W11.1). After the assassination of Julius Caesar, his nephew Octavius was accepted in 27 BC with the title of Augustus. Early in his reign he carried out a survey of his imperial resources which included a census of the population. This figures in the account of the birth of Jesus Christ and the enrollment which caused Joseph and Mary to travel to Bethlehem. (Luke 2:1-3 RV). By AD 200 the emperor had become the key figure and he stood forth to the whole Roman world as the single centre and source of political power and action with sovereignty civil as well as military. Although
the early rulers disguised their supremacy by making the senate the instrument of their more cruel or arbitrary acts despotism gradually became recognized as the governing principle of the Roman empire. War and military glory became parts of the Roman aristocratic ethos and hence of Roman political life.

After AD 250 the empire began a decline which continued for over 200 years until AD 473 when Rome itself was lost to the attacking Goths and the seventh system, Gothic rule, overtook the western empire for a period. There were ten Gothic kings in the west which ruled only for a short time until AD 553 when Justinian the Emperor in the east extended Roman rule over the whole of the empire again so the sixth system - the Imperial reasserted itself.

**Glory of the Empire**

At the zenith of the Empire from AD 200 onwards, piracy had been eliminated on the Mediterranean coasts and no quarrels of race or religion disturbed the calm, for all national distinctions were becoming merged in the idea of a common empire as the various peoples were steadily being assimilated. The philosophy of the times and Stoicism, with its doctrine of a universal system of nature, aided this general assimilation. The emperor Caracalla extended to all natives of the Roman world the rights of Roman citizenship. Only the Jew cherished a national feeling and was kept apart by his religion, but the Jewish people was already dispersed over the world.

Rome remained the undisputed capital, though rarely were her senate and people permitted to choose the sovereign or influence his policy. Her laws and language overspread the world, she was the head of the Empire and of civilisation, and in riches, fame and splendour far outshone other cities of the times and those before it.

**Decline after AD 250 - Fourfold Division**

Such unity was to be short-lived as other influences threatened it. New foes assailed the frontiers and long struggles for power followed the death of each successive emperor. After AD 253, the Western half of the empire began to break up into separate kingdoms ruled by army generals. Diocletian (AD 284-303) skillfully divided up the supreme power among four joint-emperors ruling in four capitals, namely Italy, Gaul, Illyricum and the East (see Quadrupartite map W11.2). These took account of the geographical obstacles in these areas. As time went on more layers of officials were created, taxation grew heavier, agriculture withered, serfdom spread and there were difficulties in raising and paying native troops.

**Constantine and Threefold Division**

In AD 311 Constantine, on the death of his father Constantius, became Emperor in the West of one of these four divisions.

The battle of Milvian Bridge in AD 312 saw a significant change take place in the fragmenting Empire. The ruler of Italy - Maxentius - was defeated by Constantine, resulting now in a threefold division which is highly significant when we consider the Revelation.
1. Constantine ruled in Rome over the Western Empire, which had previously been two divisions.

2. Licinius ruled in Illyricum

3. Maximin ruled the East - Asia Minor, Syria and Egypt.

It is amazing to see how precisely the book of Revelation predicts these developments - having already mentioned the fourth part, it now refers to happenings in a third part of the earth, as we shall see when we consider the seals in chapter 6.

The distinction between these three divisions was intensified by the spread of Christianity (see Tripartite map W11.3).

- As time went on Latin civilisation indelibly stamped itself on all the Western empire and these remained Roman Catholic. The political organization became a model for the ecclesiastical, with the result that church and state rendered each other mutual aid, the balance of power being generally in the hands of the educated ecclesiastics.

- In the east Hellenic (Greek) civilisation held sway in Greece, the Aegean islands, and the coastal districts of Asia Minor. The state remained supreme and used the church for its own ends. The Greek Orthodox church was philosophical, rather than military in character, a fact which led to the rise of numerous ‘heresies’ and they were Arians rather than Trinitarians.

- In the remainder of the Eastern empire, the Hellenised east (Greek) had a veneer of religion which in the course of time was overrun by the Saracens.

**Constantine Emperor over Western Third AD 312**

The Imperial nationality now began to be supported by a new and vigorous power. Although previous emperors had opposed Christianity and often tried to destroy it, this faith had benefited from the unity of the Empire and ease of travel, and had spread widely. Persecution had assisted this spread and given it martyr-heroes and a history. Now the new Emperor Constantine decided to utilize this commitment and enthusiasm by supporting the Christians who hitherto had been oppressed by the largely pagan empire.

“When Constantine, partly perhaps from a genuine moral sympathy, yet doubtless also in the well-grounded belief that he had more to gain from the zealous support of its professors than he could lose by the aversion of those who still cultivated a languid paganism, extended toleration to Christianity and ultimately embraced it himself, it was already a great political force, able, and not more able than willing, to repay him by aid and submission.” (Bryce, The Holy Roman Empire, p.9.)

This passage will attain greater significance when we come to Revelation ch.12 and consider the stage at which church and state became allied.
The Christian community had previously evolved a governing body of its own. Sacraments and the newly appointed priests were becoming more powerful and thus removed from the majority of the Christian people. When suddenly called from danger and persecution to the seat of power and instated to powerful positions in government by the new Emperor Constantine, the church continued to frame her government upon the model of the secular administration of the empire. The primitive freedom and diversity of local churches was finally overcome by the idea of one Visible Catholic Church, uniform in faith and ritual, and in relation to the civil power of the empire. This produced a remarkable upheaval which is pictured in Revelation as an earthquake.

**Constantine Sole Emperor AD 324**

Constantine subsequently overcame the remaining two rulers of the empire, Licinius and Maximin and so became the first sole ‘Christian’ Emperor over a now reunited empire. Having espoused Christianity and the Christians as he did, he became not only the emperor but also head of an invigorated church with loyal adherents.

Previous pagan emperors had exercised the presumptive right to intermeddle in religious affairs, derived from the office of Pontifex Maximus (high priest), and now the clergy were well pleased to see him preside in General Councils, and issue edicts against heresy. The first of these was at Nicaea in AD 325, where the doctrine of the Trinity was expounded in the Nicene Creed, thus condemning Arian believers. The Church grew stronger and developed great power of opinion but demanded a system which was more rigid in doctrine and organisation. It was vital to have a visible body of worshippers united by participation in the same sacraments to maintain the feeling of a single Roman people throughout the world. Christianity as well as civilization became identified with the Roman Empire. To be a Roman was to be a Christian; and soon the converse was also true.

**A new capital**

In AD 326-8 Constantine decided to remove the imperial residence and government from Rome to the ancient Greek colony of Byzantium and renamed it Constantinople or New Rome. He thought he would be in a more strategic position from which to rule the world. In fact, this accelerated the separation of East and West. Yet although the imperial sway now ceased to be connected with the city which had created it, the idea of Roman monarchy became more universal and unassailable. In AD 395, though the seat of the Western government was removed first to Milan and then to Ravenna, neither event destroyed Rome’s prestige. All subjects alike, the Syrian, the Briton, the Spaniard still called himself a Roman.

Much later in history, when it was realised that Constantinople was going to fall under the Turks, the capital was moved to Moscow, which was called the Third Rome.

**Decline and Fall**

The Roman empire, so recently united under Constantine, now began the process of decline leading to its fall.
The overthrow of the empire occurred in three phases:-

- **In the Fifth Century** the **Western Empire** was overthrown by the barbarian tribes notably through four great leaders:
  
  - Alaric and the Goths,
  
  - Genseric and the Vandals,
  
  - Attila and the Huns
  
  - and finally the victory of Odoacer and the Goths in AD 476. This led to the establishment of Gothic rule for a period until the emperor in Constantinople – Justinian - overthrew the Goths and reasserted *Imperial* rule again.

- **In the Seventh Century** the **Hellinized east** of the old empire was overcome by the Saracens followers of Mahomet. who established in its place a political system, essentially religious in character.

- **In the Fifteenth Century** the **eastern empire** with its centre in Constantinople collapsed before the inroads of the Turks.

**What Caused the Decay of the West?**

The history is very complicated and beyond the scope of our study. Suffice it to say, however, that to the north of the empire lay barbarian tribes, little affected by Roman art and culture. Commerce, however, was brisk. Adventurous barbarians infiltrated the province, sometime to admire and oftener to take service under the Roman flag. Gradually barbarian mercenaries came to form the largest and most efficient part of the Roman armies. By AD 400 a Roman soldier was an exception. A principle of the Empire was that neither birth nor race should exclude. The barbarians felt themselves members of the Roman State, even though they often remained leaders of their own tribes.

**Rome the Eternal City**

There were especially two ideas which fed the admiration of the barbarians. The one was the belief that as the dominion of Rome was universal, so must it be eternal. Nothing like it had been seen before and it seemed destined to last for ever. From the end of the republican period her poets, her orators, her jurists, ceased not to repeat the claim of world-dominion and confidently predict its eternity. As the Empire itself decayed, the Church grew stronger and prepared to fill her place and govern in her name and so continue the notion of a universal and unending state.
The second idea was the association of such a state with its absolute head, the Emperor. The right of legislation had become vested in him alone, his domestic council was the supreme court of appeal. In the confused multiplicity of mythologies, the worship of the Emperor was the only worship common to the whole Roman world. Under the new religion the form of adoration vanished, the sentiment of reverence remained. He continued to control the Church as well as the State and was thus essential to the new conception of a world-wide Christian monarchy.

The historian Bryce comments:

“They consider that the men of the fifth century, clinging to preconceived ideas, and filled with the belief drawn from Jewish prophecy, that the great Fourth Kingdom was to last till the end of the world, refused to believe in that dissolution of the Empire which they saw with their own eyes. Because it could not die, it lived.” (Bryce J V, The Holy Roman Empire, Edn.1904, p.23)

It all happened very slowly and Rome itself still struck all peoples with awe. Eventually, however, the Western empire became weakened and succumbed to the waves of attack. By AD 476 the empire of the West was brought to an end by the triumph of Odoacer, king of the Heruli, who defeated and deposed the emperor in Rome, Romulus Augustulus, and the Imperial regalia was sent to the emperor at Constantinople. After only fourteen years, however, Odoacer was overthrown by Theodoric, King of the Ostrogoths (AD 493-526) and for a relatively short time, the seventh system of rule was imposed by the Gothic Kings. The Eastern emperor in Constantinople endorsed the Gothic success and returned the regalia to Rome. Fletcher comments in The Making of Western Europe, p.110:

“In his later years the Ostrogothic king appears almost as an Emperor of the West”

These developments hastened the growth of a Latin as opposed to Greek and Oriental forms of Christianity and opened the way for the Popes in Rome, who grew in power and prestige. By AD 520 the Roman Empire of the west had entirely disappeared (see map W11.4) and all observers thought the ‘eternal city’ had sustained a deadly wound. But it re-emerged! We shall continue the story in Section 13. The map shows that the empire began to take on a European look. It also shows the tribes round the northern edge of the empire - they were moving down from the Russian steppes searching for pasture. Gradually as the empire crumbled, they came in and as we have seen, in AD 476 they took over Rome itself. We will see later on how the book of Revelation dovetails into this history.
This chapter gives us an inspiring vision of the redeemed saints rejoicing in the triumph of the Lamb and extolling his virtues to the assembled multitudes. One writer has described it thus:

“The picture is a very gorgeous one. It is a picture of over-powering loveliness, symbolic though it be. Nothing more sublime and beautiful could be conceived than the brilliant scene that burst upon his view. A human figure, of dazzling brightness, sits on a shining throne, over-arched by a rainbow of glowing colours. Before the throne, stretching away on all sides, an outspread ocean of glassy splendour and crystalline translucency, on which are grouped before the throne strange but glorious objects; four curiously-formed living creatures glistening all over with eyes, and twenty-four venerable men wearing crowns. Surrounding them on all sides is a countless multitude of the angelic host, forming an outer fringe of glory. (Robert Roberts, Thirteen Lectures on the Apocalypse).

It is not difficult to realise that this is a kingly picture in view of the “throne”. We can see that it is a divine throne by the “seven lamps” burning before it to symbolise the Spirit of God, as explained in verse 5. The occupant of the throne is proclaimed “creator”, for whose pleasure all things have been created (v11). We may well then conclude that the kingdom of God is here symbolised.

Why is this vision so soon?
Some who think the book is strictly chronological, find a difficulty here. We have only reached ch 4 and yet the final kingdom of God appears to be here! The answer is that the vision is one of many snapshot visions which are interspersed throughout the book. We know from the Letters to the Ecclesias that some believers were suffering persecution, so these visions are given to encourage them.

As we read we need to watch out for such end scenes - we shall usually find that the words which occur after them are in fact events which are to lead up to them.

This new vision introduced to John concerns the hereafter. As was discussed in the clue about the word ‘heaven’, God has promised a new administration for the earth (2 Peter 3:13, Isaiah 66:17-19)
and this is suggested by the fact that the throne is in “heaven”. This administration will be expanded over all peoples, nations and languages and will comprise the government on earth by which they are regulated and controlled. (Dan.7:14).

“And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed; and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever.” (Daniel 2:44)

What is the meaning of the “door in heaven” ch .4:1 ?
A door represents a means of entrance by which a new power will “ascend into these political heavens”. Christ is “the door” (John 10:9), he “has the keys of hell and of death” and will raise the dead and open the door of the Kingdom. The saints have been prepared and are ready to manifest the glory of God as rulers in the Kingdom Age.

“But the saints of the Most High shall take the kingdom, and possess the kingdom forever, even forever and ever.” (Daniel 7:18)

John was enabled to be in spirit to view the wonderful scene which will actually take place only after the Resurrection, at the future time of Christ’s return.

Israel’s throne restored
This Kingdom will be Israel’s kingdom restored. For example Stephen reminds us in Acts 15:15-17

“And to this agree the words of the prophets; as it is written, After this I will return, and will build again the tabernacle of David, which is fallen down; and I will build again the ruins thereof, and I will set it up ... saith the Lord, who doeth all these things. Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world.”

So the kingdom of God in the future is to be the Kingdom of Israel restored. The throne of Christ is the throne of his father David, as the angel promised in Luke 1:32:

“He shall be great and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David”

Christ is the righteous descendant of David who as “a king shall reign and prosper and execute judgment and justice in the earth” (Jer.23:5).

Christ will share his throne
We have seen that Jesus promises a place in his throne for his friends:

“To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne” (Rev.3:21).

The scene in chapter 4 before us therefore represents in symbol, these things accomplished, when the Lord Jesus sits upon the throne.

Who occupies God’s throne?
The occupant of the throne is represented by two precious “stones” (v.3) and this re-emphasises the theme of this book as one of manifesting God, for we find that it is Christ who occupies God’s throne. This is confirmed by ch.22:1:

“And he showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb”.

The Old Testament helps us here as Jesus Christ, the King, has been styled “a stone” in several places. In Genesis 49:24 as the “stone of Israel”, he is a “stone of stumbling” in Isa.8:14 to the wicked but a precious corner stone in Isa.28:16 to the righteous. In Daniel 2:42 we remember it is “a stone cut out of the mountain without hands” which smites the image on its feet and then grows to fill the whole earth.

Why two stones?

We may wonder why two stones are used in the symbolism. It does portray very clearly the fact that the king is Spirit and Flesh in combination. Each stone symbolises one aspect, for Christ was God manifest in flesh. The “jasper” is the ‘spirit’ symbol and is a hard stone of various hues, including purple, blue and green. Rev.21:11 speaks of the glory and light of the new Jerusalem as being like “a jasper stone, clear as crystal” - in v.23 we see this is the “glory of God and the Lamb”.

The aspect of the ‘flesh’ is represented by the “sardine” stone. This is named in Hebrew odem, the Hebrew consonants being the same as in the name Adam. It is a carnelian of translucent brown shades referred to as sard as interestingly, it comes from Sardis - a gem fitly symbolical of the Adam-element of the One sitting on the throne.

“Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same ...” (Hebrews 2:14)

The rainbow over the throne

The “rainbow” (v.3) is a beautiful arch over the throne and is the token of a covenant by God:

“I do set my bow in the cloud, and it shall be for a token of a covenant between me and the earth” (Gen.9:13)

As the God of Israel is portrayed in the Bible as being unchanging, any covenants he makes are binding, as he declares:

“My covenant will I not break, nor alter the thing that is gone out of my lips. Once have I sworn by my holiness that I will not lie unto David. His seed shall endure for ever, and his throne as the sun before me. It shall be established for ever as the moon, and as a faithful witness in heaven.” (Psa. 89:34-37).

We see the rainbow after storms and this too is shown in the symbols, for verse 5 mentions that “thunders and lightnings and voices” proceed from the throne. When Christ’s throne is established there will be war. The nations are in league to overthrow it:

“And I saw the beast, and the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against him that sat on the horse, and against his army.” (Rev 19:19)

but the outcome is sure (vs.20,21).
Jesus speaks peace to the nations:

“Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, thy King cometh unto thee ... And I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim, and the horse from Jerusalem, and the battle bow shall be cut off: and he shall speak peace unto the heathen: and his dominion shall be from sea even to sea, and from the river even to the ends of the earth” (Zech 9:9,10)

Why should the symbol of the physical rainbow be used in such an unnatural way, as to be all green?

One answer is that if the colour red, which represents sin in the Bible, were removed from the physical rainbow, then the remaining colours of blue and yellow would appear as green, symbolic of the glorified earth now tender, verdant and full of emerald fertility when God’s glory fills the earth “as the waters cover the sea.”

“He shall come down like rain upon the mown grass: as showers that water the earth” (Psa.72:6)

and his teachings symbolically water the earth:

“My doctrine shall drop as the rain, my speech shall distill as the dew, as the small rain upon the tender herb, and as the showers upon the grass: Because I will publish the name of the LORD: ascribe ye greatness unto our God” (Deut 32:2).

God’s covenant of permanent salvation

Sun, light, rain and cloud are elements necessary to the production of the natural rainbow; so they are also in the spiritual sense. The rainbow cannot appear until the Sun of Righteousness is enthroned “in the heavens” and the light irradiating from him will be reflected to the world from the “clouds” of immortals about the throne, as John looked forward to in ch.1:7. The rainbow is thus a guarantee of the perpetual stability of the salvation that will come with the establishment of that throne on the earth, when the Sun of Righteousness is enthroned “in the heavens” and showers of rain descend upon the mown grass to fertilize the earth.

Four and twenty elders

Verse 4 introduces us to “four and twenty elders” sitting round the throne. Their raiment of white shows them to be righteous:

“ And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints” (ch..19:8). (see also ch.7:9,13,14)

Each is wearing a golden crown, the symbol of victory to those who have overcome as promised in the letter to Smyrna in ch.3:11,12. The Greek word is stephanos and this was the floral wreath awarded to the victors in the Greek games. Significantly, this stephanos was won after effort, whereas a crown is given by hereditary succession. The gold signifies that the victory has been produced by a tried faith:

“That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ” (1 Peter 1:7)
Why twenty-four?
We may find a reason by going back to the Old Testament. King David’s reign was typical of the future:

“For there are set thrones of judgment, the thrones of the house of David” (Psalm 122:5).

On God’s instructions (1 Chron.28:12,13,19) David divided the priests and Levites into 24 divisions for the purpose of ministering to the people and also to prophesy with musical instruments (1Chron.25:1). So we are being shown that these elders typify the singers of the future age in praising God throughout the twenty-four hours of day and night (Rev.4:8 “and they rest not day and night”) and who will act as God’s priests and ministers to the nations. Another significance of the number twenty-four is the fact that there are that many letters in the Greek alphabet. In Rev.1:8 Christ claims to be the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the ending and these are the names of the first and last letters of the alphabet. The symbology shows that Christ encompasses the salvation of the saints; as Heb.12:2 says “Jesus the author and finisher of our faith.”

Sea of Glass
You will probably recognise the next Bible symbol of a “sea” (v.6), for Isaiah tells us that the nations in the past and at the present are

“like the troubled sea when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt; there is no peace for the wicked, saith my God” (Isa.57:20,21)

The sea of glass in this verse represents the nations of the millennial age experiencing peace under the righteous rule of Jesus Christ.

Four living creatures
John now sees four different beasts or living creatures in and around the throne. The Greek word used is zoa meaning living one rather than therion meaning wild beasts. This latter word is used later in the book to describe the nations which are antagonistic to God’s purpose.

Israel’s heraldry
We return to the Old Testament to understand the symbols of these living creatures in the heraldry of the nation of Israel. When Israel was delivered out of Egypt, the congregation was Divinely organised into four camps, each camp having a standard on which was displayed a beast as the heraldic symbol of the camp:

“Every man of the children of Israel shall pitch by his own standard, with the ensign of their father’s house ... “ (Numbers 2:2).

A remarkable concept
So the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders are the connecting symbol with the Israelitish kingdom - they point us back. They are the heraldry of the kingdom of God, that is, of the kingdom of Israel, past and future. They as distinctly identify the kingdom of David, as the lion and the unicorn identify the kingdom of Queen Elizabeth. It is not surprising that other beliefs, which
do not expect such a literal kingdom to be restored on earth, are often powerless to explain these symbols. It is for each of us to ponder the clues given to us in Scripture as the picture unfolds.

**Who are represented by the twenty-four elders and the four living creatures?**

As we are beginning to appreciate, the theme of manifestation or revealing God (apocalypse) is pivotal in the book of Revelation. In this chapter 4 the saints (those who have ‘overcome’ and are accepted by Christ at his return) are depicted by various symbols in the various facets of their work of manifesting the attributes of God. They are shown to be immortal and in glory. In vs.4 and 10 they are spoken of as the “Twenty Four Elders” and in v.4 as the “Four Beasts”. The singing activity is a symbol in itself of a series of vibrant activities which characterise the work of the saints. Their appreciation is expressed in heartfelt praise and thanks. It results in harmonious activities to serve God in His kingdom and assist in the great work of bringing all enemies under the feet of Christ.

We see from the above that one person or group of people may be described by several different symbols appropriate to the aspect of work being considered. When we can understand and appreciate the way this feature is used in the book, it is a further evidence of the greatness of the mind of its author. (See also ch.5:8,9 where all have been redeemed by Christ – different symbols for the same group of people who have various roles to fulfill).

**Other beliefs**

It may be useful to point out here that not all beliefs are compatible with each other. For instance popular Christianity says of the redeemed that they do reign now in heaven, whereas the Revelation of Jesus Christ says that the saints do not ascend the throne until Christ comes again (Rev.16:21) and ‘reward’ them (Rev.22:12) Then they are seen enthroned (Rev.20:4) having obtained their portion in ‘the first resurrection’. A religious system that sends ‘immortal souls’ to heaven, before and independently of resurrection and judgment is incompatible with this order of things. We also note that the redeemed expect to reign on earth and not in heaven:

“And hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth”

(Rev.5:10)

**Not angels**

Incidentally, when we can appreciate the beautiful meaning behind the symbols used, we are saved from other errors. For instance, some think the twenty-four elders and the four living creatures are angels - but we know that angels have not been redeemed by the blood of Christ, for they are already immortal. (Luke 20:36 “Neither can they die any more: for they are equal unto the angels”). The Revelation given to John was about ‘that which must be hereafter’ – so the vision is not about angels in the past.
We may conclude that the four beasts and twenty four elders represent the political and ecclesiastical administration of the kingdom by the saints in the age to come (kings and priests respectively).

Potential saints now pray for the time when the earth shall be filled with the glory of God, saying “Thy kingdom come that Thy will may be done in earth as in heaven” and therefore rejoice in the knowledge of the contents of the seven-sealed book. Similarly the angels now act as the eyes of God (Heb.1:14) but they are not to be the rulers of the future. This honour awaits the redeemed saints as we read in Heb.2:5,6:

“For unto the angels hath he not put in subjection the world to come, whereof we speak”

The song of the redeemed is new (ch.5:9) and could not be sung by others (ch.14:3). They sing praise and thanks to the glorified King sitting on the throne of David (Acts 1:6). They have been redeemed out of every kindred etc (Acts 15:14) and so the same truths are expressed as has been noted in the rest of Scripture. The gospel is not ‘salvation for everyone’, or universalism, which is so popular around us.

The conclusion is that God’s plan of salvation is not primarily for the glory of humanity, but of God Himself. The last verse gives us the fundamental reason of the worship of God by men and angels:

“Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created” (Rev.4:11).

The acceptance of this intrinsic sovereignty of the Creator is the one essential of faith which, unless it is appreciated, bars man’s way to God. In essence it is very humbling to men and women, whose in-built ego informs them it is they who are of ultimate worth. As it is expressed in Heb.11:6

“...for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.”

SECTION 13
In Part 1 we have seen the expansion and might of Rome coming to a peak and then gradually declining. Coming to AD 476 the unthinkable finally took place. The empire in the West was conquered by Odoacer and then for a period by the Goths. Meanwhile the Empire in the East became interested again in the West and eventually the strong Emperor Justinian (AD 533-553), who ruled in Constantinople, determined to assert his dormant rights over the areas of Italy and Sicily which were being ruled by the Ostrogothic kings, starting with Theodoric. After a long struggle the race and name of the Ostrogoths perished for ever.

Italy was divided into counties and dukedoms but other parts of the Western empire fared differently. Justinian yielded Gaul to the Franks; language and manners were changed by the infiltration of Teutonic settlers in other areas and they forgot over the next two centuries, their original unity, the symmetry and civilisation of the old Empire. It might have perished altogether but for the two enduring witnesses Rome had left - her Church and her Law. Justinian had a major impact on the influence of the Church, as we shall see.

The Enduring Church

As the Empire fell to pieces, and the new kingdoms which the conquerors had founded began in their turn to dissolve, the Church clung more closely to her unity of faith and discipline, the common bond of all Christian men. That unity must have a centre, that centre was Rome.

“In the West, as the sun set on the temporal power of Rome, the papacy emerged as the heir to a new empire – Christendom ... Little by little the Roman See made itself supreme in temporal as in spiritual matters, and with the accession of Gregory I appear the first indications of the leading role to be played by the pope in medieval Europe” (The McGraw-Hill Illustrated World History 1964).

A succession of able and zealous pontiffs extended the influence of the Church. It had bishops in every major city - in Rome, Byzantium etc. and great rivalries and arguments developed over who was to be the chief bishop. This was settled in AD 533 by a decree of the Emperor, Justinian. He proclaimed the pope in Rome as the Universal Bishop and therefore the head of them all. The emperor Phocas confirmed Justinian’s decree in AD 610.

Roman Law
Only second in importance to religion was that which was exercised by the permanence of the old law. Despite barbarian variations, the subject population and the clergy continued to be governed by the same elaborate system.

**Restoration of the Empire in the West**

Of the new monarchies that had risen on the ruins of Rome in the West, that of the Franks was by far the greatest. In the third century they appear as one of the greatest German tribe leagues, and were faithful allies of Rome. They were originally pagan but Clovis (AD 489) became a firm adherent to the Roman Catholic system. He continued to have a career of unbroken success. Towards the middle of the eighth century a change began. Pipin and his son Charles Martel, Austrasian Franks in the lower Rhineland, became acknowledged heads of the nation. Their past greatness had been aided by the friendship of the clergy and the favour of the Apostolic See, especially as they were Catholic rather than Arian Christians. (Arian belief does not accept the Catholic form of the doctrine of the Trinity - very much like Eastern Orthodox today).

**The Lombards threaten Rome**

The Lombards, however, who had settled and expanded since AD 568, were enemies of the Church and attacked Rome. Tormented by their repeated attacks, Rome sought help in vain from Constantinople, and eventually turned to the Catholic chief Charles Martel.

Here begins the connection of the old imperial seat with the rising Germanic power of the Franks. Here first the pope leads a political movement, and shakes off the ties that bound him to his legitimate sovereign – the Eastern Emperor.

**The Success of Pipin, the Frank**

Charles Martel died before he could obey the call; his son, Pipin (the Short) made good use of the new friendship with Rome. The Holy See gave to this new successor Pipin a sanctity hitherto unknown, adding to the old Frankish election, the Roman diadem and the Hebrew rite of anointing (AD 730). This compact between the chair of Peter and the Teutonic throne was hardly sealed when Pipin was summoned to resist the Lombards from Rome. At the successful conclusion he received the title of Patrician. This had become an official title, implying the duty of overseeing the Church and promoting her temporal interests.

After Pipin’s death, his son Charles, whom we commonly call Charlemagne, swept down like a whirlwind from the Alps at the call of Pope Hadrian to again resist the Lombards. He succeeded in overcoming them altogether, assumed the iron crown of the Lombards and made northern Italy an integral part of the Frankish Empire (AD 774). He was received by Hadrian with honours and by the people as their leader and deliverer.

**Ambitions of Pope Hadrian and Charlemagne**

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The Book of Revelation
These two great men had personal ambitions and material gains from which they could now gain; Charles to extend his rulership and status, and Hadrian the acquisition of the land around him. Rome was a city with neither trade nor industry and yet it was crowded with poor, for whom the bishop had to provide. The church saw that there was now the prospect of an independent principality, together with wealth and pomp and this encouraged it to forward the cause of Charles.

**The Coronation of Charlemagne**

The next Pope was Leo III (AD 796) and during AD 799 he saw that the time was ripe at last to honour Charles and benefit himself. Three hundred and twenty-four years had passed since the West had sustained what had appeared to be a deadly wound, when the last Caesar of the West, Augustus Romulus, had resigned his power into the hands of the senate, and left to his Eastern brother the sole headship of the Roman world. We have seen that the idea of a Roman empire as a necessary part of the world’s order had not vanished; it was cherished by the Church and recalled by laws and customs. Within the last century and a half the rise of Mohammedanism had brought out the common Christianity of Europe into a fuller relief and showed its need of an efficient head and centre.

Such leadership could not be found in the Court on the Bosphorus in Constantinople, shaken by the Arab conquests and growing ever more alien to the West. The Pope despised the East Roman princes, who had given him no help against the savage Lombards, and who for nearly seventy years had been contaminated by the Iconoclastic heresy. (This related to the worship of icons and images). At this time the East was actually ruled by the ruthless Empress Irene.

The Franks however, had always been faithful to Rome and the services of their leader Charles, against Arian heretics, Lombard marauders, the Saracens and the Avars, had earned him the title of Champion of the Faith and Defender of the Holy See. He was now unquestioned lord of Western Europe, of both Celtic and Teutonic nations. So the merging together of the military Franks and the religious power of the Popes produced a powerful alliance, which began to outshine the East, which up to then had held the power of the empire.

Thus it was that Charles, the hero who united under one sceptre so many races, was crowned by the Pope on Christmas Day AD 800 in the basilica of St. Peter, Rome. (See illustration W13.1). He who crowns another is the greater. Charlemagne was the King or Emperor effectively of the Western empire. But it was the Pope who took it on himself to crown Charlemagne - much to his surprise, as he had wanted to crown himself!

As the diadem of the Caesars was placed upon the brow of the barbarian chieftain, the multitude shouted

*“To Charles Augustus, crowned by God, the great and peace-giving Emperor, be life and victory.”*

In that shout, echoed by the Franks without, was pronounced the union, so long in preparation, so mighty in its consequences; and from that moment modern history begins.

The historian Bryce makes a significant comment:
“The coronation of Charles is not only the central event of the Middle Ages, it is also one of those very few events of which, taking them singly, it may be said that if they had not happened, the history of the world would have been different.”
(Bryce, The Holy Roman Empire, ch.5 p50)
This scene refers to the powers possessed by the Lord Jesus as the possessor of the key of David. Although the actual nation of Israel had by this time been dispersed and their Temple destroyed, we can see that Israel is woven inextricably into the fabric of Revelation. In talking of the future kingdom, Revelation shows that it will come from Jewish roots. The Lord Jesus holds the key of David (ch.3:7). Jesus was now in control of Gentile affairs:

“And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth” (Matt.28:18).

We can now imagine the scroll of papyrus parchment or other flexible material, sealed seven times to symbolise perfect secrecy. The simile of a sealed scroll has been used in earlier Scripture. It is suggested that Daniel’s prophecy refers to this very scroll:

“Go thy way, Daniel: for the words are closed up and sealed till the time of the end ... and none of the wicked shall understand; but the wise shall understand” (Dan.12:9,19).

It is this scroll in symbol which Daniel was not allowed to unseal. Here Jesus is depicted as at last unsealing it.

Why is the scroll in the right hand?

We saw in ch.4, One sitting on the throne of God, for the throne of David is the throne of God. However, the occupant of the throne is likened to a Jasper and Sardine stone. This is spirit and flesh in combination as we saw in Section 12. This stone therefore represents the Lord Jesus Christ sitting on the throne of God.  At his right hand was a sealed scroll, and this shows it was in a place of power:

“The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool” (Psa.110:1).

David calls him ‘lord’in status as he recognises he is in a different category from himself.

So the sealed scroll in the right hand of the occupant of the throne is a perfect symbol of the fact that although the knowledge and control of the future was formerly with the Father only (as Jesus
acknowledged before his ascension Acts 1:7). This was now to be imparted to His Son and those who are one in him.

The scroll is written on the inside and the outside - it contains prophecies setting out the history of the Ecclesia (those ‘within’) and the world at large (those ‘without’) These involve the conflicts down through the ages leading up to the manifestation of God’s glory when he shall be enthroned in Zion.

The strong angel proclaims loudly for a worthy person to come and open the sealed scroll and John waited with bated breath. He was old and in exile, he had waited long for his Lord to return; he only saw much disbelief and error, and the downfall of Jerusalem by Gentiles. No such one could be found. Like John, Daniel before him was much upset by the visions he was given of the future and longed to understand them:

“In those days I Daniel was mourning three full weeks ... Then said he unto me, Fear not, Daniel: for from the first day that thou didst set thine heart to understand, and to chasten thyself before thy God, thy words were heard, and I am come for thy words” (Dan.10:2,12).

To those who humbly desire to know, God reveals his plan, just as people asked Jesus the meaning behind his parables. “Surely the Lord GOD will do nothing, but he revealeth his secret unto his servants the prophets” (Amos 3:7)

Christ has prevailed

John did not weep for long. He was told that the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, had prevailed and was able to unloose the seals and open the book. As in Section 6, the scroll sealed up in symbol is now to be opened and revealed by Jesus. He was the one worthy to open the seals and given the power to bring to pass in the earth the things predicted.

In these details the Apocalypse continues to show us the theme of manifestation and this explains what could be puzzling aspects. Christ is the representative of his Father and so sits upon God’s throne. As the Lion of Judah he is the lawgiver and king, and this is taken from Jacob’s blessing on his sons in Genesis 49:9,10:

“Judah is a lion’s whelp ... The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come; and unto him shall the gathering of the people be”.

He is also the descendant or offspring of David, and will sit on his throne:

“He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David...” (Luke 1:32).

Yet another aspect of his status is that he is David’s Lord, as we saw earlier (Psalm 110:1 quoted in Matt.22:41-46) and therefore as God manifest in the flesh, he is both the root and offspring of David:

“... I am the root and the offspring of David, and the bright and morning star” (Rev.22:16).

All these aspects of his work are covered in this vision.

The Book of Revelation
The Slain Lamb

When John looks however, instead of a Lion, he beholds a Lamb, as it had been slain - therefore, it was a resurrected Lamb! (ch.5:6) This is yet another manifestation of the work of the Lord Jesus. His worthiness was proved in the ‘lamb’ stage of his mission when he appeared as:

“... the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world” (John 1:29).

Unless he had first been revealed as the sacrificial lamb, there could have been no creatures or elders as the glorified redeemed ones. It is significant that in this book, the Lamb is used 28 times. The basis of his future victory over the world is his past victory over self. This is a powerful indication to us of how we too can share in his victory and so overcome. The slain and resurrected Lamb is represented in the book of the Revelation as the centre and foundation of all the Father’s purpose. We shall see later of a ‘pseudo’ lamb representing ‘christian religion’ which purports to act as the true, but in lying deceit.

**Roles of The Lamb**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Verse</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rev.5:6,8,12,13</td>
<td>The centre of divine rule on earth, the object of the adoration and veneration of all created beings.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rev.6:1,16</td>
<td>The one who unlooses the seals, and thus guides the destiny of the nations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rev.7:9,10,14</td>
<td>The acknowledged channel of divine love and salvation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rev.7:17</td>
<td>The shepherd shepherding the flock.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rev.12:11</td>
<td>The inspirer of victory on the part of others.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rev.14:1,4</td>
<td>The leader and shepherd of the redeemed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rev.14:10</td>
<td>The conqueror of the beast.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rev.15:3</td>
<td>The choir-leader of the victorious saints.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rev.17:14</td>
<td>The captain of the victorious warriors who conquer the warring confederacy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rev.19:7,9; 21:9</td>
<td>The bridegroom of saints.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rev.21:14,22,23</td>
<td>The foundation stone and light of the New Jerusalem.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rev.22:1,3</td>
<td>The ruler of the age to come.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The **seven horns and seven eyes** (v.6) connect Jesus with the power and penetration of God. ‘Horns’ stand for the symbol of power as we saw with the ten-horned beast of Daniel. Eyes stand for sight and intelligence. Seven horns and seven eyes therefore symbolise omnipotence and omniscience. They are said to be the **seven spirits of God**. Seven is the characteristic number of the Apocalypse which numerically symbolises completeness; and therefore reveals the Lord and his associates as being all powerful and all seeing and possessing in fact the One spirit of the LORD, the Creator:

“... This is the word of the LORD ... saying, Not by might, nor my power, but by my spirit, saith the LORD of hosts” (Zech.4:6).

**Jesus takes the scroll**

Verse 7 is a further illustration of the way in which one person can be described by several symbols. The Lord Jesus is both the one sitting on the throne - as king; **and also** the lamb who receives the scroll - as the redeemer.

If we are going to find anything hard to absorb in the book of Revelation, it is going to be here - we may ask **“How can the Lamb take from the occupant of the throne (ie from himself) the scroll?”** The answer lies in understanding the basis of God-manifestation, in which Jesus is both the “**Alpha and Omega**”, the sacrificial Lamb for atonement, and also the supreme ruler of the world as “**King of Kings and Lord of Lords**.”

The occupant of the throne can therefore be regarded as the Father **in manifestation**, (as we can see in Isa.6). If this complication seems obscure, we must remember that the Lord Jesus Christ is everything - the door of the fold, and yet the good shepherd; the altar, the victim on the altar, and yet the High Priest of that same altar, and at the same time the Father’s representative enthroned.

We are seeing here an indication of the depths of the divine mind. He is revealing his wonderful plan of salvation to us, so it is not surprising if it takes a little effort on our part to appreciate its wonders.

As a result of having **prevailed (or overcome)** Jesus has been granted that knowledge of the Divine Purpose which had previously been hidden from him. Because he is **worthy** he is now able to be in control of the rest of the Father’s Plan. The song of the redeemed in vs.9 and 10 confirm that he will return to complete the work given to him by his Father. He will then unite in one both the duties of a king and a priest.

**The redeemed with harps**

When the scroll is taken there follows an expression of homage on the part of the redeemed as symbolised by the harps (v.8,9). This is also referred to in Rev.14:2 and 15:2.
“The saint himself is the harp of Deity and thus an instrument of joy; the angels are not harpers, for they cannot truthfully sing the ‘song of the redeemed’ but join with the saints in hymns of praise.” (John Thomas, Eureka).

A mind impressed with the Word and a heart full of joy and thanksgiving will cause the “saint-harp” to become an instrument of pleasure to God.

We can discover that the “golden vials full of odours” (v.8) symbolise prayers:

“Let my prayer be set forth before thee as incense; and the lifting up of my hands as the evening sacrifice” (Psa.141:2)

From the above verse the saints are seen as in a state of prayer - so they are still in their mortal life of probation. The elders represent the saints not only in the final glory which awaits them, but also in their adoration of Christ in their own generations, while yet mortal. Therefore they say prospectively, ‘We shall reign on the earth’ - showing that at the time of this part of the vision, they are in the position of hope. The faithful too can be kings and priests (v10) and share in the work of converting the rest of the earth.

The song of the redeemed is uplifting to contemplate and whilst symbolic of joy and thanksgiving, there is no doubt that there will be literal celebrations when the kingdom is established and his whole seal opening work is completed. Such praise will come from the angels (Heb.1:6) the saints (Psa.45:9-11), the Jewish people (Psa.118:21-25) and from the Gentiles (Psa.45:12). The whole work of the seals will bring the earth into the state declared in the Scriptures as being the whole purpose of God:

"For the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the L ORD, as the waters cover the sea” (Habbakuk 2:14).

Universal Praise

The number of those gathered around the throne (v.11) is ten thousand times ten thousand and thousands of thousands, better rendered myriads of myriads and thousands of thousands. This is a Hebraism for countless number (cp Dan.7:10).

Chapters 4 and 5 present an interesting aspect of the Book of Revelation to us. We see a cameo of the King in glory - a picture of the end of it all - and he is surrounded by the saints in prayer, hoping to be there. So we seem to have a time mis-phase - the symbol includes the finality and the developments that lead up to it. They link the incident of giving to Christ the power to open the seals because of his worthiness, with a portrayal of the universal exaltation that will be his, at the completion of his seal-opening work. It is a feature of the Book that the beginning of a matter is introduced together with its end, as if it came immediately after. This also happens in other places in the Scriptures, such as Dan.2 and Gen.3:15. In these chapters it gives dramatic completeness to the scene shown.
The whole work of the seals will bring the earth into a state of praise - but at the actual opening of the seals, the state of things was that described by John in his epistle, as applicable to his own day, "the world lieth in wickedness" (1 John 5:19).

Praise comes freewill from the heart – nobody can make someone praise. Those people who are there will have been given immortality - they understand what Jesus has done for them. Despite the trials and problems of life they are now no longer weak and mortal. Many had given up their life for this hope.

This is all evidence that the book is written by God - what men could have dreamed it up? It is also very inter-linked with the Old Testament. It stretches our mind to see these Divine things and the challenge is for us to check it out for ourselves in the Scriptures.
SUMMARY

1. Personal message from Lord Jesus Christ to servants. Centres on his Second Coming and Throne of authority in Jerusalem for 1000 years.

2. Blessings and warnings for those who seek to understand book and keep its sayings.

3. Daniel ch.2 - image of four world empires following each other until fifth, the Kingdom of God established.

   Daniel ch.7 - little horn to arise from fourth beast to make war against believers. To continue until Christ comes.


5. NT writers warn of Apostacy - false doctrines to supercede Truth of Gospel.

6. Personal letters from Jesus to seven typical ecclesias - encouragement, reproof and promises for those who overcame world around them. Decline in state of ecclesias prophetic of decline of Truth into Apostacy.

7. Heaven frequently used in Scripture as symbol of ruling powers - not atmospheric heavens or where God dwells.

8. History of Roman Empire:
Learn to Read the Bible Effectively

- grew from small beginnings on seven hills in 8th century BC to large, powerful empire - passed through seven systems of government - City of Rome its splendid centre.
- AD 324 Constantine became first sole Christian emperor - whole of pagan empire now Christianised.
- Dissenters to State Catholic system persecuted, exiled or killed.
- Empire divided - Western empire ended AD 476 but revived. Pope crowned Charlemagne Emperor AD 800.

Chapter 4 - Glorious vision of future throne of Kingdom of God occupied by Christ. Surrounded by redeemed saints portrayed as four living creatures and twenty-four elders, ruling nations now at peace.

Chapter 5 - Daniel unable to know contents of sealed scroll - Jesus as victorious Lamb, now worthy person unseals that same scroll - is in control of events depicted.

Chapter 5 - Highly symbolic vision follows - shows Jesus as King giving sealed scroll to Jesus as Redeemer. Saints in state of prayer and praise.

Symbols help meaning - more vivid and memorable - but only symbols. John saw drying river, three frogs, seven headed dragon. But no literal river or frogs or dragon - these signs of something else. If carefully remembered, result is enlightenment.

FIRST SEAL
Progress of Christianity: The Empire at Peace AD 96-183

“And I saw when the Lamb opened one of the seals, and I heard, as it were the noise of thunder, one of the four beasts saying, Come and see. And I saw, and behold a white horse: and he that sat on him had a bow; and a crown was given unto him: and he went forth conquering, and to conquer” (Rev.6:1,2)

The Lamb now breaks the first seal and one of the four beasts summons John to ‘come and see’. This suggests that the faithful have great interest in the signs of the times, watch public events from a divine point of view, and are anxious to share this knowledge with others. The Lamb is worthy not only to open the seal and discover the Father’s way of achieving his ultimate purpose in the world, but has the power to cause and control the events:

“And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth” (Matt.28:18)

What was signified by the noise of thunder?
In ch.1:3 we noted the declaration that the time was ‘at hand’ for the beginning of the future things shown to John. What event or phase of things is there in the time immediately after John’s receiving
of the Apocalypse to answer to this symbol? The first thing John would have noticed was that soon after he had received the visions, the tyrant and persecuting emperor Domitian was assassinated. This assassination marks a new phase in the empire after the period of severe persecution for Christians under Nero and Domitian and was described by the thunder clap which introduced the vision of the white horse. The new emperors Nerva, Trajan and later the Antonine family led a mild and beneficent administration. A period of peace and prosperity descended upon the Roman empire for about eighty years.

The historian Gibbon in *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* claims that the period represents:

> “the most happy and prosperous time of the human race ... The armies were restrained, and the Emperors delighted in the image of peace, and considered themselves as the accountable ministers of the laws.”

**Why a horse?**

The answer will be helped by realising that political powers are often represented by animals, as we have already seen in our studies in Daniel. Today, for example, we note the use of the British lion, the Welsh dragon, the Russian bear. In John’s day, apart from barbarous parts of the earth, the only State was the Roman State. It comprised the entire civilised world at that time. The horse is one of the symbols of the Roman state and was dedicated to Mars, their god of war, as can be seen on coins and in their literature (See illustrations W15.1). So a white horse could be thought of as symbolising the Roman empire in a state of calm and peace.

**The Bowman has a crown but no arrows!**

It is suggested that the period of peace in the empire allowed the successors of the apostles to deliver the word of their testimony. That word made such an impact upon society that it would result in the pagan Roman state being vanquished. Gibbon himself calls such preachers “spiritual conquerors”. It is therefore appropriate that the Bowman wears a victorious crown. The Greek word is *stephan*, and this is the laurel wreath of victory as gained in the Games.

The work was of a conquering nature and was carried out throughout the Roman Empire. They ‘overcame’ the pagan Roman world - the social, political and religious environment in which these first century believers found themselves, and many new converts were made as the new faith spread. The victory was to be won by the use of the tongue, but without arrows as weapons of offence. It was a war of ideas - of truth against error and was a period of rapid growth of Christianity.

It was achieved without bloodshed, as Paul said

> “The weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of the strongholds” (2 Cor.10:4)

and

> “We wrestle not against flesh and blood but against the principalities and powers (that is, the ruling authorities - see Titus 3:1), against spiritual wickedness in high places” (Eph.6:12)

The next verses describe the armour of these conquering believers.

The period was not one of unmitigated peace for the Christians, however. Although not intensively persecuted as before, the emperors did not encourage the spread of the new faith, as can be seen from
the letter written by the Younger Pliny to the emperor Trajan (AD 98-117) towards the end of the first century. Pliny was the Roman administrator of Bithynia and Pontus.

“The number of culprits (i.e. Christians) is so great as to call for serious consultation. The contagion of the superstition hath spread not only through cities but even villages and the country.”

“I have asked them in person if they are Christians, and if they admit it, I repeat the question a second and third time, with a warning of the punishment awaiting them. If they persist, I order them to be led away for punishment; for, whatever the nature of their admission, I am convinced that their stubbornness and unshakeable obstinacy ought not to go unpunished.”

He goes on to describe how he found it necessary:

“to extract the truth by torture from two slave-women, whom they call deaconesses.”

With the death of the last Antonine, Marcus Aurelius in AD 180, a great change came over the Roman world.

SECOND SEAL

The Roman Horse Red with Civil Blood  AD 183-211

“And there went out another horse that was red: and power was given to him that sat thereon to take peace from the earth, and that they should kill one another: and there was given unto him a great sword” (ch.6:4).

Here the horse was red, signifying bloodshed, and the rider held a sword - Gk. machaira.

Liddel & Scott’s Greek Lexicon defines it as:

“a large knife or dirk; a short sword or dagger; but still rather an assassin’s than a soldier’s weapon.”

It seems odd to call this small dagger great - this must apply to the use of the weapon rather than its size.

Clearly the influences to be at work within the Empire were different from those of the First Seal period and confirm that the time under the first seal was a period of peace and that now tumult and confusion would be substituted. We find that the dagger was most appropriate to represent a time when assassination became the order of the day.

The rider is again a symbolical personage, not representative of an individual man but the power of the sword. The second seal opened in AD 183 with the accession of Commodus. After a cruel and tyrannical reign he was strangled by his own servants in AD 192 and real power passed into the hands of the Pretorian guards, the soldiers stationed at Rome. Of subsequent emperors of this period, Pertinax was assassinated by the guards after only sixty-eight days, Julian was beheaded after sixty-six days, and civil war was waged between contending generals until Septimius Severus attained the
position. He consolidated his power by much slaughter of senators and nobles and in the tenth year of his violent reign, proceeded to severely persecute the community of believers for the next nine years, until his death in AD 211.

We can check these phases from the dust-covers of history books – the seals mark different phases of the Roman Empire and the order in which they would come. These predictions are ahead of when they were to happen – and so are a confirmation of Daniel 4:17:

“...to the intent that the living may know that the Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men and giveth it to whomsoever he will ...”

**THIRD SEAL**
**A Black Horse - Famine and Distress  AD 212-235**

“... And I beheld, and lo a black horse; and he that sat on him had a pair of balances in his hand. And I heard a voice in the midst of the four beasts say, A measure of wheat for a penny, and three measures of barley for a penny; and see thou hurt not the oil and the wine” (ch.6:5,6).

The third seal introduced another change in the state of the Roman horse or empire. The wording sounds as if it is concerned with the fiscal administration of the time, and that the decisions would be oppressive for the common people, who would depend on such commodities as wheat and barley.

The rider of the horse was a man holding a pair of balances. Roman coins of the period display a pair of balances symbolising the Emperor, as the Administrator of Law and Justice (see illustration W15.2). When bread is eaten by weight, it is a sign of scarcity and famine.

The fierce Caracalla succeeded his father Septimius Severus in AD 211, and his first tyrannical deed was to assassinate his brother and rival for the throne, and to destroy any associated with him amounting to around 20,000 persons. He then distributed to the soldiers the accumulated treasures of his father’s reign. Under his extravagances and extortions, most wealthy families were ruined and the general populace reduced to a condition of poverty, misery and oppression. He was astute in extending the citizenship of Rome to all the empire, in order to impose upon them the taxes especially associated with citizens.

He was succeeded in AD 217 by Macrinus, a usurper, and then by Elagabalas who lived in the wildest extravagance. Thus taxes continued to be raised in every conceivable way, including duties on all kinds of commodities in daily use, to pay for the profligate excesses of the Emperors, the official balance-holders of the Roman horse.

Eventually a change of emperor to Alexander Severus brought about an alleviation of Rome’s troubles, although it was still perpetually disturbed by mutiny among the troops and murder of the officers. At last the fierce discontent of the army succeeded in killing the emperor himself.

So Rome was left black with distress and misery. Vast tracts of country had already gone out of cultivation and prepared the way for the famine to follow.
Interesting observations
When contemplating European history in this way, it seems as if there is a monotonous stream of confusion and bloodshed repeated age after age. This is due to the same human passions and ambitions which operate century after century; the same violent means to satisfy greed and the same train of calamities resulting to large sections of mankind.

It is therefore an amazing feature of the Revelation that it has constructed out of this vast mass of chaotic material a recognisable programme, distinguished by symbols and events. It would not have seemed possible that such a uniform scene of the social and political turmoil should be mapped out into distinct sections, and represented by separate and appropriate sets of symbols. The Revelation accomplishes this feat to perfection and the Spirit of God selects one or two leading features in each age, and portrays them in a bold and distinctive symbolism. At first this may seem to be depressing but as we learn to appreciate the meaning more we find satisfaction and conviction that it is indeed written by the God of Heaven, who is in control of all things, so:

“...that the living may know that the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will, and setteth up over it the basest of men.” (Dan.4:17).

The coins at the time of Alexander Severus would give an immediate link between prophecy and reality, as the following illustration shows.
CLUE

TITLES IN SCRIPTURE

In the Old Testament some men are given a status or title which we would expect to apply to God Himself or to the Lord Jesus or at least only to His most faithful servants. Yet on occasions Titles are given to men who were, for example, unbelieving Gentiles not being God-Fearing at all and not at all those in whom we would think God would have any interest whatsoever. Let’s take an example to illustrate the point. This usually occurred with those carrying out some special purpose related to God’s eternal purpose with Israel.

Isaiah 44:28 the passage starts in v.24

“Thus saith the LORD ... That saith of Cyrus, He is my shepherd, and shall perform all my pleasure: even saying to Jerusalem, Thou shalt be built; and to the temple, Thy foundation shall be laid.”

Here a heathen king who as far as we know had no covenant relationship with God, and may not even have worshipped Him at all, is classified as my shepherd - an elevated title which we might think must be referring to the Lord Jesus himself. Yet not so!

Cyrus is even said to perform all God’s pleasure, yet he was obviously not a perfect, sinless man. Far from it!

The thing is, it is Cyrus’ actions listed in the verse which please God.

In the next chapter 45:13 God confirms that Cyrus was to be specially provided to bring forward God’s purpose with His people, who would by then be captives in Babylon. It was God’s intention to bring them back after seventy years to Israel, and to allow the rebuilding of the Temple. Cyrus himself didn’t convert the Persian empire to Judaism, or institute the sacrifices in Persia; he didn’t even see that the Temple was rebuilt. He ‘fulfilled all God’s pleasure’ in certain limited respects as we can learn from history. This was because what he wanted to do was the same as God wanted to be achieved. Thus Cyrus had his own freewill and acted from his own motives.

The next chapter goes even further and gives the great title of anointed to Cyrus.
“Thus saith the LORD to his anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I have holden, to subdue nations before him ...”  (Isa.45:1)

This is very similar language to Psalm 2, where the nations will be in angry conflict against God and his anointed. Peter in Acts 4:25 quotes this Psalm 2 and confirms that it does indeed refer to Jesus.

**So we discover a principle which is often found in Scripture.**

First the actual event itself is depicted. All that is prophesied by Isaiah about Cyrus was fulfilled by Cyrus in his acts of history. But the episode and language may carry in some respects a foretaste, a picture of some of the work of Christ.

**Are there other examples of this in Scripture?**

The following examples show how God uses people to fulfil His purpose and gives them special status:

1. Isaiah 13:1-3 Who are the sanctified ones who will destroy Babylon? The Medes - see v17.

2. Joel 2:25 where my great army are the invaders and oppressors of Israel as in v20. These were Gentile kings and their armies.

3. Ezekiel 28:12-15  This amazing language refers to the king of Tyre.

4. Isaiah 14:12-14  Lucifer means daystar or light bearer. This was not Israel but the king of Babylon - see v.4.

**To summarise:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cyrus</th>
<th>His Shepherd, His Anointed</th>
<th>Isa.44:28, 45:1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Medes</td>
<td>My Sanctified Ones, My Mighty Ones</td>
<td>Isa.13:1-3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Nations who devastated Israel</td>
<td>My Great Army</td>
<td>Joel 2:25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The King of Tyre</td>
<td>The Anointed Cherub in Eden</td>
<td>Eze.28:12-15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The King of Babylon</td>
<td>Lucifer, Fallen from Heaven (the figure for rulership over the nations)</td>
<td>Isa.14:12-14 Means daystar or lightbearer</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**These examples help us to see how God views situations.**

He is not interested in how these ‘servants’ related to their wider world, or their personal motives, or how the world sees them, or even how the world sees the events in which they are involved.

He consistently and single mindedly pursues His great purpose with the earth to bring mankind to the great consummation He planned before all things.

“Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world.”  (Acts 15:18).

The Book of Revelation
Do these people act under their own freewill?
These elevated titles are often given to people who did not even acknowledge the God of Israel but are used to bring judgment by Him. So it is also important to realise that each continues to act under their own freewill. Most of them did not understand that “the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men” (Dan.4:17), and were ignorant of God’s workings in the history of Israel and the surrounding Gentile nations. They no doubt wrote off such happenings as the natural interplay of the cycles of history.

This interesting principle sheds much light on the Old Testament and saves us from false conclusions. For instance many people fear and believe in a ‘devil who fell from heaven’ on the basis of Isaiah 14 above. We can see clearly that this passage relates to the human king of Babylon, however. But such error means that God is misrepresented and dishonoured.

When we come to New Testament times we know that after the ascension of Jesus, all power was given to him (Matt.28:18) and he is in control of the affairs of this world.

Remembering the principle in this Clue will be of great benefit when we come to passages in the book of Revelation which sound as if they are describing the work of the Lord Jesus. An example of this is in Rev.12:5 where a woman is to bring forth “a man child who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron.”. This sounds so much like the work of the Lord Jesus in Psalm 2:9 that it is a tremendous potential pitfall – is it actually the work of Jesus or of another? The symbols must be understood in their context – if misunderstood, it can affect our interpretation of the whole of the Book.

As we have seen in the examples above, God may be using men to forward his purpose in the earth. It is only the Lord Jesus Christ who can complete the actual great consummation of that purpose.
FOURTH SEAL  
*The Pale Horse - Widespread Violence and Death*  *AD 235-303*

“...And I looked, and behold a pale horse: and his name that sat on him was Death, and Hell followed with him. And power was given unto them over the fourth part of the earth, to kill with sword, and with hunger, and with death, and with the beasts of the earth” (ch.6:8).

The Greek word translated *pale* is *chlorotic* and conveys the idea of green as the tint of the paleness. It is characteristic of approaching death, which was to afflict the Pagan Roman horse. The fifty years which followed the death of Alexander Severus were a period of disaster and crisis, notable for thirty-nine emperors, all but four of which died of assassination. Most of them were made and un-made at the whim of the Roman soldiers who proclaimed and assassinated emperors mainly for their own profit. The word ‘hell’ used in this verse is the Greek *hades* and refers to the grave.

In Revelation the inhabitants of the Roman Empire are often referred to as ‘the earth’, because the empire covered the majority of the then known world. It was the arena of the events which were disclosed to John.

The leading fourth part of the empire, including the head-quarters at Rome, was Italy. The events of the fourth seal were to especially affect this section of the empire, as indeed was the case.

The sword *rhomphaia* denotes a longer sword than the dagger referred to in v.4 and was used by Thracians. The first emperor of the period, a crude, towering Thracian soldier called Maximinus, waged dreadful violence against any he suspected of being his enemy. Of this period the historian Herodian says:
“after reducing most of the notable houses to poverty and finding the income obtained thereby small and insufficient for his purpose, Maximinus began to lay hands on the public treasures”.

The complete disorganisation of the Roman frontier defences and the anarchy and insurrection among the troops, led to the inevitable flood of marauding “beasts of the earth” in the form of the Franks, the Alemanni, the Goths and the Persians.

Not only famine, but pestilence raged from AD 250-265. For some time 5,000 persons died daily in Rome and many towns were entirely depopulated. Thus the pallor of the Roman horse gave warning of its death-like condition. The historian Gibbon calculates that civil and national wars, the tyrannical conduct of Emperors, together with pestilence and famine accounted for the death, in a few years, of no less than half of the human race. Of this terrible period, he says:

“the animating health and vigour of the Empire were fled”.

Eventually, Diocletian took the sceptre in AD 284 and restored to the empire some sense of political order. In AD 286 he appointed a co-emperor to rule the western provinces, a fellow officer named Maximian and in AD 293, two heirs-apparent with the title of Caesar to succeed to the throne. These young men were named Galerius and Constantius. This confirmed the geographical divisions which already existed in the empire.

The four praefectures covered the areas of:
1. The East including Egypt, Syria, Asia Minor etc
2. Illyricum, as in modern Turkey
3. Italy
4. Gaul, comprising France, Spain, Britain etc.

Whilst under this system Diocletian retained the supremacy, his reign is still filled with incidents of slaughter of rivals. The disintegration prepared the way for a new system of government, which was afterwards completed by the family of Constantine. History books confirm these details and some entitle the period as “Diocletian’s Tetarchry”.

How amazing that this history was seen so long in advance - with details correct and in the right order!
“...And when he had opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held: And they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth? And white robes were given unto every one of them; and it was said unto them, that they should rest yet for a little season, until their fellow-servants also and their brethren, that should be killed as they were, should be fulfilled” (Rev.6:9-11).

Background
In the early part of the reign of Diocletian, the followers of Christ had quietly flourished whilst the Emperor devoted his attention to the reorganisation of the empire and the containing of the barbarian hordes along the frontiers. Ever since the reign of Nero, Christians had endured sporadic persecution, but in spite of this, congregations throughout the Empire had held their ground numerically and had even made some converts among Rome’s influential families. This period of comparative peace, however, was disastrous for the believers. Eusebius, who was contemporary with what he describes, says:

“Through too much liberty the Christians grew negligent and slothful, envying and reproaching one another - waging, as it were, civil war among themselves ... ”,

and the Ecclesiastical historian, Milner writes:

“The era of its (Christianity’s) actual declension must be dated in the pacific part of Diocletian’s reign.”

The Christians Divided
Fifty years before this fifth seal, the ecclesial world had been divided into two camps - one group followed the Bishop of Rome, Cornelius, and the second group was led by Novatius. Novatius and his followers were excommunicated by Cornelius and his council and they afterward completely disavowed any connection with the “mother” church or her ministers, whom they considered effeminate and abandoned. Novatius had been put to death for the Faith during the reign of Valerian, but the two groups nevertheless remained. Many in the Roman empire had united with Novationists in protesting against the prevailing corruption and they thus became known as Novationists or Puritans or in the Greek Chathari - a name bestowed upon them by their adversaries because of what they termed an excessive severity of discipline and exclusiveness. Instead, they began to desire recognition and political power.

This situation may well explain why the opening of this seal is not accompanied by a voice of one of four living creatures. That symbol represents the united camp of the faithful but during the previous seals periods, that unity had been sorely disturbed. The Ecclesia was no longer united, heresy was rife, and there had commenced a general drift from the principles and practices of the Truth.
What was the cause of the cry of anguish?
The fifth seal introduces a change of scene which portrays persecution. Diocletian, who, in a great measure, terminated the public calamities of the fourth seal by the vigour of his administration, proved a great persecutor of the now numerous Christians. At the instigation of Galerius, he determined to eradicate the name Christian from his dominions, for he attributed the calamities of the previous period to them. By an Imperial Edict he condemned to death those who held secret assemblies for worship. Moreover, any in possession of the Scriptures or any refusing to acknowledge Paganism were to die. From AD 303 many were thrown into prison and every mode of torture and death was used against them. He pursued his course with unrestrained fury and dedication and erected monuments commemorating his victories over the Christians. These were inscribed:

“Diocletian Jovian, Maximian Herculeus Caesares Augusti, for having extended the Roman Empire in the East and West, and for having extinguished the name of the Christians who brought the Republic to ruin.”

Another monument praised Galerius:

“For having everywhere abolished the superstition of Christ, for having extended the worship of the gods.”

Multitudes of professors saved themselves by renouncing Christianity and gave up the Scriptures to be destroyed - these were called Traditors or ‘the Lapsed’. However, many did remain faithful and were put to death throughout the Empire.

How can we understand souls under the altar?
Jews eat Kosher food as they are not to eat the blood - this is because Lev.17:14 states that the soul or life of the flesh is in the blood. In carrying out the sacrifices under Moses’ Law, the blood was poured at the base of the altar. So we may see the phrase “I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain...” as an echo of this practice.

The altar itself is a symbol of Christ:

“We have an altar, whereof they have no right to eat which serve the tabernacle”
(Heb.13:10)

The vision speaks of martyrs - they were symbolically crying to God and demanding retribution. When will God vindicate those who died in faith? Paul explains in Col.3:2 that the lives of believers are hid with Christ in God. This is because Christ has the power to bring all his people to life again by resurrection at the last day:

“And this is the Father’s will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day” (John 6:39).

A dead saint, especially one put to death for his faith, is in a special sense under the altar; in Christ’s safe keeping for resurrection and vindication at the appointed time. Meanwhile they are asleep in the dust of the earth - at rest for a little season.
How can dead saints speak?
It is not uncommon in the Bible to impute words to things incapable of speech. We may remember the incident early in the history of man when Cain killed his brother Abel. God then said to Cain:

“Thy brother’s blood crieth unto me from the ground” (Gen.4:10).

Paul comments on this incident and remarks that the sprinkled blood of Jesus:

“speaketh better things than that of Abel.” (Heb.12:24).

It is in this sense only that these slaughtered saints are referred to, and not as being literally alive and conscious. For we have seen in our other Bible studies that man is mortal. These saints are not shown as being immaterial and in heaven. They are under the Christ altar, and have been recognised by him as being worthy of the white robe of righteousness (ch.19:8).

It is helpful to us in our search for the meaning of the Book of Revelation to remember that literal truth must govern all our interpretations of symbols and parables, for God is consistent.

These believers appealed to their “Lord, holy and true” (v.10) and recognised His absolute supremacy over the affairs of man. The word they used was the Greek Despotes. As they resisted and suffered under a pagan Despot on earth, who was seated on the throne in Rome, they significantly appealed to one exercising greater power in heaven.

The promise of white robes
These white robes (v.11) remind us of the promise to the faithful in Sardis:

“Thou hast a few names even in Sardis which have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with me in white: for they are worthy” (ch.3:4).

It was intended to encourage the believers. They had been told not to take their own revenge

“Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord” (Rom.12:19).

and so they needed the reassurance contained in 2 Thess.1:5

“So that we ourselves glory in you in the churches of God for your patience and faith in all your persecutions and tribulations that ye endure: ......that ye may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which ye also suffer: Seeing it is a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to them that trouble you.”

They took comfort in the conviction that their Lord and Master would one day return to:

“judge the world in righteousness” (Acts 17:31).

The little season (v.11) during which more fellow-servants would be killed included the atrocities of Maximin who had succeeded Diocletian. These reached to AD 312, when this severest of all persecutions was ended by the victorious Constantine.

During these early centuries of Pagan persecution, Christianity might have been stamped out, had there not been provided both meeting and burying places, in the Catacombs of Rome (see W17.1).
Over four million graves have been found in this vast labyrinth of galleries, cut out of the soft volcanic tufa. They extend for fifteen miles along the Appian Way (Benjamin Scott, FRAS, *Catacombs of Rome*.) This is not mere book lore, nor historical conjecture but evidential proof to the fact of primitive Christianity. It is concrete evidence, in the heart of Rome itself, of the effective work of the “Arrowless Bowman” going forth “conquering and to conquer”.

The Book of Revelation
Two Opposing Forces in Scripture
The Book of Revelation is full of contrasts and the idea of two opposing forces. We may recall God’s promise in the Garden of Eden which introduces us to this idea:

“And I will put enmity between thee (the serpent) and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel” (Gen.3:15).

This serpent was described as more subtle than any beast of the field (Gen.3:1) so we might therefore expect his progeny or seed to be classified as beasts and to be similarly cunning.

The Lord Jesus was particularly angry with the religious leaders of his day for they had corrupted and replaced the upright laws God had given the Jews through Moses. He classed them as the seed of the serpent:

“Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell?” (Matt.23:33).

Scripture develops these ideas of wise and foolish people, and gives us many examples of those who fear God and those who rebel against Him. The opposites types are laid out especially in Psalms and Proverbs. God Himself looked at the nation of Israel in a special way.

The nation of Israel as a wife
God had loved Israel, rescued her from Egypt and had then spoken as if he had taken her to himself as a wife:

“Now when I passed by thee, and looked upon thee, behold, thy time was the time of love ... yea, I sware unto thee, and entered into a covenant with thee, saith the Lord GOD, and thou becamest mine” (Eze.16:8).

But the wife became a harlot when she committed adultery by worshipping the gods of the nations, in addition to Yahweh, the God of Israel:

SECTION 18

CLUE
TWO WOMEN
“But thou didst trust in thine own beauty, and playedst the harlot because of thy renown, and pouredst out thy fornications on every one that passed by; his it was” (Eze.16:15).

“... and makest thine high place in every street; and hast not been as an harlot, in that thou scornest hire; But as a wife that committeth adultery, which taketh strangers instead of her husband!” (v.31,32).

“And I will judge thee, as women that break wedlock and shed blood are judged; and I will give thee blood in fury and jealousy” (v.38).

The nation divides into two kingdoms
This one wife of Israel later became two wives in Ezekiel 23:4 - Aholah and Aholibah - who represented the two kingdoms when Israel divided after King Solomon. Samaria, the capital of the northern Israel and Jerusalem, the capital of Judah. The more faithful was Judah but finally they both worshipped false gods which was termed adultery. This is not actual immoral misbehaviour but spiritual and religious infidelity. This often did lead to actual immorality, as it was involved in the pagan rites and religious worship of the Canaanites.

The New Testament bride
The same movement from the pure to the adulteress is seen in the New Testament. The apostle Paul saw the new believers in a special way:

“For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ.
But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtlety, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ” (2 Cor.11:2,3).

Simplicity here is not naivety. The same chapter shows that his fears were not unfounded; the corruption was already working:

“For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ” (v.13).

In the book of Revelation the Lord Jesus sends a letter to believers in Thyatira. In it he warns them of subtlety and deception:

“Notwithstanding I have a few things against thee, because thou sufferest that woman Jezebel, which calleth herself a prophetess, to teach and to seduce my servants to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed unto idols” (Rev.2:20).

His very servants were being misled by false teaching to their destruction. They had to beware of these evil influences.
We may remember that the Jezebel of the Old Testament had persecuted faithful Jews and had even sought to kill the prophet Elijah. (1 Kings 19). But for some in Thyatira it was already too late - a part of the new prospective bride had already been unfaithful. This is very similar to what happened to Israel and later to Judah.

The Book of Revelation
In our study of the Book of Revelation we can look out for references to the Bride and also to the Harlot. We shall find that the *chaste virgin* had indeed fallen for she *brings forth a manchild* (ch.12). By ch.17 this harlot is presented in all her lurid details. The woman who began life as a chaste virgin and prospective bride ends up as a harlot persecuting power who opposes the Lamb (Rev.17:5,6,14). As we proceed, we will discover more information which will help us to identify this harlot.

By the end of the Book, the Bridegroom triumphantly returns to claim his Bride. In Matt.9:15, 25:1 and Mark 2:19 Christ depicts himself as the Bridegroom. God had created Eve to be a help-meat for Adam; so in a similar manner, He caused a deep sleep to fall upon Jesus of Nazareth and *he slept* for three days and three nights. In so doing, he gave himself for his bride:

> “Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; ... That he might present it to himself a glorious church ... that it should be holy and without blemish” (Eph.5:25-27).

We know that this is Paul’s meaning for he says in v.32:

> “This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church”.

So the One body of believers, both Jews and Gentiles, is symbolised as the Bride, as we saw in our *Clue* on the word *Ekklesia*. We each have the opportunity to make the decision as to whether or not we wish to become part of the bride of Christ.

Rev.19:7 speaks of the glorious marriage supper and Rev.21:9-17 shows us the full vision of the Lamb’s wife. If we wish to share in this glorious time, we too must be prepared through the instruction of the word of God and become adorned with that spirit or character that the bridegroom, Jesus Christ, values so highly:

> “And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband” (Rev.21:2)
THE GREAT EARTHQUAKE
Pagan Rome becomes Christian Rome
AD 311-324

“And I beheld when he had opened the sixth seal, and, lo, there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became as blood; And the stars of heaven fell unto the earth, even as a fig tree casteth her untimely figs, when she is shaken of a mighty wind. And the heaven departed as a scroll when it is rolled together; and every mountain and island were moved out of their places. And the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bondman, and every free man, hid themselves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains; And said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb: For the great day of his wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?” (Rev. 6:12-17).

The sixth seal shows us a different state of things altogether. It could well be looked upon as being a retribution on the Pagan world for the evil deeds performed under the fifth seal; but that is something we will have to each consider.

What does this earthquake represent?
We are presented with a symbolic picture of a universe in tempestuous dissolution. By now we probably expect that this refers to the political universe, for symbols do not represent themselves. We remember from when we discussed how Scripture uses the word Heaven in Section 10, that heaven can mean the rulers of a society. So heavenly bodies such as sun, moon and stars would refer to those controlling the empire. Similarly an earthquake would affect every level of society, as is reflected in the language of v.15. Following close on the fearful persecutions of the fifth seal under Diocletian, what happened in the Empire which could possibly be represented by such amazing language?

The Book of Revelation
The success of Constantine
Diocletian’s colleague, Constantius, who ruled the west, had disapproved of his persecutions and successfully shielded the Christians from the extreme measures dealt out to them in other parts of the empire. His son Constantine, perceiving them to be a growing party in the State, proclaimed himself their protector. On succeeding his father Constantine marched from Britain to Italy and after a series of victorious battles, including that of Milvian Bridge in AD 312 when he overcame the other ruler of the West, Maxentius, he found himself in Rome. He was now the unchallenged ruler of the principal third part of the empire. He emancipated all Christians and many mutilated believers suddenly found themselves in power and favour. Constantine claimed to have seen a vision of a Cross in the sky with the message “In this sign, conquer”. He subsequently painted the Christian monogram on the soldier’s shields.

His position continued to be challenged by the remaining two rulers of the Empire. These were Licinius in Illyricum and Maximin in the East. These saw the position as a contest between Paganism and Christianity as is shown by the speech of Licinius before the battle of Adrianople in AD 323:

“Friends and fellow-warriors, these are the gods of our ancestors, whom, received from our earliest predecessors as objects of worship, we honor; but he who commands the army that is drawn up against us, having adopted an atheistic opinion, violates the customs of the fathers, venerating a god from abroad, I know not whence, and disgraces his troops with his ignominious standard (the Cross with the monogram of Christ) ... This occasion therefore will show which of us errs in his belief, and will decide between the gods ... for either by showing us the victors, it will show our gods are most justly regarded as auxiliaries and savours; or, if the Deity of Constantine, come from I know not whence, shall prevail over ours, which are many, let no one thereafter doubt what Deity ought to be worshipped ... If the foreign god, whom we now deride, should appear the mightiest, we must acknowledge and honor him, and bid farewell to these to whom we have vainly lit wax tapers. But if ours prevail, which is not to be doubted, then, after the victory, we must proceed to war against the atheists”.

The fear of the Pagans
Licinius lost this battle and historians tell us that in this defeat “the greater part of the fugitives retired to the mountains.” This they did, to conceal themselves from the conqueror, as predicted in the seal (v.15). All levels and ranks of Roman society, having participated in the persecution of the Christians, recognised in these public calamities the retribution inflicted by “the God of the Christians”. They assumed that Constantine’s armies were the true representatives of Christ and that therefore the successes attached to the conquests of Constantine were manifestations of the ‘Lamb’s’ power. The Pagans became panic stricken to the extent of desiring concealment, even in death, from the terrors that swept through the length and breadth of the Roman Empire as Constantine’s armies overcame the armies of the Pagans, as is seen in ch.6:15.

These words are drawn from Isaiah 2:10 and so the events of the sixth seal foreshadow an even greater upheaval to come at the coming victory of the Lord Jesus Christ when he returns (see also Malachi 3:2). It may feel incongruous to speak of Jesus showing wrath to his enemies, but a moment’s thought will remind us of his scathing attacks on the hypocritical Pharisees, who had misrepresented God’s law to the people. In the letter to Ephesus (Rev.2:6) we saw that he felt hate towards the deeds of the Nicolaitans; and in Matt.21:12 and Mark 3:5 he shows anger.
The victor - Constantine - pursued his opponent across the Bosphorus. At the battle of Chrysopolis in AD 323, Licinius surrendered to the superior might of Constantine, leaving him supreme. His extraordinary success had resulted in the complete defeat of the armies of the Pagan emperors. Constantine, the befriender of the persecuted Christians, had become sole master of the empire.

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“Constantine saw himself as responsible to God for the well being of the church to which he more and more publicly and unequivocally adhered. After AD 320 the sun no longer appeared on his coins and his soldiers had to attend church parades.” (The Pelican History of the World).

The end of the Pagan Imperial heavens

History thus shows us the Pagan world in a state of violent and revolutionary turmoil ending in the overthrow of Paganism. The old order of a thousand years based on national idolatry was upset and a new ‘world’ order established! The Pagan Imperial heavens of Rome - sun, moon and all the stars included - were rolled away like a scroll.

The constitution of the world was completely changed and the social upheaval is well described as an earthquake, resulting in all the effects portrayed in the prophecy. It shows in symbol how the previous form of government would be overthrown; the entire pagan political system - involving emperors, princes, rulers, and priests would be removed from their positions of authority. The sun of the political universe - the Pagan emperorship, who was both high-priest and defender of Paganism, became darkened or eclipsed; the moon, or ecclesiastical element of the Roman empire - the Pagan clergy - could no longer be seen as the borrowed light of its sun had been eclipsed, and so it disappeared in blood. The stars of these political heavens were the numerous statesmen exercising authority in the empire by the goodwill of the emperor, and they therefore fell out of their places with the overthrow of their master and gave place to Christian successors. The Church clergy now constituted a powerful aristocracy throughout the empire.

“Constantine had brought a whole new world into being. Constantine himself was profoundly aware of the vastness and holiness of his task; he saw himself as the thirteenth apostle of Jesus, and as God’s messianic regent upon earth.”

“The church’s elevation therefore to become the ruling section of the Empire was one of the most surprising phenomena in Roman history” (Michael Grant, History of Rome).

This earthquake revolutionized the whole Greek-Latin world, for as we have seen, Rome wielded universal empire over the civilised races of men. It dethroned the worship of Jupiter, cast all his official adherents out of their places and installed the “holy catholic church” in the government of the Roman world. The effects of this great earthquake are felt in every part of the globe to this day. A change so radical, effected so violently, could not better be represented than by the symbolism of the sixth seal.

“In a political sense it is still proper to date the age in which we live from the French Revolution. The shock carried by that Revolution and the spread of its principles has produced repercussions ever since.” (Larousse, Modern History).
In a *History of The Church* issued by Catholicism for use in its schools, the conquest of Constantine is described as follows:

“In the year 313, he issued from Milan a decree giving toleration to Christianity, and shortly afterwards he declared himself a Christian. Thus after two and a half centuries of bitter persecution, the Church had triumphed, and the cross replaced the eagle on the standards of Rome.”

Despite this famous Edict of Tolerance Constantine himself continued to try “to read the riddle of the future from the steaming entrails of sacrificial sheep” (from *The Liberation of Mankind*, p,80) and put off being baptised until his deathbed. He was, however, an astute statesman and in an endeavour to make Christianity attractive to pagans, a series of Councils were held to determine agreed doctrine.

Pagan practices such as magic were freely indulged in, and pagan feasts were renamed and incorporated into the Christian calendar.

Macaulay later wrote:

“The church was victorious and corrupt. The rites of the Pantheon had passed into her worship, the subtleties of the Academy into her creed. In an evil day, though with great pomp and solemnity, was the ill-starred alliance stricken between the old philosophy and the new faith.” (*Essays*, “Lord Bacon”).

**Dissenters**

These general approaches and changes caused widespread division among some followers of Christ who felt that the essence of what he stood for was being undermined by linkages with and tolerance of paganism.

From contemporary historians it appears that in the far-flung western provinces of the empire, around the African seaboard of the Mediterranean, there remained a sizeable community who were strongly anti-Catholic.

Although little is known of them apart from the testimony of their enemies, they claimed to at least professed “the faithful and apostolic element” of true Christian doctrine. They were known as the Donatists and refused any fellowship in any form with the Catholic Church in her political or ecclesiastical functions.

**Scriptural Use of these Symbols**

The same symbols as are used to describe this seal are referred to many times in the Old Testament. A notable example is Isaiah 34:4, which relates to the overthrow of ancient Edom:

“And all the host of heaven shall be dissolved, and the heavens shall be rolled together as a scroll: and all their host shall fall down, as the leaf falleth off from the vine, and as a falling fig from the fig tree.”

Joel 2:10 paints a similar picture of a day of trouble:
“The earth shall quake before them; the heavens shall tremble; the sun and the moon shall be dark, and the stars shall withdraw their shining ...”

Other examples are to be found in Isaiah 60:20; Jer.15:9 and Amos 8:9 where Zion’s sun was to go down, and in Dan.8:10 and Matthew 24:29 where stars are said to fall.

We have already considered the Scriptural use of ‘heavens’ in 2 Peter 3:10-12 when the Jewish heavens were to be overthrown in AD 70 as completely as the Pagan heavens were to be in AD 312. See also Isaiah 51:6 for a use of similar language.

**How are mountains moved in v.14?**
Jeremiah 51:24-26 speaks of Babylon as a mountain, when predicting its fall:

>“And I will render unto Babylon ... Behold I am against thee, O destroying mountain, saith the LORD, which destroyest all the earth: and I will stretch out mine hand upon thee, and roll thee down from the rocks, and will make thee a burnt mountain ... thou shalt be desolate for ever, saith the LORD.”

So we can understand these words in Rev.6:14 to mean that sections of the Roman empire which might be considered immune from normal disturbances because of their prominence or insularity, were not to be immune from the effects of the earthquake.

**How contemporary writers saw these events**
The ecclesiastical historian of the time applied the language of Psalm 46:8,9 to this epoch:

>“And now a bright and splendid day, with no overshadowing cloud, irradiated the churches in the whole world with its celestial light.”  (Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History*, Book 15, ch.1)

The last verse 17 of ch.6 sums up the attitude of both pagans and the Christians in power, who had now achieved an alliance of church and state. Many pagans embraced the new religion, and the Christians began to teach that the Church comprised the Kingdom of God on earth. They saw in its elevation to power, the fulfilment of all the prophecies of Christ’s reign on earth - the Millennium. This was later especially expounded by Augustine. It is a matter of great debate as to how the volume of Scriptural prophecies concerning the Kingdom of God re-established on the earth by Jesus, could possibly be represented by the fallible reigns of a series of mortal men.

See W19.1, W19.2
THE SEALS OF REVELATION CHAPTER 6

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<td>COMMODIUS (strangled)</td>
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<td>Strong # 4450. Firelike, flame coloured. A fiery red. This, together with what else is stated signifies the onset of a fiery war.</td>
<td>PERTINAX (murdered)</td>
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<tr>
<td>BLACK HORSE</td>
<td>Period of heavy taxation. “The growing cost of the armed forces and the inflation accompanied it compelled the emperors to increase existing taxes and invent new ones. The spirit of the times was, moreover, very susceptible to the message of Christianity, which makes great advances.” Pages 217-218</td>
<td>JULIANUS (army revolts)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PALE HORSE</td>
<td>“For nearly half a century – since the death of Severus Alexander – the roman world had been on the verge of</td>
<td>MAXIMUS</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pale – Gk. Chlorus;</td>
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Green – sallow, deathly colour. It exactly fits the character of the times. 

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Green – sallow, deathly colour. It exactly fits the character of the times</th>
<th>chaos, and the consequences were incalculable. The empire emerged from the period <em>in a state of collapse</em>. Wherever the barbarians had passed they had left behind them <em>waste and ruin</em>, while the peasants whose fields and homes were ravaged, often yearly, had fled. Many of them had been slaughtered and many others had <em>died of starvation.</em>” Pages 218-220</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>FIFTH SEAL C/p 1 Cor 10:6-18. Those under the altar are those who sleep in Christ – c/p Gen 4:9-10. They sacrificed themselves for the Truth. Romans 12:19. Future persecutions anticipated.</td>
<td>“To complete his work Diocletian set about the task of restoring the moral unity of the Empire, which at once brought him into conflict with Christianity…In 303, therefore, several edicts were published ordering churches to be closed and books sacred to Christian worship to be seized. First the clergy and then the faithful were legally obliged to offer sacrifices in the Roman manner.” Page 224</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SIXTH SEAL C/p language of Isaiah 34:4,5. Also Isa 13 (especially v10). See also Ezek 32:7,8.</td>
<td>“At this moment the empire had finally broken with Roman pagan tradition and a new era was about to begin.” Page 225</td>
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The Book of Revelation
A regular feature of the Book of Revelation are chapters we might call *visions of the kingdom* and there are seven of these. They are interspersed between the unfolding events of the historical visions and are like cameos of the future glory. Each are given at a new phase of events and each portray a different aspect of the thrilling work of the saints.

As the plan of God has unfolded through its seals, trumpets and vials the believers have been able to note the period of history in which they lived. The snapshot visions have encouraged and strengthened them down through the ages as they have looked in faith to the kingdom promised. They continue to instruct and encourage believers today that the purpose of God is unchanged and is working towards its certain and predetermined end.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Chapter(s)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ch.1:12-16</td>
<td>Vision of the final purpose of God with the body of believers - the multitudinous Christ man; all the saints immortal and prepared for dominion and judgment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ch.4,5</td>
<td>Christ on the throne; the saints in glory as living creatures and elders - this would encourage saints who would come under persecution throughout history</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ch.7</td>
<td>The 144,000 sealed in their foreheads - victory through great tribulation. Encouragement for the saints who had to stand aside from positions of power in the state Roman church in the 4th century in the time of Constantine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ch.10</td>
<td>The march of the Rainbowed Angel achieving victory over the nations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ch.14</td>
<td>The 144,000 with the Lamb on Mount Zion. The conquest of Babylon anticipated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ch.15</td>
<td>Glory to come after the fall of Babylon the Great - the nations peaceful. Saints sing the song of Moses and of the Lamb. True believers needed this assurance before the rise of the final phase of the Beast</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ch.19,21,22</td>
<td>The marriage of the Lamb and his Bride. An invitation to attend the marriage supper</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
These visions of the glorious future all include a throne belonging to the kingdom of God which is to be set up on earth. The events symbolised in the rest of the Book have a direct relation to that kingdom and this is the reason why certain historical happenings are foretold. We must not suppose, however, that all events from John’s time to ours and beyond could be foretold; but the leading events which have a direct bearing between Christ’s true brethren and the world are seen to be the important events. Others, which we might consider of importance, may be passed over unnoticed. This is the same basis as that adopted in the Old Testament where the Kingdom of Israel is dealt with (called the Kingdom of the Lord 1 Chron.28:5). The full development is looked forward to in prophecy as the future establishment of the Kingdom of God. Thus the Bible refers to four great epochs which can be called:

1. Pre-Israelitish times - Adam to the call of Abraham
2. Israelitish times - to the death of Christ
3. Gentile times - to the second coming of Christ
4. The Kingdom of God

The third section receives a little attention in the prophecy of Daniel and much more detail in the book of Revelation but the other three are dealt with fully in the Old and New Testaments.

Two vital keys to understanding ...

1. What do the visions describe?
We have already noted that all the visions are concerned with the throne of the coming kingdom of God. We have also noticed that the prophets Daniel and Ezekiel had visions of the four living creatures such as John saw in chapter 4. Another prophet, Isaiah, saw a similar vision of one seated on a throne of glory and again surrounded by the living creatures with six wings, called here the seraphs:

“In the year that king Uzziah died, I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne high and lifted up and his train filled the temple. Above it stood the seraphims: each one had six wings ... And one cried unto another, and said Holy, holy, holy, is the LORD of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory ... Then said I, Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips ... for mine eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts.” (Isa.6:1-5)

Here we are introduced to the supreme name of the Deity - Yahweh - shown in the Authorised Version of the Bible as LORD, and to the seraphs with their superlative ascriptions of praise.

A problem!
Yet we know from the rest of Scripture that it is impossible for men to see God:

“ Ye have neither heard His voice at any time, nor seen His shape ” (John 5:37)
“ No man hath seen God at any time, the only begotten Son which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him” (John 1:18).
“Who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen, nor can see.” (1 Tim.6:16).

Despite this, Isaiah says in 758 BC:
“... for mine eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts” (Isa.6:5)
“I heard the voice of the Lord saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then said I, Here am I; send me” (Isa.6:8).

We have seen in our other studies that Scripture does not contradict itself, although a surface reading may give that impression. The explanation of this puzzle has a direct relation to the visions we are considering in the book of Revelation.

**The answer given by John himself**
In the gospel of John ch.12, the inspired apostle comments on why the people disbelieved the miracles of Jesus. In verse 38 he quotes from Isaiah 53 which is a familiar chapter to us, for it describes the suffering of Christ. He follows this with a quotation from Isaiah 6, which comes at the end of the verses we considered above. And then he makes the amazing statement that Isaiah’s vision was about Jesus:
“These things said Esaias, when he saw his glory, and spake of him” (John 12:41).

This simple statement explains emphatically what would otherwise appear not only improbable, but impossible; that Isaiah did not actually see the Supreme Deity despite the phrase “the King, the LORD of Hosts” - but a symbolic picture of the Lord Jesus Christ enthroned in glory. When we think about it we see that this must be the case, because in v.3 Isaiah states of the vision - “The whole earth is full of His glory”. This was certainly not the case in 758 BC and indeed, it is still future, until Christ takes unto himself his power and authority and reigns. It is a symbolic vision. As we have previously seen with the “three frogs and the dried up river” - there were no frogs and no river. Jesus is not actually there - he had not yet been born.

So the startling truth is brought home to us that Jesus in his glory fulfils this apparent description of the hierarchy of heaven. This divine aspect of the Son of Man is of paramount importance in understanding the fascinating truth about how God intends to manifests himself and is also referred to by Isaiah in Chapters 9 and 40.

So when we consider the visions of future glory, one of which is of the throne in heaven in chapter 4, we have to remember that this is the Revelation of Jesus Christ of things yet to come to pass on the earth, “things which shall be hereafter”. This is the Key to all the visions in Revelation, which speak only of Christ whose revelation it is.

2. **The End Picture Presented First**
The vital principle to understand is that the final picture is presented first, and afterwards the processes that lead to it are explained.
For example in ch.11:15-17 we see the time when
“the kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever.”

Then in the next two verses we read of God dealing with the nations who were angry, which clearly would have to happen first:

“And the nations were angry, and thy wrath is come, and the time of the dead, that they should be judged...” (Rev.11:18).

Another simple example is ch.15:1-4 where the saints sing the song of Moses and of the Lamb when “all nations shall come and worship before thee.” This is the end when the kingdom has been set up. The next verses introduce “seven golden vials full of the wrath of God.” Ch.16 details the pouring out of these, leading up to Armageddon and the return of Christ. Then follows the seventh vial and the great earthquake which marks the judgment of God upon great Babylon. These are events, perhaps over a long period of time, which lead up to the opening picture in vs.1-4.

An Old Testament example
This method is used throughout Scripture to help us understand this principle. In Isaiah 2:1-4 we read the well-known passage about the establishment of the kingdom. Following this, verses 10-22 give us the details leading up to it.

Similarly, in Isaiah 11:1-9 we see “the peaceable kingdom of the Branch” where “the wolf also shall dwell with the lamb ... and a little child shall lead them” and “the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD”. After this in verses 10-16, we are given some of the particulars regarding the regathering of Israel, prior to the establishment of the kingdom, when “the Lord shall set his hand again a second time to recover the remnant of his people.” At this time also shall Christ “stand for an ensign of the people” and “to it shall the Gentiles seek”.

This principle a vital key
The principle in prophecy of the ultimate goal stated first, followed by the events leading up to it, is vital to our correct understanding of the book of Revelation. It is important to always remember this principle or wildly differing interpretations could result!

Summary of visions - Jesus is always shown sitting on his throne. The foundation principle of the gospel is that he is going to return, and will set up his kingdom - with his saints. The judgments of Revelation are only on those who repeatedly refuse and so the world has to be purged and reconstructed. But a wonderful prospect through resurrection remains - it is never too late to turn to the Lord, who is forgiving and merciful.
In this chapter our attention is diverted to the work of God amongst true believers themselves, rather than to happenings in the whole Roman empire. It is a wonderful contrast and shows us the blessings for those who remain constant.

**Background**
A new situation had now arisen in the earth; previously Christianity had stood in sharp relief against all forms of Paganism. Constantine as we have noted, united church and state under one authority, and Christianised the Roman empire. In order to achieve a consensus he had absorbed various aspects of Paganism into the State religion. There were groups who resented these changes, and stood aside from the religion of the State. We know little of such protestors except from the testimony of their enemies but the Arians, the Ebionites and the Donatists seem to have been such. Among these were many conscientious objectors who would not take up the sword to defend themselves. Milner, for example, refers to the “peaceable Donatists” who were frequently banished into exile.

The Donatists appeared as a numerous people in the early part of the fourth century, which is the time soon after Constantine’s victory as required by chapter 7. They resided in the African portion of the Roman empire where it embraced all the countries bordering the southern part of the Mediterranean Sea. They denied the christianity of Catholics and would have no fellowship with them. They rejected Catholic baptism as null and void, repudiated their dogmas and contended for “the simplicity which is in Christ.” They claimed their faith to be Apostolic as distinct from the Catholic. Their separation from the Catholic Church began when it was proposed to elect a manifestly wicked man to be a bishop and so their chief characteristic seems to have been an intense zeal for purity within the church and freedom from all worldly taint. They were bitterly persecuted by Constantine, who issued a severe law against them.

*There was now claimed to be the true and the counterfeit amongst Christianity itself.*
There had always been false disciples and wrong beliefs, about which the apostles had warned in their day. But now there was an established, state church and a large body of dissenters. Their beliefs were mutually exclusive, yet in some ways they looked the same, for they both claimed to follow the Lord Jesus Christ and believed he had been crucified and resurrected. It was obviously vital to God’s
purpose that the true ecclesia was not submerged. So the time of peace in the Roman Empire which followed Constantine’s victories was an opportunity for Christians to regroup and preach the true gospel to those who would listen.

Error expected to arise
The apostle Paul had written to Timothy about a similar issue of error in the ecclesia and had given him assurance and guidance for true believers:

“Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his. And, let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity” (2 Tim.2:19).

Why does this sealing work come between the Seals and the Trumpets?
In passing we should note the significant placing of ch.7 between the Seals of ch.6 and the Trumpets of ch.8. Constantine united church and state under one authority, and Christianised the Roman empire. It was now necessary, in the Divine scheme of things, to separate the true believers. This separation was not merely from the politics of the world as previously, but also from the pseudo-Christianity that had assumed positions of political power. It was important to show that the Christianity in power was not the true faith.

After these things ...
An understanding of this state of affairs will help us to make sense of chapter 7. The first words “After these things” is a significant expression used in the Book of Revelation to indicate a new facet of the vision. Up till now, John had seen a symbolic representation of the things “written on the outside”, events in the world (see notes ch.5). The scene now changes to consider things written on the “inside of the scroll”, i.e. a description of the effects of these events on the believers (those within) as opposed to the empire at large (those outside).

What do the four winds signify?
We are helped in our understanding by reading Jer.4:11-13 where winds represent armies:

“A dry wind of the high places in the wilderness toward the daughter of my people, not to fan, nor to cleanse. Even a full wind from those places shall come unto me: now also will I give sentence against them. Behold, he shall come up as clouds, and his chariots shall be as a whirlwind ...” (Jer.4:11-13).

as is also the case in Isa.17:13,14 and Dan.7:2.

The “four winds” stand for all winds, or war from whatever quarter. So “angels holding the four winds” intimates that the events leading to war are subject to the control of Christ (Matt.28:18) to whom the angels are subject (1 Peter 3:22).

As we have already noted, earth generally represents the Roman empire (ch.16:14); sea denotes nations (Isa.57:20), whilst trees stand for people (cp.Psa.1:3; Isa.40:6-8).
So we have a picture of a period during which all armies were held in restraint, and a state of peaceful calm throughout the empire for people and nations. The reign of Constantine was noted for a period of peace extending to AD 396.

The next verse (v.2) introduces us to “an angel ascending from the east” which is better rendered “having ascended from the east”. The word “east” is literally the “sun rising” as in the RV. The gospel came “out of the sun rising” in the sense of being promulgated by the risen Christ - The Sun of Righteousness. This gospel was also brought from the east, the land of Israel into the western regions of the Roman Empire. It was brought by the members of the true ecclesia including the apostles, who are thus pictured as an angel or messenger. (It could be called a ‘multitudinous angel’ as it comprises many believers).

The seal
The effect of the preaching of the gospel by this multitudinous angel is likened to the impress made by a seal. A seal is an implement for making an official mark of identification or authentication on a prepared surface and wherever the seal is impressed it makes the same mark. If the material to be sealed is not suitable, the seal does not make a mark or else makes a defective and therefore useless one. The spiritual lesson can be readily seen in the work of preaching the gospel, for it is necessary for the hearers to have thoughtful, receptive minds, capable of feeling humility before God.

The truth contained in the gospel given by the inspired apostles is the seal of God. When this is brought into contact with “good honest hearts” makes a mark or impression on their thinking. It is the state of mind caused by the knowledge of the gospel, which is why the seal is spoken of being applied to the forehead - it is the symbol of the understanding. To be “sealed in the forehead” is to have the truth impressed on the understanding by the preaching of the gospel. Such a work on a large scale requires a time of peace. When men are at war their minds are too pre-occupied. This is the reason for the peace that followed the Constantinian revolution - a peace divinely provided and preserved - that the sealing work might be effectively done.

Why 144,000?
This symbolic number represents the whole number of the redeemed. The total of 144,000 is derived from the square of twelve, denoting perfect government, and relates specifically to Israel. We saw in ch.4 that the Israelitish nature of the hope was emphasised - the priestly aspects of Israel being symbolised in the twenty-four elders and the military organisation of four divisions in the four living creatures. Now the general organisation of Israel is brought into focus. Whereas twelve is representative of the tribes of Israel, its square denotes the families of Israel - the word thousands is a term frequently used in the OT in the sense of families or of clans (Judges 6:15; Num.1:16, 10:4, 36; 31:5, 1 Sam 10:19). The civil administration of Israel was divided into twelve divisions, over which were appointed twelve princes and twelve stewards (1 Chron.27:16,25). This suggests a square of twelve, creating a foundation of 144. The New Jerusalem in Rev.21 shows this same foundation pattern measurement, with twelve foundations and twelve gates.

Another interesting aspect of the symbolic number of 144,000 is that it reflects the standing army of Israel. This consisted of 1,000 from each of the twelve tribes for each month of the year.
The symbolic number of the redeemed therefore represents the full completion of the household of God, as the basis of the perfect Israelitish Government of the millenial age. The Lord Jesus said “Salvation is of the Jews” (John 4:22) and the gospel is “the hope of Israel” as Paul told the Jews in Acts 28:20, being based on promises made to the fathers of the house of Israel (Rom.15:8). The letters to Smyrna and Philadelphia speak of those who claimed to be Jews but were not, for only faithful believers are the true seed of Abraham. The extension of this hope of Israel to Gentiles meant that they ceased to be Gentiles and strangers (Eph.2:12). They became fellow citizens in the commonwealth of Israel. It is therefore appropriate that the sealing is represented as affecting the tribes of Israel.

**How are the redeemed prepared for glory?**
John sees a great and innumerable company of all nations, peoples and tongues standing in glory before the throne (v.9). This company will not actually be gathered until Christ comes to reward them, for their glory is to come after the sealing and the suffering in their lives in v.14. The apostles knew “that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God” (Acts 14:22). Such experiences are moulding influences on our characters by which they will be shaped for divine use in the Age to come. The glorious vision in this chapter of the redeemed at rest (v.15-17) must have been very encouraging to true believers who had to stand aside from the false church and who continued to be persecuted.

**When will the total number of the redeemed be made up?**
John sees ‘after this’ the actual result and how long after is not indicated. The work of the gospel and the end to which God purposes it shall lead, must always be taken together. The exact number we are told in v.9 is “a great multitude which no man could number.” God, however, does know the number, and His “longsuffering waiteth” until the full completion is achieved (2 Pet.3:15; 1 Pet.3:20).
Error expected to arise
As already mentioned, the beliefs and practices of early Christianity had undergone much change since the days of the apostles and this had been clearly predicted by them.

The apostle Paul had written to Timothy about errors in teaching likely to arise in the ecclesias. For example: 2 Timothy 4:3

“For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables.”

With the Christianisation of the Roman world by Constantine many opportunities arose for changes in teaching. What actually happened may be illustrated by considering two doctrinal issues as recorded by historians. One such teaching concerns the coming the millennial reign of Christ on earth: the second concerns Christian participation in military service.

The Millennial Reign of Christ on Earth.
The historian Gibbon traces what happened to this belief:

“The ancient and popular doctrine of the Millennium was intimately connected with the second coming of Christ. As the works of the creation had been finished in six days, their duration in the present state, according to a tradition which was attributed to the prophet Elijah, was fixed to six thousand years. By the same analogy, it was inferred that this long period of labour and contention, which was now almost elapsed, would be succeeded by a joyful sabbath of a thousand years; and that Christ with the triumphant band of the saints and the elect who had escaped death, or who had been miraculously revived, would reign upon earth until the time appointed for the last and general resurrection.

The assurance of such a Millennium was carefully inculcated by a succession of fathers from Justin Martyr and Irenaeus who conversed with the immediate disciples of the apostles, down
to Lactantius, who was Preceptor to the son of Constantine. Though it might not be universally received, it appears to have been the reigning sentiment of the orthodox believers: and it seems so well adapted to the desires and apprehensions of mankind, that it must have contributed in a very considerable degree to the progress of the Christian faith.

But when the edifice of the Church was almost completed, the temporary support was laid aside, the doctrine of Christ’s reign upon earth was at first treated as a profound allegory, was considered by degrees as a doubtful and useless opinion, and was at length rejected as the absurd invention of heresy and fanaticism.

(Edward Gibbon, The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire, Ch.15)

This is confirmed by the Encyclopaedia Britannica:

By the time of the triumph of the church in the reign of Constantine such hopes were on the wane. The great Western theologian Augustine was a millenarian early in his career, but he later changed his views. At the Council of Ephesus (431) millenarian views were not condemned; but they were mentioned only to be ignored. In later times they arose sporadically when they could be used against the authority of the church; thus they flourished among spiritual enthusiasts during the Middle Ages and particularly at the time of the Reformation, when social and religious ferment worked together, especially among the various groups loosely denominated Anabaptist. 

(Britannica On-line 1998)

Christian Participation in Military Service

The second teaching was the very practical question of allegiance to the State and of taking up arms in its defence, and was thus a crucial one for Christians. There is no doubt that the earliest Christians believed the Lord Jesus when he told them:

“They that take the sword shall perish with the sword” (Matt.26:52)

And as he explained to Pilate

“My kingdom is not of this world, else would my servants fight” ( John 18:36)

It is interesting to consider the following quotations:

“And we who formerly slew one another not only do not make war against our enemies, but, for the sake of not telling lies or deceiving those who examine us, gladly die confessing Christ” (Apology of Justin Martyr AD 150 - addressed to the emperor Antoninus Pius)

“And we who formerly slew one another not only do not make war against our enemies, but, for the sake of not telling lies or deceiving those who examine us, gladly die confessing Christ” (Apology of Justin Martyr AD 150 - addressed to the emperor Antoninus Pius)

“Who does not reckon among the things of greatest interest the contests of gladiators and wild beasts ...? But we, deeming that to see a man put to death is much the same as killing him, have abjured such spectacles. How then, when we do not even look on, lest we should contract guilt and pollution, can we put people to death?” (Athenagoras, Legat.35 - written about AD 177 to the emperor Marcus Aurelius, AD (161-180).

Many dangers beset the empire during the reign of this emperor, and the heathen writer Celsus angrily complained that if all citizens acted as Christians the empire would be lost. In connection with the
greater dangers that imperilled the empire’s very existence in the middle of the third century, an eminent modern ecclesiastical historian bitterly remarks:

“The great corporation of the Church even yet maintained its selfish isolation. Not a hand would they lift to save a sinking world” (H M Gwatkin, Early Church History, II.267).

The result was a justification of the persecutions of the emperors Decius (249-251) and Valerian (253-259), who felt that in such a crisis all sources of weakness should be eliminated from the empire.

Tertullian made it clear in AD 211 that his attitude was a question of the impossibility of dual allegiance - the military oath asked too much of a man who owed his allegiance to Christ:

“Is it right to occupy oneself with the sword, when the Lord proclaims that he who uses the sword shall perish by the sword? And shall he, who is not the avenger even of his own wrongs, administer chains and imprisonment and torture and executions? ... No plea of necessity or risk of death can justify wrongdoing; the case is similar with public offices; one must flee from them or endure martyrdom.” (Tertullian, quoted in C J Cadoux, The Early Church and the World, p.422-430).

Early in the third century there were sets of rules for church membership, one of which is as follows:

“A man who has accepted the power of killing, or a soldier, may never be received at all.” (The Hippolytean Canons according to Achelis, xiii.71).

Origen regarded it as wrong for a Christian to kill a man under any circumstances:

“... For we no longer take ‘sword against a nation’ nor do we learn ‘any more to make war’, having become sons of peace for the sake of Jesus, who is our leader, instead of the ancestral customs in which we were strangers to the covenants.” (Origen, C J Cadoux, The Early Church and the World, p.424,434-437).

A gradual change

However, in the decades preceding Constantine, Christians had begun to enter public life, becoming magistrates and even accepting the now mainly social honour of being local priests of the emperor-worship. Their first and second century predecessors had suffered martyrdom rather than offer, much less preside over, such worship. Christian soldiers were found in the armies of Diocletian and Galerius and as we have already noted, many more still were found in the forces of Constantine in his successful bid for supremacy.

This gradual change is confirmed in the Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church:

“In early times when the form of civil government was essentially pagan, some ecclesiastical enactments were made which seemed to forbid Christians to take part in military service, while Tertullian and Lactantius also expressly condemned it. On the other hand, there were numbers of Christians in the army from the second century onwards.” (Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church 2nd Edition 1974).

It is also recognised by a church working party:
“It is not easy to establish what was the Christian attitude to war as such in the first three centuries of the Christian era, because for a variety of reasons Christians normally abstained from military service. It was in the aftermath of the conversion of the Roman Empire in the fourth century AD that influential Christian thinkers and leaders began to teach that it could be licit for Christians to fight in a war, on condition that the war was just and that they fought with a right intention” (The Church and the Bomb, 1982, Hodder & Stoughton).

**Two Christian groups**

Yet so completely was the alliance between Church and State formed, that in as early as AD 314 the Council of Arles pronounced excommunication against deserters from the army of Constantine. So believing Christians were forced to choose whether they would compromise the commandments of Christ in order to remain in the State Church.
Learn to Read the Bible Effectively

SECTION 23

INTRODUCTION TO THE TRUMPETS

Introduction
We have now reached ch.8. We have seen that the six seals depicted in amazing detail the main happenings in the Western Roman Empire, right up until Constantine became the first Christian sole emperor in AD 324.

We have also spent some time looking at the subsequent history of this Western Roman Empire and know that it sustained various changes and attacks until it finally fell in AD 476. So we will not be surprised that ch.8 reflects these changes and portrays them for us in a symbolic way.

But the book is not just a prophecy of history to come, impressive though that would be. We are shown that the Lord Jesus Christ is in control. Ch.7 explained that he is intimately involved with his true saints and knows them, as we would expect. Although they were not spared the hardships of exile and many suffered death in these early years of the now Christianised Roman Empire, the Lord encouraged them with visions of their ultimate glory, as we see in ch.7.

He is also concerned to warn the peoples who have become caught up in a new system of life and we realise that the events he controls have a purpose. This is expressed in ch.9:20,21:

“And the rest of the men which were not killed by these plagues yet repented not of the works of their hands, that they should not worship devils and idols of gold .. Neither repented they of their murders, nor of their sorceries, nor of their fornication, nor of their thefts.”

So the events are designed to bring about an awareness of the true nature of things and a change of heart. The Old Testament describes other occasions when God has sought to warn Gentile nations and ask for their repentance, for instance, Jonah was sent to preach in Nineveh, the capital city of the mighty empire of Assyria. Their repentance and change of life successfully averted judgment for a time (Jonah ch.3).

God’s principle is stated in Jeremiah 18:7-10:

“At what instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to pluck up, and to pull down, and to destroy it; If that nation, against whom I have pronounced, turn from their evil, I will repent of the evil that I thought to do unto them. And at what instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to build and to plant it; If it do
People of the Christian Catholic Roman Empire were now in a perilous position - they professed the name of Christ and converted others to what they taught was the true Christian faith. In addition they persecuted and killed people who would not conform to these beliefs, such as the Donatists at this time. Clearly not all people could be right - the beliefs must be diametrically opposed for both parties to take such stands.

The Lord God of heaven has never stood idly by whilst His Name is blasphemed as we have learned from the history of Israel in the Old Testament. God is concerned that others have an opportunity to see things as they really are in His sight.

Chapter 8 opens with the last and seventh seal of the scroll remaining to be opened - but on opening it, an amazing vista of many future events open out, rather than the more specific happenings under the other seals. The new set of symbols are appropriate to the new Europe. The Roman Empire, no longer the avowed adversary of Christ under Paganism, now, under the headship of Constantine, is professedly subject to him. This is the stage we reached after the sixth seal.

**What does silence signify?**

Immediately on opening the seal there was *silence for about half an hour* (v.1). This foreshadows peace in the ruling realm after Constantine’s triumph over Paganism, during which the sealing of ch.7 took place. We are more familiar with Scripture giving time periods as days - why is this one expressed as part of an hour? We can imagine that the period of half an hour was fitting for John to witness as he watched the visions and that is why it is expressed in this way. An hour is part of a day in the same way that a month is part of a year. It is suggested that we take the lunar month to represent the hour. This is because the Jews divided the day into twelve hours (and the night into twelve hours). As one hour is one twelfth of a day, this may be equated to a month which is one twelfth of a year. So therefore, half an hour would equate to half a lunar month; i.e fifteen days. On the principle of a day for a year used in Scripture (Ezek.4:6), these fifteen days would represent fifteen years.

It was actually fourteen years from AD 324 until AD 337 and Gibbon calls it “the general peace during the last fourteen years of his (Constantine’s) reign.” This was an opportunity for people to make up their minds about what was involved in true Christianity.

**More echoes**

We saw that the seals achieved the end of the pagan Roman system. Verse 2 describes the next phase of events as seven trumpets, which seven angels receive from God. It may be interesting at this point to recall that the number seven may remind us of an echo in the Old Testament account of the destruction of Jericho. The Israelites under Joshua were to march round the city seven days, the priests blowing trumpets of rams’ horns as they marched. On the seventh day they were to march round the city seven times, after which the city should fall into their hands. We will note a certain analogy between this and the seven seals, the last of which contains the seven trumpets, the last of which again contains the seven vials, and the last of these the seven thunders. As the result of all this,
Babylon falls, and the world comes into the hands of Christ and his brethren. The Bible abounds with beautiful analogies, and this is one of them.

We may also like to consider that the prophets of the Old Testament often use the trumpet as a symbol for representing judgments to come:

“Declare ye in Judah ... and say, Blow ye the trumpet in the land ... for I will bring evil from the north, and a great destruction” (Jer.4:5,6).

“Set the trumpet to thy mouth. He shall come as an eagle against the house of the LORD, because they have transgressed my covenant, and trespassed against my law” (Hosea 8:1).

“Blow ye the trumpet in Zion, and sound an alarm in my holy mountain: let all the inhabitants of the land tremble: for the day of the LORD cometh, for it is nigh at hand; A day of darkness and of gloominess ...” (Joel 2:1).

The prayers of saints
Verse 3 tells us something else significant - that the prayers of saints are in some way connected with the events of the trumpet soundings. Before they begin to sound another angel comes to the altar with a golden censer with which he offers incense with the prayers of all the saints. The golden altar is Christ: the angel with the censer is the representative of the saints in the attitude of prayer.

There was a special need for prayer at this time, as some believers were being oppressed and afflicted greatly by the dominant church. It could not tolerate their dissent from its authority, and their protest against its unchristian ways. Prayer to God was the only weapon of defence left them against their enemies and in v.4 we learn that God himself heard these prayers. In response, fire from the altar symbolised the answer to their prayers, for when cast onto the earth, there were voices, thunderings, lightnings and an earthquake.

The history of the thirty years succeeding the death of Constantine in AD 337 illustrates these upheavals by strife and bloodshed among his sons and civil war resulting in the elevation of Julian to the throne of the empire. He tried to restore paganism and this political earthquake, although not finally successful, was a terrible calamity to the Catholic Church and the Bishops etc were subjected to great tribulation.

A few comments need to be made about the division of the Roman Empire for we may remember that Constantine’s father was Caesar of a fourth part. At the decisive battle in AD 312 at Milvian Bridge, near Rome, one of the four rulers, Maxentius, was totally defeated and two of the divisions became the western third. Although Constantine later became sole ruler of the Empire, after his death the geographical and cultural divisions remained and were intensified by the spread of Christianity.

After the death of Constantine and his sons, the subsequent emperors Julian and Jovian, were overthrown. Then Theodosius gained power and by his direction, the Empire was divided into two parts. This could be said to equate to the “two legs of iron” of Daniel 2. This is the point in time to link into the unfolding dream of Nebuchadnezzar. The two divisions were distributed to the two sons of Theodosius on his death. It was never again re-united. Gibbon claims:
“The genius of Rome expired with Theodosius, the last of the successors of Augustus and Constantine who appeared in the field at the head of their armies, and whose authority was universally acknowledged throughout the whole extent of the empire.”

The elevation of his two sons in the West and East constituted a:

“final and permanent division of the Roman empire.” *The Decline & Fall of the Roman Empire*, ch.29.

(NB In his encyclical on unity dated 25 May 1995 the Pope called for an end to this situation! “...the Catholic Church desires nothing less than full communion between East and West.” “No Christian community can exempt itself from this call. The Church must breathe with her two lungs”).

In summary, it will be seen that the first four Trumpets were concerned with the territory of the Western part of the Roman empire, whilst the fifth and sixth announced events which affected the Eastern empire and which finally brought the divided empire to its end. Thus the Revelation, by specifying these divisions in its prophetic presentation of coming events, faithfully anticipated the course that things would take in the history of the world.

**Which was the third part?**

The seven angels now prepared to sound (v.6). As we have noted, the first four all affect the third part of the Roman Empire, which was in the West. Gibbon, in his Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire, composed with no reference to The Book of Revelation, records four such events, extending from the first invasion of the Goths and Vandals at the beginning of the fifth century, to the fall of the Western third of the Empire in AD 476. He states that each event directly contributed to the downfall of the Empire in the West, comprising Gaul (or France), Spain, Britain, Italy and the Province of Africa.

Once again we see that the book of Revelation shows that God and the Lord Jesus are involved in bringing judgments on the Roman world - they are in control. The happenings are not just chance events but are the judgments of God on an empire which had not only departed from Him but were killing and punishing His saints. Just as the Seals brought about the downfall of Paganism, the first four Trumpets are to bring the downfall of the Western Empire and the fifth and sixth, that of the Eastern Empire.

See W23.1
TRUMPETS ONE TO FOUR

Chapter 8

The Trumpets portray a new phase of history of the Roman world. The Western empire was invaded by a great movement of Germanic tribes, often called the “migration of peoples”. The cause of these changes lie in climatic changes. Many camped on the banks of the Rhine and Danube and the Romans found it useful to recruit these barbarians for their army - Saxons, Franks, Vandals, Ostrogoths, Visigoths, Huns – all these varied peoples swept from the Russian steppes westwards into western Europe (see map ‘Peoples of the Steppes’ W24.1).

THE FIRST TRUMPET

Alaric and the Goths from AD 395

“The first angel sounded, and there followed hail and fire mingled with blood, and they were cast upon the earth: and the third part of trees was burnt up, and all green grass was burnt up” (Rev.8:7).

The effects of the first trumpet is said to affect a third part and it is worth remembering that the Roman empire at this time was culturally divided into three (see Tripartite map) and the history of each area is different. The Western empire was Latin whereas the eastern was made up of Greece (often referred to as Hellenic) and Asia etc. In this large latter area the people spoke Greek but essentially were not Greek (often referred to as Hellenised). These first four trumpets all concern the Western empire with its centre of Rome.

The symbolic language of hail and fire is used in the Old Testament to describe coming judgments:

“Woe to the crown of pride, to the drunkards of Ephraim ... Behold the Lord hath a mighty and strong one, which as a tempest of hail and a destroying storm ... shall cast down to the earth with the hand” (Isa.28:1,2).
“And the LORD shall cause his glorious voice to be heard, and shall shew the lighting down of his arm, with the indignation of his anger, and with the flame of a devouring fire, with scattering, and tempest, and hailstones. For through the voice of the LORD shall the Assyrian be beaten down, which smote with a rod” (Isa.30:30,31).

These judgments are cast upon the earth which describes those who are ruled over - in this case the Roman empire - (as we have already considered the word (Section 10) in the sense seen in Isaiah 1:2, a sinful nation).

Trees are used as a figure for the leaders of the people:

“The tree that thou sawest, which grew, and was strong ... under which the beasts of the field dwelt, and upon whose branches the fowls of the heaven had their habitation: It is thou, O king, that art grown and become strong ...” (Daniel 4:20-22)

and grass represents people, the common multitude:

“The voice said, Cry. And he said, What shall I cry? All flesh is grass ... The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: because the spirit of the LORD bloweth upon it: surely the people is grass” (Isa.40:6,7. Also Isa.51:12).

Judgments are plainly to be poured out on Rome, which was already collapsing from within - but from what quarter?

Who was Alaric?

For many years Rome had been troubled by the hordes of barbarians along her borders. With the Empire disintegrating from within, it became expedient to enter into a political agreement with these, supply them with arms and settle many of them in the areas of Thrace, Phrygia and Illyricum on the northern borders of the empire. Chief among these was Alaric, king of the Visigoths, a loose and wandering confederation numbering about 100,000 people. He was to inflict the judgments on Rome signified by the first Trumpet blast. The Visigoths became prime beneficiaries and admirers of the civilisation of the Roman Empire, but their proximity and great numbers made them also the clearest threat to her peace. Rome was defended strongly by Vandal-born Stilicho, Consul of Rome and Master of Soldiers.

Meanwhile in AD 406 the confederate Germanic tribes burst like a flood from the coast of the Baltic across the upper Danube and advanced without resistance across the Alps, the Po and the Appenine. Again it was Stilicho who drove back the enemy from the capital and more than a third of the various multitude of Sueves, Vandals and Burgundians perished on the fields of Tuscany. But one hundred thousand Germans still remained and never retreated, so that this, according to the historian Gibbon:

“may be considered as the fall of the Roman Empire in the countries beyond the Alps; and the barriers which had so long separated the savage and civilized nations of the earth from that fatal moment levelled with the ground”.

Upon the death of Stilicho in AD 408, Alaric set out again for Rome and starved her people into submission in a series of bitter sieges. In AD 410 he gained entry and Rome was turned over to the barbarian warriors for three days of plunder.
Alaric’s historic “sack of Rome” caused lasting damage to the Empire that was immense and irreparable. To Romans in every part of the Empire, the impossible had occurred: the “Eternal City”, which had remained inviolate for eight centuries, lay at the feet of an uncivilized conqueror. No other event could have so dramatized the terrible imminence of the demise of a once-mighty Empire.

After Alaric’s death in AD 410, the Visigoths had no chance of achieving their ambition to conquer the whole of Italy: they had to be content with a section of Gaul, eventually enlarging their borders until they held all of Spain as well.

**THE SECOND TRUMPET**

Genseric and the Vandals from AD 429

“And the second angel sounded, and as it were a great mountain burning with fire was cast into the sea: and the third part of the sea became blood: And the third part of the creatures which were in the sea, and had life, died; and the third part of the ships were destroyed” (Rev.8:8,9)

These symbols can also be interpreted by their use elsewhere. A mountain burning with fire is a destroying power, and the idea is seen in Jer.51:25:

“Behold, I am against thee, O destroying mountain, saith the LORD, which destroyest all the earth: and I will stretch out mine hand upon thee, and roll thee down from the rocks, and will make thee a burnt mountain”.

Waters symbolise peoples:

“... The waters which thou sawest, where the whore sitteth, are peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues” (Rev.17:15)

and being a collection of waters, the sea becomes the symbol of people gathered together into one body or kingdom:

“But the wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt” (Isa.57:20).

The four great beasts of Dan.7 were seen by the prophet to come up out of the sea, in consequence of the four winds striving upon the Great Sea.

In this trumpet prophecy, the sea can be thought about in two ways - both symbolical and literal. The destroying power was to descend literally upon the maritime region washed by the waters of the Mediterranean and symbolically upon the peoples inhabiting these coasts. The third of the sea refers to the same third part of the Roman empire as in verse 7 and was that region subject to the Emperor of the Latin Catholic west. It included the coasts of Spain, Gaul, Italy and Roman Africa, with the islands of Sicily, Sardinia, Corsica, Majorca and Minorca. This sea became blood as a result of its peoples being put to the sword at the hands of the Vandals. The next major threat to Rome came from these Vandals.

**The Vandals**
This barbarian tribe from the Steppes had emerged from the German forests, crossing Gaul and Spain. In AD 429 the cunning and cruel Genseric became their king. For fifty years he contrived to entangle the plans of Roman diplomats and Germanic kings alike - but always to the Vandal’s advantage, being a ruthless king, a subtle conspirator and a genius at political manoeuvre. Boniface, the Governor of Africa, sought his help and ferried his people across the Straits of Gibraltar. But Genseric proved an enemy and laid waste cities, churches, fields and granaries in a barbarous orgy of wilful destruction. Being an Arian Christian, he carried out a merciless campaign against the Catholic population, whilst at the same time bringing a measure of deliverance to the Donatists who had suffered rigorous persecution at the hands of the Catholics for so long. This illustrates the point that with persecution there is often a protection raised up for the people of God.

What were the fish?
The creatures of the sea were the fish of the symbolic sea and therefore fish in the symbolic sense. A sea being thus considered as a kingdom or empire, the living fishes in it must be typical fishes or men. The introduction of ships into the prophecy, indicates that the judgments of the second trumpet have especial regard to the naval and commercial interests of the western third’s dominion.

By AD 335 Genseric and the Vandals controlled everything in the six African provinces except Carthage, but in AD 439 Genseric broke the peace terms to which he had agreed and captured Carthage. He then used it as a pirate base: and for thirty years his ships greedily roamed the water of the Mediterranean, disrupting trade, destroying by fire ships sent against him and establishing himself in a lucrative career of piracy. In AD 455 he seized the opportunity to infiltrate Rome and in fourteen days of pillaging the barbarians removed all they could carry that was of value from Rome’s treasure stores. When Genseric died in AD 477 he remained in possession of all his conquests and left behind a people who, because of their wilful and wanton destructiveness, have given their name “vandal” to anyone who wilfully destroys.

THE THIRD TRUMPET
Attila and the Huns  AD 433-453

“And the third angel sounded, and there fell a great star from heaven, burning as it were a lamp, and it fell upon the third part of the rivers, and upon the fountains of waters; And the name of the star is called Wormwood: and the third part of the waters became wormwood; and many men died of the waters, because they were made bitter” (Rev.8:10,11).

A star symbolises a ruling power, as we saw in Section 10. Consider these two parallel verses :

“The kings came and fought, then fought the kings of Canaan in Taanach by the waters of Megiddo; they took no gain of money.
They fought from heaven; the stars in their courses fought against Sisera” (Judges 5:19,20).

Daniel 8: 9,10 is also helpful :

“And out of one of them came forth a little horn ... And it waxed great, even to the host of heaven; and it cast down some of the host and of the stars to the ground, and stamped upon them”.

The Book of Revelation
It can sometimes signify a destroying power:

"...there shall come a Star out of Jacob, and a Sceptre shall rise out of Israel, and shall smite the corners of Moab, and destroy all the children of Sheth" (Numbers 24:17).

**So a star symbolises a ruling power or destroying power**

The blazing-star symbol of this trumpet is identifiable with the meteoric reign of Attila, king of the Huns, who ravaged the Western third of the Empire with his wild illiterate band of nomads. They swept into the Empire from Central Europe. History paints for us an incredible and frightening picture of this wild nomadic people. They were more like fierce two-legged beasts than civilized men, illiterate, skinny, with foul-smelling bodies. Their faces were flat and their cheeks scarred from cuts made in childhood to stunt the growth of beards in later life. under rat-skin helmets, their hair was filthy, black and bristly. They were, however, highly skilled horsemen who could virtually eat and sleep in the saddle. By all accounts the sight of the approaching band of Huns on horseback was enough to strike terror in the stoutest heart.

Attila gathered under his banner many of the Vandals, Ostrogoths, Gepidae and Franks. Theodosius, the Eastern Catholic Emperor, was forced to relinquish a portion of territory south of the Danube and to pay tribute to Attila.

**Where were the rivers and fountains of waters?**

The *burning star* was to fall upon the one third part of *rivers and fountains of waters*. This blends the literal and symbolical. *Rivers* are nations:

"...the Lord bringeth up upon them the waters of the river, strong and many, even the king of Assyria, and all his glory: and he shall come up over all his channels, and go over all his banks: And he shall pass through Judah; he shall overflow and go over, he shall reach even to the neck..." (Isa 8:7,8) and

"In that time shall the present be brought unto the LORD of hosts of a people scattered and peeled ... a nation meted out and trodden under foot, whose land the rivers have spoiled ..." ( Isa.18:7).

and *water* represents peoples (as we saw in Rev.17:15). The literal area in the Catholic western Roman empire are the river courses of the Danube and Rhine, and the Alpine lake and river country (W24.2). The name *Wormwood* (undrinkable - bitterness) is in the Greek *Apsinthos* and this was the name of a river in the Illyrian third of the empire. It was the very area from which Attila the Hun arose to scourge Europe.

In AD 451, the fierce Hunnish horsemen marched westward into Gaul and were opposed by the forces of the western third of the empire under Theodoric, king of the Visigoths, and a ferocious and costly struggle ensued at the Battle of Chalons. Some contemporaries estimate that between 165,000 and 250,000 were slain, including Theodoric. Attila retreated but a year later he revenged himself against the staggering Empire with a devastating attack on *northern Italy*.
The Emperor was powerless to resist and the city of Rome was only saved from destruction by the intervention of Pope Leo I who visited Attila and is said to have “subdued his ferocity into awe by the apostolic majesty of his men”.

Following his sudden and unexpected death in AD 453, the Hunnish realm quickly disintegrated. The symbol of a great destroying power progressing with rapid and intense but brief motion and coming suddenly to the end of its career and leaving nothing but a smoking desolation as the memorial of its presence, is very apt.

**THE FOURTH TRUMPET**

**Solar and Lunar Partial Eclipse of Rome - The Fall of the Western Roman Empire AD 476**

“And the fourth angel sounded, and the third part of the sun was smitten, and the third part of the moon, and the third part of the stars; so as the third part of them was darkened, and the day shone not for a third part of it, and the night likewise” (Rev. 8:12)

We have met similar language when we discussed Section 10. Another example is found in Ezekiel 32:7,8 where God judges Egypt and it is to be attacked by Nebuchadnezzar:

“And when I shall put thee out, I will cover the heaven, and make the stars thereof dark; I will cover the sun with a cloud, and the moon shall not give her light. Also the bright lights of heaven will I make dark over thee, and set darkness upon thy land, saith the Lord GOD.”

The events of the first three trumpets had reduced the power of Rome to nothing more than the semblance of an Empire, with none of the vigour that had for centuries controlled the world. The successive inroads of the barbarians - Goths, Vandals and Huns had totally weakened the western empire. So what events followed which could possibly be described by the symbols of verse 12?

Upon the death of the all-powerful Hunnish king Attila, the Ostrogoths, who for nearly eighty years had been subservient to the Huns, seized the chance for freedom. They defeated Attila’s sons at the battle of Nedao in AD 454, and in order to secure land to farm and a supply of gold, a young nephew of their king was sent to Constantinople as hostage. This (second) Theodoric found favour with the Emperor Leo I and was educated as a high-ranking Roman - however, his loyalties remained with his own people to whom he eventually returned.

Meanwhile, a barbarian of uncertain origin named Odoacer, had gained the leadership of several tribes formerly under Hunnish rule and in AD 476 he deposed the puppet Emperor in Rome. This was a boy named Romulus Augustus and he was thus the last Emperor to reign in the Western Roman Empire. So this western third was indeed eclipsed - the long reign of emperors in Rome had now ceased. Everyone thought the ‘Eternal City’ had sustained a deadly wound but it re-emerged! We will see later how the book of Revelation dovetails into this history.

**A seventh system of government?**

We may remember that in the History Section 11 it was mentioned that Rome had in fact, seven
systems of government. The Imperial system of emperors was the sixth and was by far the longest.

Ch.17:10 is rather interesting in this connection:

"And there are seven kings: five are fallen, and one is, and the other is not yet come; and when he cometh, he must continue a short space."

When John received the prophecy the Imperial system, the sixth, was in operation and we have seen that it continued in the West until AD 476. Does history throw any light on the rest of the verse?

As a sign that the Imperial Constitution of the empire was eclipsed, the Senate in Rome sent the royal insignia to the Emperor Zeno then ruling in Constantinople, protesting that "the throne of universal Empire shall be transferred from Rome, to Constantinople". Zeno replied with a carefully hedged affirmation: but clearly Odoacer was an illegal ruler and as such had to be removed.

Things continued for fourteen years, until the Theodoric mentioned above and who was by this time "Theodoric, the Great" King of the Ostrogoths, was given permission by Zeno to wrest the territory of Italy from Odoacer. He succeeded in AD 493 and became the sole ruler and so the eclipse, which is only a passing phenomenon, was superseded by a new Gothic kingdom. Theodoric became 'King of the Goths and Romans'.

The Roman character of the rule of Theodoric the Great was well recognised in his own times by the rival empire of eastern Rome and eventually even the Imperial regalia was returned to him. He maintained law and order, granted religious freedom to Catholics and Jews, preserved the noblest buildings of Rome and encouraged the arts. This kingly government, Gothic by race but Roman in spirit and profession, continued for a short space. Theodoric reigned as first King of the Seventh Head, which we saw indicated in ch.17:10. Eventually, however, the Ostrogoths disappeared and the depopulated land was overrun by a new and warlike band of warriors, the Lombards. As we saw in the History Section 13, this led to the Pope calling for help from the Franks and crowning Charlemagne Emperor in AD 800. These facts show the remarkable dovetailing of the predictions with history, when we consider that John was given the prophecy in AD 96, four hundred years earlier.

For a while however, the western section of the Empire settled down under its Gothic rulers and there for the time we leave it while we turn our attention to the east.

The first four trumpets having accomplished their work in the western third, attention was drawn in verse 13 to the remaining three trumpets (woe trumpets) by “an angel flying through the midheaven”. The Revised Version margin informs us that the Greek word for angel here is aetos, meaning eagle. In ch.4:7 the flying eagle was one of the living creatures, representative of the saints. So we see believers, brethren in Christ, preaching the Truth and warning the inhabitants of the earth of the terrible events - called Woes - that were coming. They were witnessing to the prophetic word as in ch.6:1. They would point to what had already come upon the Empire and what was yet to come, urging people to repent of the works of their hands, their murders, sorceries, fornications and thefts - Rev.9:20,21.
The flight of the eagle could suggest a change of venue, from Rome in the West to Constantinople in the East. The forebodings of the loud voice repeating Woe (v.13) were amply justified by the terrible events that harassed and afflicted the inhabitants of what remained of the Roman earth, the Byzantine Empire in the East.

**Historian’s Comment on the first Four Trumpets**

It is significant that the historian Gibbon in his *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* states that each of the four events we have considered under the four trumpets directly contributed to the downfall of the Empire in the West. He also comments on the fact that in AD 393 Theodosius left the empire to be divided and distributed to his two sons, one in Rome in the West and the other in Constantinople, the East. This constituted a “final and permanent division of the Roman empire.”

This division had already been anticipated in Nebuchadnezzar’s Image as the two legs of iron (Dan.2), and the course of history to come is faithfully portrayed in The Book of Revelation. The sounding of the Trumpets announced events that brought the divided empire to its end as such, and laid the foundations of the several states of modern Europe, eventually leading to the ten toes of Dan.2.
SECTION 25

FIFTH TRUMPET
MAHOMET - Chapter 9:1-11

The Fifth and Sixth Trumpets concern the Eastern empire, with its capital of Constantinople.

The remaining three trumpets of the seven are also called Woe Trumpets, because there is a difference between the overthrow of the West and East. On the west arose, as we shall see later, an empire after the model of that which was destroyed: in the east an overflowing flood of enemies obliterated the Roman name and continued in flood until the time came for the waters to recede and ultimately to “dry up”. We are particularly interested at present with the next two trumpets. These will bring the Eastern Roman Empire to a total end and affect all parts of the civilised world, although the events will be spread over nearly a thousand years.

This new phase is so well marked in history as to constitute an epoch and the starting point of a new order of things in many countries. The Roman world was about to be visited by a scourge far transcending the inroads of the northern barbarians, who at least professed the same religion and assimilated with the populations of the countries they overthrew. Because of the appalling nature of this visitation, attention was called in a special manner to the trumpets heralding its approach, as we saw in ch.8:13.

What does history tell us about events at this time?
Is there anything which would correspond to the symbols of ch.9? Mahomet was born about AD 570 in Mecca and belonged to the Koreish clan, whose special privilege and duty it was to guard the sacred Black Stone at Mecca. Mahomet commenced his preaching career in AD 609, declaring that he was in communion with God and had been appointed His prophet. His religion was monotheistic and appealed to the numerous Jews throughout Arabia. At first he enjoyed the protection of the Prince of Mecca but on his death, the people, who made no small gain out of the Black Stone, drove Mahomet from the city and he fled to Medina in AD 622. This flight or Hegira marks the beginning of the Mahommedan era and their calendar. Gradually the number of his converts increased, and when he turned his tenets into a military direction, offering plunder to the victors and eternal
happiness in Paradise to the slain, Mahomet soon found himself at the head of hordes of Saracens - children of the desert - who clamoured to be led against the cities of the Roman empire. The first attacks were directed against the towns of the trade route from Damascus to Petra. Then the Saracenic hordes swarmed into the deep gorge of the Jordan Valley and emerged to the conquest of the hill country of Judaea, Jerusalem falling in AD 637.

**What realistically links the Fifth Trumpet to Mahomet?**

Let’s start by making sense of the terms used a little more clearly. Ch.9:1 introduces a fallen star with a key. This star represents one who had acquired power and become a leader, which is certainly true of Mahomet. The star falling from heaven unto the earth seen by John would be an apt description of the prominence of Mahomet as a leader. The fall from heaven (rulership) equates to his flight or Hegira from Mecca to Medina. Having been ejected from his previous position of eminence, Mahomet turned to the people (the earth) for support.

**Keys again!**

Every word in these prophecies has amazing significance. Verse 1 continues to inform us that Mahomet was given a key or power to elevate a royal dynasty out of the ordinary multitudes of Arabs, who dwelt in the bottomless pit, as we shall soon see. This key could be compared to the key of David (Isa.22:22; Rev.3:7) and Christ as the holder of it in resurrection and restoration. The Catholic system has the Papal keys; the Koran speaks of the key of God. The key was also a symbol used by the Moslems in Spain, being sculptured on the archway of the Alhambra. Sale’s *Introduction to the Koran* tells us that the Moslem doctors call the sword the key of heaven and hell.

**Where is the Pit?**

The phrase bottomless pit (v.1) is better rendered pit of the abyss (RV). The word abyss in the Greek language abussos, means depth and is frequently used for the sea:

“The waters are hid as with a stone, and the face of the deep is frozen” (Job 38:30)

“He maketh the deep to boil like a pot: he maketh the sea like a pot of ointment.” (Job 41:31)

“Where is he that brought them up out of the sea with the shepherd of his flock? ... That led them through the deep ...” (Isa.63:11-13)

In Revelation this becomes a fascinating study as the word is used seven times - ch.9:1,2,11; ch.11:7; ch.17:8; and ch.20:1,3). However, ch.9:1,2 the Greek phrase used is phrear abussos. This difference is vitally important. It means the shaft or pit of the abyss, i.e. the shaft leading to the water below, as in a well. It signifies that the effect of the sounding of the fifth trumpet was to open the shaft or pit that leads to the abyss, and not the abyss itself. The abyss is the deep (Rom.10:7; Luke 8:31), or the “peoples, multitudes, nations and tongues” which was the Roman peoples (Rev.17:15).

So the pit or shaft of the abyss was the way to power over the deep, the seas - the Roman system both political and religious. Mahomet did indeed seek to overthrow the Eastern Roman Empire, and its capital Constantinople. But first he had to gain control of the East. In gaining control of Arabia, Palestine and Syria, he opened the pit of the abyss, or the territory to be captured, in order to open up the way to the domination of Europe.
In v.11 the bottomless pit is mentioned again but here only the word abussos is used. This is the sea of nations of the Greek and Roman Catholic countries of Europe, the waters where the whore sits (Rev.17:15). Therefore the beast is said to ascend out of the bottomless pit in ch.17:8. It is the troubled sea of nations out of which Daniel’s four beasts arose in Dan.7. On the other hand, the shaft of the abyss, referred to in v1,2 denotes the entrance to the abyss, and in the terms of the prophecy, the way into Europe.

This prophecy, therefore, faithfully indicates, that whereas the star of this fifth trumpet would gain control over the shaft leading to the abyss, he would lack control over the abyss itself, he would not be successful in gaining control over the eastern Empire.

It is appropriate to the symbol that Arabia, the region from whence Mahomet originated, is noted for being part of the lowest point of the earth’s surface which is above water, hence the accurate description - abyss.

Eventually the Prophet-King or Star was matured in the pit of the abyss and acquired undisputed authority and power to open the pit. Smoke then poured out in columns vast enough to darken the sun and the air. This took the form of the armies of Mahomet, united under the yellow banner of their Star, who marched forth to declare open war upon the Trinitarians of the Greek and Roman Catholics.

Smoke (v.2) signified God’s punishments upon the unsealed in their foreheads (v.4) resulting from the conquest of Arabia and warned the rest of the Eastern empire of the impending fire. Scripture gives us many examples of smoke associated with God’s judgments. For instance, Sodom and Gomorrah:

“... and, lo, the smoke of the country went up as the smoke of a furnace.” (Gen.19:28) and

“The LORD will not spare him, but then the anger of the LORD and his jealousy shall smoke against that man ...” (Deut.29:20)

“O God, why hast thou cast us off for ever? why doth thine anger smoke against the sheep of thy pasture?” (Psalm 74:1)

“And the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever ... who worship the beast and his image, and whosoever receiveth the mark of his name” (Rev.14:11).

The principle of freewill
It is worth reminding ourselves here that Mahomet and his followers acted purely from their own freewill and self interest; indeed they believed they would win a place in Paradise by killing those who worshipped a triune god. The principle of man’s freewill is upheld by God; even though he knows the end from the beginning:

“Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world” (Acts 15:18).

He has the power to order events to bring them to a pre-determined end:
"... to the intent that the living may know that the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will, and setteth up over it the basest of me" (Dan.4:17).

in the time-scale he has set :

"Because he hath appointed a day, in which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead" (Acts 17:31).

This he does by pressures brought to bear on people by apparently natural happenings, to which they react in their own freewill. **It therefore follows that any judgment God brings on them is just and righteous**, for their reactions spring out of their own freewill.

**The symbolic sun and air**

In verse 2 the **sun** is the symbol of that same Imperial majesty of the Roman empire as that which was darkened by the judgments of the fourth trumpet. The sun now shone in Constantinople, the capital of the Byzantine empire. In the countries where the **locusts** (v.3) of the smoke established themselves, the **sun and the air** was darkened. The **air** denotes the civil and ecclesiastical organisation of the world and this had not been affected by the previous judgments - they still continued Catholic. However, this was all changed where the locusts tormented the unsealed. The **air** became Arabian. Place and power, in the conquered countries, were only for the locusts of the smoke; so that if a Catholic would retain office he must become a convert to the new superstition. In the Middle East, throughout Arabia, Palestine and Syria, Byzantine authority (ie the authority of the Eastern Roman Empire) was darkened by the smoke of war. Damascus was taken in AD 634 and Jerusalem in AD 637.

**Why were the Saracens called locusts?**

The **locust** is a fitting symbol for the Arab hordes and echoes Judges 6:5 :

“For they (the Midianites) came up with their cattle and their tents, and they came as grasshoppers (RV locusts) for multitude ...” (also 7:12).

In the natural sense locusts are generated in the pits of the earth, out of which the new progeny arises in the Spring. The desert area of Arabia is a favourite breeding ground for these creatures. The locusts of this first woe represent armiess of men, whose main force consisted of cavalry, invincible, licentious and tormenting, analagous in their destructive operations to clouds of locusts. Larousse Encyclopaedia of Ancient & Medieval History, page 265 says:

“In 737 Leo III suffered several raids from Asia Minor, and two years later, 150,000 Moslems, stripping the country bare in their passage, advanced as far as Nicaea, and the standard of the Caliph floated once again over the Bosphorus”.

Verse 3 tells us that **power** was given to the locusts and it is remarkable that through the leadership of Mahomet, the Arabs became united and developed into a great power. This was unique to their history.

**The unusual policy of the Saracens**

The **grass, green things and trees** of verse 4 refer to people in general (as we have seen before in Isa.40:6-8) and it is implied in v.4 that the Saracens would devote themselves to the overthrow of
systems and of nations, rather than of people. The instructions of Abubeker, who became the first Caliph on the death of Mahomet, was significant, for they were to avoid injustice and oppression and their victory was not to be stained with the blood of women and children:

"Destroy no palm trees; burn no corn; cut down no fruit trees; (smite only) the men with shaven crowns, who are the Synagogue of Satan."

It is to be feared that these instructions were not always adhered to, but their severity was to be reserved for those men which have not the seal of God in their foreheads (v.4). Within a hundred years of AD 622, Palestine, Syria, Egypt, North Africa, and Spain were brought under the Moslem dominion. However, they carried their learning with them wherever they went, giving to Western Europe many of the arts and sciences - chemistry, astronomy, algebra and the arts of weaving and forging. In North Africa and Spain they constructed irrigation works, and brought semi-desert lands under cultivation, while many ruins indicate their architectural skill.

The Saracens overran Spain, passed the Pyrenees and pressed on to the river Loire, threatening to engulf Europe. However, after a bitter struggle at the battle of Tours (Poictiers) in AD 732, they were driven back by a vast army of Franks and their allies. The whole course of history might have been changed had the eastern horn of the great crescent been simultaneously pushed through Constantinople to Vienna. Fortunately the Eastern Roman Empire remained firm, and its conquest later fell to another race - the Tartars or Turks - under the next trumpet, the sixth.

Verse 5 informs us that the Empire was not to be killed with political death at this stage; the Eastern Empire was not to be entirely overthrown. Constantinople was twice besieged by the Saracens (AD 668-675 & 716-718) but not taken.

**A natural history lesson!**
The period of five months (v.5) is interesting and is actually the literal period of locust activity and so is in keeping with the natural history of the symbol. It is thus repeated in v.10, giving a total of ten months for the period. Five months is 150 days and upon the principle of a day for a year, which is the basis of the symbolic times of the Revelation as we have already noted, represents 150 years. Hence, the locusts were to torment and hurt for a total of 300 years. It is significant that the expression hurt men (Gk. adikeo) (v10) is different from the word torment in v5. Their total period of ascendancy was to consist of two different phases of attack.

The tormenting began when Syria was invaded in the year Mahomet died in AD 632. He was succeeded by Abubeker, the first Caliph and the period lasted until AD 932 when the secular power of the Caliph fell in Baghdad.

**“Lopping away” the Eastern Third**
From Syria the Saracens spread northwards to Asia Minor and Persia, and southwards to Egypt and North Africa. Within fifty years of Mahomet’s death the Moslems had advanced to the two great citadels of Europe - Constantinople and Gibraltar. The Crescent, lying in a vast semi-circle upon the northern shores of Africa and the curving coast of Asia, with one horn touching the Bosphorus and
the other the Straits of Gibraltar, seemed about to round to the full and overspread all Europe (see map W25.1).

“In a few campaigns the Empire lost all its possessions beyond Mount Taurus, i.e. it lost one of the three great divisions of the Empire, that, namely, in which neither Greek nor Roman civilisations had ever thoroughly taken root ... Every province that was conquered by the Saracens was utterly lopped away, it became the possession of men altogether alien and hostile in race, language, manners, and religion”. (Freeman, Historical Geography of Europe, pp.111-112).

Graphic details in verses 7 - 10
The details of the following verses give us many clues. For instance the Moslem victories were largely dependent on their splendid cavalry and horse-drawn artillery. The appearance ‘as it were’ of crowns of gold refer to the yellow turbans worn by the fierce, longhaired and bearded warriors, in contrast with the shaven Romans, the Goths and other barbarian hordes. Their iron armour and breastplates are well known features of Arab warriors of the 6th and 7th centuries, and the Saracens employed in their military operations formidable missiles which they themselves styled scorpions! These wrought havoc for they fired a thunderous exploding cloud of fire in all directions. They were the precursor of guns and gunpowder and this artillery was dragged into battle and then the horses were swung around to face the cannon to the enemy. To John, who saw the action of the Arab cavalry in vision, this suggested the scorpion, whose sting is in its tail.

Thus their attacks injured but did not kill the political life of the Eastern Roman Empire. However, it was against the will of the majority; most people were willing to succumb and sought peaceful incorporation with the conquering power but political death was denied them (v.6). The word hurt in v.10 is the Greek word adikeo and signifies ‘to be unjust, to injure, morally, socially’ and together with torment in v.5, the words imply that men shall be tormented by unjust and unjurious demands imposed upon them by their Arab conquerors. The Arabs proved to be ruthless and demanded that people accept either the Koran or the sword.

The king of v.11
The Hebrew and Greek words Abaddon and Apollyon respectively, each signify Destroyer, and the language given signifies the countries affected. This feature is also seen in Rev.16:16 in the Hebrew word Armageddon). The Caliph is known as the King and High Priest of Islam, and the Commander of the Faithful. They were indeed the destroyers of firstly the Holy Land and Middle East, and then the Greek Catholic countries, aiming to overthrow the power of the Byzantine Empire and Constantinople, the headquarters of the Greek Catholic Church. Such were the Moslem locusts who came, declaring that “There is one God”. They were violent anti-trinitarians who brought judgment for three hundred years upon the worshippers of the triune god borrowed by Catholicism from earlier pagans, because of their unsealed foreheads.
SECTION 26

SIXTH TRUMPET
THE TURKS - Chapter 9:12-21

THE SIXTH TRUMPET
The Turks AD 1062 - 1453

This trumpet also contains its own timings and like the previous woe, is of long duration. It is still concerned with the surviving eastern Roman empire. This second Woe trumpet again sounds as a response to the incense of the prayers of the persecuted saints, for the voice of Christ came from the golden altar of incense in v.13 and incense symbolises prayer (Psalm 141:2).

The Saracens were to be followed by another great military eruption, based near the river Euphrates (v.14) in the east. The four angels or messengers bound in this area are seen to be military powers, represented by myriads of horsemen. Up to the time appointed by God, the Euphrates was the limit of the advance of these military powers, who were now to be permitted to burst forth westward. They poured in great successive waves into the provinces of the eastern third of the Roman empire, for a period of nearly four hundred years. The desolating tornadoes of innumerable cavalry, for the Turks preferred to fight on horseback, were led by names famous in history - Togrul Beg, Alp Arslan, Timour, Bajazet etc. the leaders of the four great dynasties - Seljukians, Moguls, Tartars and Ottomans. The fourth of these powers (the remnant of the Ottoman Empire which ended in 1917) still retains control of Constantinople, where the throne of the extinct eastern third of the Roman Empire flourished for one thousand years.

Verse 15 is very specific about the intended effect of this new threat. The torment of the Saracens was not to kill but the Turks were to slay the remaining Eastern Roman empire with political death.

The Tartar or Turkish races had accepted the religion of Islam rather than be exterminated but they accepted none of the civilising influences of their conquerors. They remained for centuries nothing more than a horde of fanatical Mohammedans, and towards the close of the eleventh century, horde after horde swept across the boundary of the Euphratean lands. These invasions may be grouped broadly into four. First the Seljuk Turks established their supremacy over the grass lands, stretching from China to the Bosphorus.

The Book of Revelation
Lunar time
The period begins when the powerful Turkish leader Togrul Beg, after besieging and capturing the capital city of Baghdad, established himself in Islamic authority by marrying the Caliph’s daughter on 27th April 1062. He then became the head of the Mohammedan faith. The enigmatic time period in verse v.15, when computed on the lunar year of 360 days, becomes 391 days 1 hour as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time Unit</th>
<th>Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>an hour</td>
<td>30 days</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a day</td>
<td>1 year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a month</td>
<td>30 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a year</td>
<td>360 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>391 years</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

On the day for a year principle (Ezekiel 4:6) this represents 391 years, one month and it was exactly this period of time from when Togrul Beg assumed full Moslem authority to when Constantinople finally fell on 28th May 1453, to the attack of Mohammed II.

The achievements of the Turks
The successor to Togrul was Alp Arslan, who led the Turkish army against the armies of the Emperor in AD 1071. This was a battle of far-reaching consequences - the Asiatic provinces of the Empire were irretrievably lost and the Emperor himself was taken prisoner. After Alp Arslan’s assassination, his son Malek Shah, was the first Turk to appropriate to himself the title “Commander of the Faithful”. Civil war then divided the Empire into four. The capital of one was Bythinia, only a hundred miles from Constantinople, which was still seen as the vital key to papal dominion over Eastern Europe, Russia and the Near East. In 1106 the Crusaders liberated Jerusalem from the Turks and they were driven back beyond Antioch, leading to the downfall of the Seljukian empire.

The second invasion
Then, at the beginning of the thirteenth century a new power arose in Central Asia, in the area of Mongolia. Temujin fused his warring nomad tribes into an invincible army and set about the conquest of the world. He took the title of ‘Genghis Khan’ - ‘lord of the earth.’ His sons continued his policy and swept over all the lands which his cavalry could reach from Central Asia: eastwards to North China and westwards to South Russia, south-eastwards to India and south-westwards to Mesopotamia.

“Persians, Saracens, Turks, Greeks - Christians and Mohammedans - fell victims alike to the conqueror’s insatiable thirst for blood and plunder. Cities disappeared as he advanced. Rich plains were transformed into horrid deserts ...the most terrible scourge that ever afflicted the human race” (Myers, Mediaeval and Modern History, p.239).

The third and fourth invasions
Tamerlane, a descendant of Genghis, advanced into India and established a Mongol or Mogul, Empire there, with its capital at Delhi. Meanwhile in north western Anatolia (present day Turkey) a new power was ready to break into Europe. The Ottoman power had won their independence from the Seljuk empire as it disintegrated under the impact of the Mongol invasions.

The Book of Revelation
From their vantage ground in Asia Minor these Ottoman Turks could strike at three important agricultural and commercial areas - Mesopotamia, Egypt and south-east Europe. These were the channels as it were into which the Turkish waters flowed. (Naturally, when the time came for “the waters of the great river Euphrates” to dry up Rev.16:12, the action was reversed and the Turks began to be driven back towards Asia Minor along the same three lines). In 1301 they gained their first victory over the Byzantines, in 1356 they crossed the Dardanelles and invaded Europe. The legacy is still felt today – for instance, Albania is Moslem because the Turks came into Europe. They surrounded Constantinople itself in 1397, again in 1422 and in 1453 they finally captured the city under Mohammed II after a siege of forty days. Firearms, both muskets and cannons, were used in this battle and from that day when it fell into the hands of the Ottoman Empire, Constantinople remained the Turkish capital.

The political eastern Empire then came to an end; Greek Catholicism was ejected from the city and the victorious Turks replaced the cross by the crescent on the dome of S. Sophia. The Catholic Patriarch fled to Moscow where he set up his power and Moscow became known as the Third Rome, the two previous ones being Rome itself, and Constantinople. The Orthodox Catholic Church has vowed ever since to return and has signified this by the golden cross atop their churches, both in Russia and Greece, for under it you will see the Moslem crescent.

Incidentally, the Turks continued to advance further into Europe until they reached Vienna, which resisted attacks in 1532 and 1683. This may be compared with the similar success of the Franks against the Saracens at the Gate of Poitou in 732.

Myriads of cavalry
The word for thousands in v.16 is myriads and Gibbon writes of the Turkish cavalry as “being, both men and horses computed by myriads.” Thus the language of Scripture is appropriate to the circumstances and indicates a large unnumbered multitude. However, the total number during 400 years would not be likely to run far short of this immense figure of 200 million. In v.17 John’s attention was also attracted by the unusual appearance of the new weapon used, the cannon that the Turks introduced into the science of warfare, and by which they gained their great victories and established their widespread conquests (W26.1). They perfected the use of gunpowder and this is suggested by the mention of jacinth or hyacinthine, a colour of deep purple or reddish blue such as the bluish smoke of gunpowder. Brimstone is sulphur, which is related to gunpowder, and which also gives forth a bluish smoke and sulphurous smell. The roar of the cannon suggested the roar of the lion and it is significant that the name Alp Arslan, the successor of Togrul Beg, signifies the ‘valiant lion’. Gibbon writes:

“The successor of Togrul displayed the fierceness and generosity of the royal animal.”

To John, the attack would appear to come from the head of the horse-drawn cannon, as it was the practice to swing it around to face the enemy. At last an effective weapon had been found – the cannon could attack the walls of Constantinople from a distance.

Constantinople falls
The fall of Constantinople is one of the outstanding events of history. It destroyed Byzantium as the seat of eastern Christendom and established the Ottoman Empire. It marked the ending of an epoch, the passing away of a constitution which had lasted there for upwards of a thousand years. If any
event could have brought an evil world to its senses, this should have done so. It did nothing of the kind. It was felt to be a terrible calamity: but men neither repented nor reformed. It was just as had been foretold in v.20,21.

Warnings unheeded
The survivors and the Western Empire, *the rest of the men* (v.20) were unwarmed by the overthrow of eastern Rome by the Turks, as the instruments of God’s vengeance. The populations continued addicted to the doctrines and practices of the Mother Church. Verses 20,21 detail the dreadful effects resulting from the worship of saints and images (1 Tim.4:1); the slaughter of heretics in the Inquisition (murders), the fraud of Purgatory (sorceries), the immoralities of a celibate priesthood (fornication) and the sale of indulgencies (thefts). Credulity, superstition and reverence for the clergy took the place of faith, belief and a real reverence for God.

The eastern section of Christendom includes all the countries of Asia Minor where the apostles laboured and the whole of the Bible had been available in the Greek tongue - the Old Testament had been translated into Greek about 250 BC and was called the Septuagint - and they had now been given over to the desolating Turk. This is an echo of the seven nations of Canaan who were given over to the sword of Joshua for their long-standing and increasing abominations. One way of looking at it could be to say that the Roman world were responsible to God for they did have the Bible, but chose instead to ‘turn unto fables’ as the apostles had predicted, rather than receive ‘the love of the truth’ (2 Thess.2:10).

Another far-reaching consequence of the fall of Constantinople was a further spread of God’s Word, the Bible. Greek believers fled west from the Turks, bringing the Greek manuscripts with them. This coincided with the invention of printing and so brought together circumstances which were destined to reshape Christendom. William Tyndale, a young priest in Gloucestershire, England - knowing that it would probably cost him his life - determined to translate the Bible into English from the original languages of Greek and Hebrew. His translation of the New Testament (from the Greek text of Erasmus) appeared in print in 1525. Most of it was promptly burnt but another edition appeared in 1534. John Foxe wrote :

> “These books of William Tyndale being compiled, published, and sent over into England, it cannot be spoken what a door of light they opened to the eyes of the whole English nation, which before were many years shut up in darkness.”

We owe an immense debt to such people who laboured to give us the light of God’s truth.

Effect of the six trumpet blasts
Each of the three cultural divisions of the imperial Roman Empire was now destroyed as the result of the forces called forth by the sound of the trumpets, thus :

1. A third - the Latin west by trumpets one to four
2. A third - the Hellenised east by trumpet five (Saracens)
3. A third - The Hellenic east by trumpet six (Turks).
More and more judgments were, and are still, needed before true repentance will be manifested, and men will everywhere worship God in spirit and in truth, freed for ever from the corruptions of superstition and man-made religion. When the seventh trumpet call is sounded, it will draw forth the forces which will destroy for ever these false systems and “the kingdom of this world shall become the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ” (ch.11:15).

A new perspective
This is nearly the mid point of the book and an appropriate time to be given a vision of the future. In the Book of Revelation or Apocalypse, God is not merely outlining a sequence of events but more importantly, revealing to His servants the principles upon which He will manifest His Glory in the earth in the pouring out of His judgments upon the nations. Each of the six seals and then the six trumpets revealed a phase of this and they follow each other in chronological sequence - we call this unfolding story of history by the self-explanatory phrase of ‘continuous historic’. We are already familiar with this in Daniel ch.2, and chaps.7-12 where the succession of world empires is detailed.

Ch.9 covered the entire period occupied by the rise and fall of the Saracens and Turks in the eastern part of the empire, as described by the fifth and sixth trumpets. The Ottoman Empire then established, reigned supreme until 1917. This was well into the period covered by the seventh angel sounding his seventh trumpet. This last and seventh trumpet will definitely usher in the events leading to the establishment of the Kingdom of God. Ch.10:1-7 completes the theme of ch.9 by taking us forward to the glorious vision of the consummation of God’s purpose. More details of the same time of glory are given in the second half of the next chapter (ch.11:15-19).

The vision at this time (ch.10) was able to remind John that the overthrow of the Roman Empire was not to establish Ottoman power permanently, nor would the blasphemies perpetuated by false religions be permitted to continue indefinitely, but that ultimately all would be swallowed up by the conquests of the “rainbowed” angel of ch.10. It was an answer to the prayers of the saints in ch.6:10 asking, “How Long?”

The intervening verses, the last half of ch.10 and the first half of ch.11 explain what would be happening meanwhile in the western part of the Empire, which we had left at the end of the fourth trumpet. These events would be concurrent with the sixth trumpet (or second woe trumpet) and form part of it in point of time; this is why it is not until ch.11:14 that the second woe is actually completed. These events may appear to be a break in the narrative, but if we keep the themes in our
minds we will see that although the events might be contemporary in point of time, they constitute in fact, a different phase of God’s purpose with the nations.

The rest of the Book of Revelation will take us right back to the Christianising of the Roman Empire under Constantine in chapter 12 and then follows the history of the western empire from a religious viewpoint, until after the return of Christ. At ch.16 the eastern empire is re-included. Thus all the phases are seen to culminate in the grand finale.

Chapter 10 - the Rainbowed Angel
In ch.10 a new vision unfolds before John. He sees a cloud-clothed angel descend from heaven, with face of sun-like brightness and head encircled with rainbow-like beauty and glory. His feet, like pillars of fire, bestride earth and sea as a conqueror and he utters a shout like a lion’s roar. Seven thunder peals follow, declaring matters which John wished to write, but was forbidden. This shows us that the matters relating to the conquest of the nations after the return of Christ and the battle of Armageddon are temporarily hidden from view. They are revealed elsewhere in outline and the “seven thunders” (v.4) can be linked to Psalm 29 if we wish to enjoy some further study, and to the seven specific campaigns of King David of Israel in 2 Sam.8,10, which give us hints as to how Christ will set up the Kingdom.

The angel assures John that the purpose of God will come to fruition at the sounding of the seventh trumpet and that there would then “be time (delay) no longer” (v.6) in completing the final vengeance against God’s enemies. This confirms the promise to Daniel:

“And I heard the man clothed in linen, which was upon the waters of the river, when he held up his right hand and his left hand unto heaven, and sware by him that liveth for ever that it shall be for a time, times, and an half…” (Dan.12:7).

The time periods outlined by the angel to Daniel would be completed when the seventh angel sounded. A comparison of the two verses is most revealing and strengthens our conviction that there is one divine mind in control of all things.

The mighty angel (v.1) is distinct from the seven trumpeters and his description is an echo of the one like unto the Son of man of ch.1. He is the Sun of Righteousness (Mal.4:2) manifesting the divine glory (Dan.12:3), with feet of fiery conquest.

His clothing with a cloud is a reference to the multitude of saints:

“Behold, he cometh with clouds ...” (ch.1:7).
“Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses ...” (Heb.12:1).

The rainbow can only appear when the Sun of Righteousness is enthroned as we saw when we considered the throne of glory in ch.4:3.

This rainbowed angel thus represents the multitudinous Christ:

“Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ” (Eph.4:13).
It is achieving the conquest of the nations. It is the symbol of the One Body as it appears in power and great glory at the return of Christ.

If this is so, how can it be said that he “came down from heaven”? (v.1)

As we have discovered, there are heavens political and spiritual as well as heavens atmospheric. Saints are already in the heavens in Christ Jesus (Eph.1:3) even though they have not left the earth! Their life is hid with Christ in God (Col.3:3,4). The saints have been begotten from above (John 3:3) by the incorruptible seed of the Word of God (1 Peter 1:23), and in this sense it can be said that they come down from Heaven with him. When the Lord returns they will be associated with him in the “new heavens” or form of Government he will establish on earth (Isa.65:17,18). From that elevated position of status they will “descend to earth” in order to subdue nations, and organise the government of the world.

This is the time referred to in 2 Thess.1:10 when Jesus comes to be:
“glorified in his saints and admired in all them that believe...”.

What is his promise to them at that time?
“...to him will I give power over the nations, and he shall rule them with a rod of iron; as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers, even as I have received of my Father” (Rev.2:26).

Psalm 149:9 speaks of the honour of the saints as they “execute ... the judgments written.” He and they, head and body, then form one powerful community of whom it was told Daniel of this time:
“... judgment was given to the saints of the most High; and the time came that the saints possessed the kingdom” (Dan.7:22).

The mighty angel was seen bestriding earth and sea and this suggests universal dominion. We shall understand this more when studying chapter 13, which refers to a beast of the sea in v.1 and another beast of the earth in v.11, and over which the multiduinos Christ will finally gain the victory.

The word “mystery” in v.7 should be rendered secret. There is nothing mysterious about the purpose of God, though only the initiated understand His revelation, as it has been declared by the prophets and apostles:
“Surely the Lord GOD will do nothing, but he revealeth his secret unto his servants the prophets” (Amos 3:7).

“Now to him that is of power to stablish you according to my gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began, But now is made manifest, and by the scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, made known to all nations for the obedience of faith” (Rom.16:25,26). See also Eph.3:3,4.

The “little book” (vs.2,9) is small in comparison to the seven-sealed scroll because its contents cover a short period of time. It detailed the seven thunders (v.4) to be further revealed at the coming of Christ, for it is open and revealed to the Rainbowed Angel, the One Body of the resurrected saints.
How could John eat the little book?
John was commanded to “eat” (v.9) and this means he was to absorb the message of the book. He was to make it a part of himself and his thinking, just as had Jeremiah the prophet:

“They words were found, and I did eat them; and thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart: for I am called by thy name, O LORD God of hosts” (Jer.15:16).

His reaction (v.9) mirrors that of Ezekiel (Ezek.3:3,14). The effect of the power and influence of the Truth of God is soothing and strengthening, as sweet as honey (v.10) (Psa.19:10,11; Prov.24:13,14).

But the knowledge of the book enabled them to view life from God’s standpoint and they were filled with indignation against a godless world. They were thus able to endorse the judgments to be poured out upon it. Deut.32:24 shows that bitterness (v.10) implies fierce anger, judgment and destruction (Eze.3:14). We can see similar reactions of joy followed by indignation and prayers for revenge from God from Jeremiah after he had ‘eaten’ God’s words (Jer.15:15,16).

Can revenge be godly?
The concept of revenge needs to be considered. The Lord God has set out the attitude of obedience and trust which He requires from His servants, and which He knows will develop their characters. The principle was clear in the Old Testament and is repeated in the New, that they are not to render evil for evil but to exercise restraint, and to love their neighbour as themselves.

They must therefore trust that in God’s own good time and manner, He will make sure that His righteousness prevails and their patient waiting will be vindicated. This is the great drama of the Gospel in relation to the coming age. A people humble and meek, who in all the ages have been despised, ridiculed and sometimes persecuted by the world about them, will be made great in the earth, so that even “kings shall bow before them.”

This is emphasised in Romans 12:19:

“Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord.”

“To me belongeth vengeance, and recompence; thir foot shall slide in due time: for the day of their calamity is at hand ... For the LORD shall judge his people, and repent himself for his servants ...” (Deut.32:35,36 and quoted in Heb.10:30).

“The righteous shall rejoice when he seeth the vengeance ... So that a man shall say, Verily there is a reward for the righteous: verily he is a God that judgeth in the earth” (Psa.58:10,11).

King David shows us how he learned this lesson and applied it in his life (1 Sam.25:33; 26:9-11).
Learn to Read the Bible Effectively

We are not thinking here of small personal offences where we are encouraged to be merciful and forgive others. Where God’s honour is at stake, however, and often the prophets and apostles were persecuted for preaching the truth of God, the believer is told to be meek and restrained and leave it to God to avenge them in his own way and time. One of the logical outcomes of this of course, was that the early Christians did not involve themselves in armies of the world.

It is natural to human beings without God to take revenge. In ancient Greece it was developed to be an art form, with many popular plays being written and enjoyed on the subject. Shakespeare considers the subject in ‘Hamlet’ where he constantly argues whether it is right or not to avenge himself. One of the indications that the Bible is Divine, is that it gives such clear guidance on the subject, together with the reasons, and yet which is so against man’s natural inclinations.

It is indeed a cause for hope and rejoicing to know that the time is coming when the whole world will be governed righteously, and oppressors will no longer cause such misery and anguish.

**A future preaching work**

In v.11 John is told that he had a yet greater work to perform in the future, and this must have been very encouraging to him, for he was then an old man banished to the Isle of Patmos. He did not receive this assurance just for himself, however, for he is representative of all saints. An identity was formed between him and the One Man Angel, who gave him the book, which was open to view. We thus see that all resurrected saints, including John, will “prophesy” (see 1 Cor.14:3) “before many peoples, and nations, and tongues and kings” (v.11).

It is referred to again in ch.14:6,7:

>“And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people, saying with a loud voice, Fear God, and give glory to him; for the hour of his judgment is come: and worship him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters.”

This establishes the principle that God always gives people a warning and an opportunity before the judgment comes. In the future, even after the nations have fought at Jerusalem (Zech.14:2), the resurrected saints will be giving all peoples a chance to obey the Lord Jesus Christ as King of all the world, as he begins to establish his kingdom. The saints will rejoice that the time has come for the overthrow of the power of the enemy who still refuse to honour God, and the triumph of Christ in all the earth.

Much exciting and interesting work will follow, when the saints will go forth to teach the nations, out of which they have been taken, the wonderful truths of God’s Millenial Age. The “cloud” of saints in v.1 will pour forth rain (Psa.72:6) in refreshing showers of divine truth (Deut.32:2). Mankind will be educated in God’s ways (Isa.2:2-4), so that at last “the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea” (Hab.2:14).
As John was shown in ch.10:11, God’s goodness meant that a testimony would be borne in front of the nations before His judgments came upon them. In ch.11 John is shown how this worked out in practice during the long period of most of the six trumpets. The specific events of the fifth and sixth trumpets - the Saracens and the Turks - affected the Eastern empire. Meanwhile the believers in the western empire, were experiencing the conditions described in this chapter. It was achieved by the existence of two witnesses (v.3). These stand for political and religious dissenters who protested with vigour against tyranny in the Roman empire, and had no scruples in taking up arms in the struggle. In so doing they unconsciously allowed the Truth to sound forth. They acted as a protecting shield for true saints, who would otherwise have been silenced.

Later in the book the two witnesses are described as the earth (political opposition) and the woman (religious opposition). The saints themselves are a distinct group in God’s eyes and He sees them as:

“the remnant of her (the woman’s) seed which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ” (Rev.12:17).

What is the temple in v.1?
The first two verses of the new vision refer to a temple which John is told to measure, but omitting the court. The reed is a symbol of measurement (Eze.40:3; Rev.21:15) and a “rod”, Greek rabdos, is used for correction (1 Cor.4:21). So the symbol indicates a measured period of chastisement for the worshippers.

Originally, God met with His people in the tabernacle and later in the temple (Ex.25:22). Finally, the Lord Jesus appeared, who perfectly manifested the glory of the character of the Father, “full of grace and truth” (John 1:14). Since then true followers of Jesus Christ are spoken of as the “temple of God” (2 Cor.6:16; 1 Tim.3:15) and they partake of the Christ-Altar (Heb.13:10). They are the true Israelites, the seed of Abraham (Gal.3:16). They expect tribulation in their lives as the Lord Jesus told them in John 16:33 and know that it is a refining process (also 1 Pet.4:13; Heb.12:6).
The “court without” of v.2 describes the Court of the Gentiles, with which John had been familiar in the literal temple in Jerusalem. The symbols indicate true saints as being a separated priestly community worshipping at the altar inside the temple and those in the court outside as being those who claim to be “Christian” but who oppose the real teaching and practice of the Truth. John is told to leave out the court from the Greek ekbale - ‘cast out’. There was to be no fellowship between these two groups as John had already advised in his epistles (eg 2 John 10).

How long is 42 months and when was it?
We are familiar with the idea that true believers, the Ecclesia, are spiritual Jerusalem - the holy city (v.2). This is confirmed in Rev.21:2 where the new Jerusalem, the Holy City is described as a bride adorned for her husband. These were to be trodden underfoot for 42 months by Gentiles who claimed to be part of the Temple. This is 3½ years, which was the time of the actual down-treading of the Jesus ‘temple’ in the Holy City and land of Israel - it is therefore an appropriate way to express the time period. On the day for a year principle, using the 30 day lunar month as is normal in scripture, it becomes 1,260 years.

So v.2 describes an epoch when the ecclesia is trodden underfoot by those in the court of the Gentiles or those organised as a ‘Christian’ community but with whom the holy city will have no fellowship.

The time period can commence when the Pope in Rome was finally made the chief bishop of all the churches by the decree of the Emperor Phocas in AD 608-610:
“The Emperor Phocas enjoyed good relations with Rome, his recognition of the primacy of the pope in matters of religion winning him praise from pope Gregory I....Phocas conferred on him, rather than on John IV the patriarch of Constantinople, the disputed title of ‘ecumenical patriarch’.” (Encyclopaedia Britannica CD1998). (See illustration W28.1).

This confirmed the Decree of Justinian in AD 533. So we can measure 1260 years from this establishment of the temporal power of the papacy - and this brings us to AD 1868-1870. It just happens that this was the precise time that the papacy lost its temporal power as a result of the armies of Napoleon etc. As we continue in our studies, we may discover more details of the events of these times which will help us decide whether this has any relevance to these verses.

The two witnesses
In v.3 we are introduced to my two witnesses (the word power should not be in the text) who were to prophesy for 1260 days, being clothed in sackcloth - an indication of mourning. Further hints are given in v.4 that these witnesses are two olive trees and two candlesticks and they stand before the God of the earth.

The following verses are packed with incident and may seem baffling at first sight.

Why two ways of describing time periods?
You may have noticed that this is the same length of time as is given in different words in v.2. This is because they are to be computed from different starting dates! (There is even a third method in ch.12:14 which links with Dan.7:25; 12:7). Each method links the period to a specific starting date that is to be observed wherever that particular form of words is used - it is like a code to help us.

Communities of people or individuals?
We know from Rev.1:20 that candlesticks (or lampstands) are used to represent communities of people. They witnessed before many peoples, nations, tongues and kings and so it was not confined to witnessing in any one place, such as Israel.

The witnesses are evidently very irritating, for eventually (at the end of the 1260 days) they are killed, and they of the people and kindreds and tongues and nations shall see their dead bodies ...” (v.9). This also shows us the witnesses are not two individuals but rather communities of people, for otherwise ‘nations’ could not see them. This is confirmed in v.7 where the beast makes war against them, for only against a community could war be made. Mention of the beast will later be seen to refer to the Roman empire as the arena for the witnessing.

My witnesses?
First, a problem which may spring to mind. Maybe we think that because Jesus calls them my witnesses, they are bound to be saints (but see Section 16 on Titles). The title is used because even though they do not embrace the Truth in its purity (they show no scruples in taking up the sword in defence of their position, though that is denied true saints), they demonstrate the principle that “all power” is in the hands of the Lord Jesus (Matt.28:18; 1 Pet.3:22). He will provide protection to his true followers, when they proclaim the truth in its purity. The two witnesses provide such protection in the protests against tyranny. It is suggested that the two witnesses have stood for political and religious freedom and the very vigour of their protest against tyranny has permitted the Truth to sound forth, even though the holy city has been trodden underfoot of pseudo-Christian Gentiles.

Olive trees - good or bad?
We read of olive trees elsewhere in Scripture - in Zechariah 4. There are important differences between this vision and the one in Rev.11:4. The one in Zechariah wholly portrays believers and the pipes carrying the oil of truth from the two trees of Israel and the Gentiles, to be burnt in the one golden candlestick are of gold, symbolising tried faith. In Revelation, the two trees are separate and have a separate candlestick each.

The apostle Paul in Romans helps us here with his description of two kinds of olive tree in Romans 11. As far as God is concerned there are only two kinds of people. They are either saints, part of the commonwealth of Israel (Eph.2:12,19) (the Good Olive Tree) or Gentiles and alien to the covenants of promise (the Wild Olive Tree).

Neither of the olive trees in Rev.11 are stated to be of good olives, nor the candlesticks to be golden. So the symbols of the two witnesses are suited to communities of religious and political zealots who tormented the enemies of truth. They are both wild olive trees. They witnessed while the oppression existed. The French Revolution lifted much of this tyranny and the work of the witnesses as such came to an end.
Who is the God of the earth?
The two witnesses stand “before the God of the earth” and this god is not to be confused with the “God of heaven” (the Creator) in v.13.

As we saw in our Clue about heaven and earth, the symbol of earth refers to the common people of society (cp Gen.6:11; Deut.32:1; Isa.1:2). In pagan Roman times the god of the earth was Caesar, and when the empire became Christian the popes thought of themselves as God. Thus Gregory the Second, writing to the Emperor in Constantinople in the eighth century, said:

“All the lands of the west have their eyes directed towards our humility; by them we are considered as a God upon earth” (Ranke, History of the Popes, vol.1,p.13).

The God of the earth is evidently the god whom the earth worshipped. The two witnesses were to stand before (in the sense of being against) this papal god of the Roman earth and deliver their testimony (See illustration W28.2).

This god foreseen by the apostle Paul
The apostle Paul had foreseen the full development of the false ideas which were even then developing. He knew that the falling away, or apostasy, would lead to a counterfeit Christian system, to be destroyed by Christ when he returned. In his prophecy in 2 Thess.2 he warns believers to be on their guard by remaining steadfast to the one true gospel.

“Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition;
Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God” (2 Thess.2:3,4).

Did the witnesses really torment?
To the god of the earth and the people of the empire the effect of the torment (v.10) of the two witnesses was equally bad. When their consciences were not being attacked by the preaching of the gospel, then they were subjected to wars and troubles fomented by the political agitators, which is shown in v.3 as “fire”. Anyone who believed in freedom of religion or in political liberty were protestants against the God of the earth. The one was the military arm of the other, and indeed, it was only the true believers who would not take the sword in protest; they limited their prophesying or preaching to “the sword of the spirit, which is the word of God” (Eph.6:17). However, many other protesting Christian groups had no such scruples. So in fact, these two broad groups co-existed and overlapped; religious and political reactionaries witnessed side by side against the injustices of the state.

Both church and state in the Roman empire during the ages of Christendom, developed a spirit of bitter persecution against all who would not submit to their allied despotism and claims. But although the stronger party during the greater portion of the time, the papacy has suffered much at the hands of the religio-political rebels who dared to question its authority and to carry on a warfare against it. The best known illustrations are those connected with the Protestant reformation, which introduced a state of war lasting thirty years in which all parties suffered severely. This is an example of what v.5 tells us about the witnesses:

“And if any man will hurt them, fire proceedeth out of their mouth ...”.

The Book of Revelation
Further powers of the witnesses are described in v.6 where to shut up heaven results in the withholding of showers of rain and producing drought, is figurative of divine wrath upon the sufferers, instead of Divine blessing and peace (cp. Deut.11:17; Zech.14:17). Here it is the political heavens that are referred to and therefore represents peace being taken from the earth (contrast Psa.72:6,7). The waters refer to peoples (ch.17:15) and so speak of the war and bloodshed for those involved. The effects of war and other judgments are spoken of as plagues in ch.9:20 also.

**True gospel still preached**

And through it all the great purpose of God was maintained - the true ecclesia was enabled to continue to “contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints” (Jude v.3) and so give people opportunity for repentance. At the same time it was protected from extinction during the ages of open persecution by the protestings of the two witnesses. We have already noted this aspect in Section 21 in remarks about the Donatists. This is why Christ could term them my witnesses - they were to protect his brethren, the holy city. For apart from the testimony and the fighting of the witnessing people, the saints would have been entirely subdued. Unable themselves to retaliate, they must have perished had not the events been so manipulated that there were those who stood for liberty of conscience and speech against the religious and political tyranny of Christendom.

We must keep reminding ourselves that the saints themselves - the holy city - are a distinct group in God’s eyes and He sees them as:

“the remnant of her (the woman’s) seed which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ” (Rev.12:17).

Later in the book the two witnesses are described as the earth, (political opposition - those secular groups who opposed the authoritarian practices of the State religion on non-religious grounds) and the woman, (religious opposition - those religious groups who opposed the State religion on Scriptural grounds but were not sufficiently enlightened to become true believers).

The two witnesses are known in history by several names: Donatists (see notes Section 21), Waldenses, Novatians, Huguenots and others. All in their turn witnessed against the autocratic ecclesiastical power of Rome and so maintained a continuous record of opposition to its political and religious tyranny. Frequently the two forces of opposition combined to accomplish their ends. History provides numerous examples of groups who though they did not agree with the teaching of the woman or the remnant of her seed, were ready and eager to defend their right to teach it.

**A beast?**

At the end of the 1260 days, the witnesses are overcome and killed by the beast that ascendeth out of the bottomless pit (RV abyss v.7). In Section 23 we dealt with ch.9:1 where the shaft of the abyss was the entrance into the abyss, provided by the conquest of the Middle East, thus opening up a way into Europe for the Arabian warriors. The abyss itself, (often rendered deep as in the sea Job.38:30; Isa.63:13 Sept.) denotes the teeming masses of Europe and it is from these that the beast arose. Symbolically the abyss represents the sea of humanity (Rev.17:15).
This is the first time a *beast* has been mentioned and we are immediately reminded of the four beasts of Daniel’s prophecy, which represented God’s view of four world empires. These were to span the centuries from Daniel’s time to the coming of Christ (Dan.7:17-22. See Section 6 Old Testament Background). Dan.7:21 tells us that it was a further horn which came up upon the dreadful ten-horned fourth beast, which “made war with the saints, and prevailed against them” and this is further confirmation that the witnesses were not individuals. Rev. ch.11 supports Daniel’s prophecy and in subsequent history both are seen to be fulfilled.

**How do we count the 1260 days?**

The *two witnesses* began the 1260 day-year period of their testimony in AD 312, with the establishment of the new Christian church state under the victorious Constantine. It was then that the Donatists in North Africa:

> “broke with the Roman Catholics in 312 over the election of Caecilian as bishop of Carthage; the name derived from their leader, Donatus (d.c.355).” (Encyclopaedia Britannica CD1998).

The period of sackcloth witnessing could not take place while Rome was Pagan, as Paganism made no pretence to belong to the temple of God.

The date AD 312 plus 1260 years brings us to AD 1572 and thus the period of their witness ended (v.7) in a determined attempt by the church to destroy, once and for all, the political and religious opposition it had previously experienced. This culminated in an epoch of frightful persecution beginning with the so-called Massacre of St. Bartholomew, in France on 24th August 1572. It was particularly directed against the Huguenots, who especially exemplified this opposition to church and state, and their growing political influence made their suppression appear as a necessity to the Catholics.

The Huguenots were thus representative of the witnesses in all the earth in which the Pope was god, and they were more numerous and powerful in France than elsewhere. From Paris massacre spread to the provinces and once again France was plunged into civil war. Pope Gregory XIII was so proud of the murders that he issued a medal to commemorate the Massacre of the Huguenots in 1572. On the reverse side of the medal the Catholic murderers are represented as an angel of light, killing men, women and children in the name of Christ.

In 1598 Henry IV issued the Toleration Edict of Nantes, a form of human rights charter, and this ended the first phase of the war upon the witnesses. They had been “overcome” (v.7). But in 1685 this edict was revoked by Louis XIV, and in the persecution of the Protestants by means of the dreadful ‘Dragonnades’, or billeting of Dragoons upon them with licence to proceed to any methods of ‘conversion’, the witnesses were finally “killed” (v.7). Their social and political life was destroyed and private worship was forbidden under threat of offenders being sent to the galleys. The province of Languedoc alone lost 100,000 persons by premature death, and a tenth of these perished by fire, strangulations, or the wheel (see illustration W28.3).
After thousands had been massacred, some 300,000 survivors fled to Holland, England, America, and other countries, carrying germs of the truth and the ideas of liberty with them. Here, under protection of the laws, they were able to exist as groups, but bore no testimony as before.

**Why France?**

It strikes one at first as odd that these happenings should be identified so prominently with France. One interesting reason is that France was the first nation to become a Catholic country. This was through the conversion of Clovis, the great great grandfather of Charlemagne. As we noted in the History Section 13, they have always been orthodox Catholics and not Arians. France has always borne the title “the eldest son of the Church”, and what the eldest son does is done for all the family.

The next verse will provide more details.

In v.8 we learn of a great city, in the street of which lay the dead bodies of the two witnesses. We may guess by now that this great city is Rome. But a difficulty appears, for the verse also says that Jesus was crucified in this great city, and he was not crucified in Rome. The answer is to be found in the fact that in the constitution of the Roman Empire, the City of Rome was finally made co-extensive with the Roman Empire - Rome was legally said to cover every part of the Roman Empire. The whole empire was the city. This was by a decree of the emperor called the Edict of Caracalla, and was passed before the time of Constantine. In this sense the great city reached from Persia to the Atlantic and included Israel, where Jesus was crucified by Roman officials. Indeed, the Jewish people themselves insisted that they had no other King but Caesar (John 19:15). In a spiritual sense, the great city was as Sodom in its pride and abomination and Egypt for darkness and bondage.

The street (plateia or Broadway) indicates the main thoroughfare of the great city and answers to France, the first and chief Catholic country. The dead bodies of the witnesses were not to be buried out of sight and forgotten - v.9 tells us that all peoples kept them in public view. In France particularly, they were commemorated by a day to be observed every year - a day in which it was considered that “The Church” in 1685 had finally triumphed over its enemies who had tormented it for ages. Rome “rejoiced” (v.10), ‘Te Deums’ were sung, Pope Innocent XI sent congratulations to Louis XIV of France, “The Most Christian King”, and public thanksgivings were held.

A statue of Louis was erected with the inscription, ‘Louis the Great, the everlasting Conqueror’, and he had two medals struck, commemorating the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes 1685 and also the overthrow of the churches of the Calvinists 1685 - to celebrate ‘The Extinction of Protestantism’ (or the killing of the witnesses). The reverse side of one shows Louis XIV as the executioner receiving a victor’s crown at the hands of the Romish Church. He is standing with his right foot on the neck of a Protestant which he has just broken with the iron bar balanced on the back of his victim. The other celebrates the victory of Roman Catholicism, with the Roman whore placing a cross on the altar of a ruined Protestant church. The inscription reads “To commemorate the recall to the Church of 2,000,000 Calvinists, 1685.”

**How can we measure 3½ days in v.11?**

The violent opposition of Catholicism towards the Huguenots and others, was not permitted to be hidden away, or put out of sight, for a period of three and a half days. One writer has said that:
“in conformity with the aptness of the symbol, this is described as three and a half days. It would not be appropriate for a dead body to lie in an open street for longer than such a time because decomposition would take place.”

It is suggested that the days referred to are in fact lunar days. The duration of one lunar day from sunrise to sunrise on the moon, is 720 hours. This is equivalent to thirty 24 hour days on earth. If the thirty earth days are now multiplied by the $3\frac{1}{2}$ days in the prophecy, it equals 105 days. On the day for a year principle this period now represents 105 years. (See note in Section 1, p.11).

In 1793, Bicheno, a Baptist pastor of Newbury, suggested that the interval between 1685 to 1790 is 105 years, by regarding them as lunar days, as reasoned above. He perceived the resurrection and ascension to power of the witnesses in the then current Great French Revolution.

Actually, a period of **105 years** did elapse between the political death of the witnesses in 1685 as above, and their political resurrection in the French Revolution of 1790. During that period ‘Protestantism’, political and religious, was without organised power - an unburied body - in France, the main street of the Roman city.

**What did people who lived at the time think?**

We may wonder what believers in other ages made of the Book of Revelation. Thomas Newton (1754) notes several contemporary writers who identified the Massacre of St. Bartholomew’s Day 1572 with the death of the witnesses in France. It is significant to read the *Accomplishment of Scripture Prophecy* by Peter Jurieu, a Protestant pastor:

> “It is one of the keys of the Revelation to understand that the Great City signifies not Rome alone, but Rome in conjunction with its Empire. This being supposed and proved, then in my opinion, we cannot doubt that the ‘tenth’ part of the city is France. It is also the ‘street’ or place of the city, that is, the most fair and eminent part of it. I lay not down the exact time of the resurrection of the witnesses, but I strongly hope the three and a half years began at the time of the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes.”

**This was published in 1687, two years after this event.**

At the end of the 105 years, the Witnesses for civil and religious liberty and defenders of ‘the rights of man’ revived. It was an event that struck terror into the minds of their enemies, the king, nobles and clergy of France. On 23rd August 1789, the new National Assembly published a decree proclaiming liberty of opinions, religious and political; while on 10th July 1790, they stood upon their feet (v.11), when the National Assembly decreed that the property of exiled Huguenots, unsold at that date, should be restored to their rightful heirs.

From this time the spirit of democratic liberty held sway and religious protests and enquiry were revived. The British and Foreign Bible Society was founded in 1804, by which, in defiance of the mandates of the god of the earth, the Scriptures have been circulated greatly among other nations, thus preparing their minds to receive and seek for the Truth as it is in Jesus. The Baptists arose in England, and the Campbellites in America, and out of the controversies of the times at length came the re-discovered faith of the Apostles and primitive Christianity, and Christadelphians.
Religious liberty and freedom of worship in our day owe much to the zealous work of the two witnesses. Those who value the truth of the Scriptures and are thus part of the Holy City, express deep gratitude to their Lord for protecting the early brethren by the work of the witnesses and preserving the Truth from extinction.

**Political heavens again!**

The astonishing detail of this chapter continues in v.12. Here the language is once again based upon the literal death, burial and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ, but as with the rest of the symbols in this chapter this ascension is related not to the heaven, but to the political heavens. The Royal Decree of Louis XVI convoking the States General in 1789, permitted the oppressed classes to send 600 of their representatives to parliament and they later **ascended** to place and power in the political **heaven**. Their royal, clerical and aristocratic enemies regarded their elevation with dismay.

The great earthquake (v.13) which swiftly followed was the great French Revolution (1789-1794). France was the tenth part of the city (v.13) of Rome, being the street of the great city, where the mutterings of discontent erupted with destructive violence (see W28.4). From the taking of the Bastille by the mob of Paris to the execution of the king and queen, the revolutionary forces went from one extreme to another, till the whole political constitution of France was levelled to the dust as by an earthquake. Royalty, the aristocracy and the Catholic religion were abolished, substituting the Goddess of Reason.

The interesting detail in the verse that seven thousand names of men were destroyed, has reference to the fact that all clerical and civil titles were completely abolished and everyone became a citizen. In this Reign of Terror, the guillotine was supplemented by mass killings and the remnant were **affrighted and gave glory to the God of heaven** (v.13). That prophecy was amazingly fulfilled on 8th June 1794, when at a specially arranged festival, Robespierre proposed that the French people acknowledge the existence of the Supreme Being and the immortality of the soul. The ascription “To Reason” was then replaced by another “To the Supreme Being” on the front of Notre Dame and other Cathedrals.

**End of the sixth trumpet at last**

This remarkable act brings us at last to the end of the sixth, or second woe trumpet! It has taken a very long time to sound and had two parts. The first part put to death the Greek Catholic dominion with its centre of government at Constantinople - the eastern Roman empire. The second part tormented with a terrible testimony the world rulers and spirituals of the European commonwealth in church and state. **“The third woe cometh quickly”** (v.14).

**The French Revolution anticipated**

Many writers before the French Revolution expected just such an event on the basis of Revelation ch.11, such as the following:

*Peter Jurieu* (1687) also wrote:
“The (ten) kings, who yet remain under the Empire of Rome, must break with her, leave her solitary and desolate. But who must begin this last revolt? ‘Tis most probable, that France shall...It cannot be any country but France...Seeing the tenth part of the City which must fall, is France, this gives me some hopes, that the death of the two witnesses hath a peculiar relation to that kingdom...”

Joseph Mede (1649) identified the great earthquake of Rev.11 as “a great commotion of the Nations, and alteration of politic affairs.” He refers to a man named Philipus Nicolaus who understood the phrase “the tenth part of the city” as referring to “the ten kingdoms subject to the dominion thereof, which (forsooth) in this stir of the nations, should fall away from Rome...”.

Robert Fleming (1701) noticed a ‘step by step’ rise of papal power and saw a corresponding gradation of its fall. He expected these stages in the fall of papal power in the years 1794 (period of the Revolution), 1848 and then finally in the year 2000 (or 2018 according to Julian years).

Thomas Newton (1754 p.630-631) understood that he was still living in the time of the sixth trumpet, also called the second woe trumpet.

“These seven last plagues (ie the vials of Rev.16) must necessarily fall under the seventh and last trumpet, or the third and last woe trumpet; so that as the seventh seal contained the seven trumpets, the seventh trumpet comprehends the seven vials...If then these seven last plagues synchronize with the seventh or last trumpet, they are all yet to come; for the sixth trumpet is not yet past?”

The great earthquake in France, signalling the end of the sixth trumpet or second woe, was nearer than he realised; just 35 years into the future.
Learn to Read the Bible Effectively

SECTION 29

THE SOUNDING OF
THE SEVENTH TRUMPET
Chapter 11:15-19

After the French Revolution, *the third woe cometh quickly* (v.14) and unlike the other woe trumpets, dates immediately from AD 1794.

The final vision first
At the sounding of this trumpet the final picture is given first, and then progressive details follow to describe how that end is reached. This is frequently the case in Scripture as we saw in Section 20. For example, Isaiah in ch.2:2-4 first draws a picture of Jerusalem in its glory and then proceeds to describe conditions and events which will precede that state. We have already seen examples of this in the book of Revelation, such as in ch.1. Here the coming of Christ and the Day of Judgment are revealed to John, although Jesus does not actually return until ch.16:15. Rev.21 opens with John projected into the time after the Millenial reign of Christ when “there was no more sea” (nations of mortal people). Here again, the consummation is first declared, and then the means of attainment is revealed, with the nations walking in the light of the Holy City-community (v.24).

So ch.11:15-19 are a brief rehearsal of the final effect of the seventh trumpet:

“But in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he shall begin to sound, the mystery of God should be finished, as he hath declared to his servants the prophets” (ch.10:7).

The *great voices in heaven* (v.15) refer to the seat of government of the coming age and so they proclaim the Millenial reign of Christ. In the Greek, the word *kingdoms* is singular, as used in Daniel:

“... the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men ...” (Dan.4:17 & 2:42).

Man’s rule will be transferred to Christ as his inheritance:

“I will declare the decree: the LORD hath said unto me, Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee. Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession” (Psa.2:8).
“Yea, all kings shall fall down before him: all nations shall serve him” (Psa.72: 11).

Christ will reign for ever and ever, (literally this is the ‘ages of ages’) until the conclusion of the thousand years, when he will give the perfected Kingdom to God:

“All they that be in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of eternal life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation.” (Mat.25:31-46).

The seventh trumpet still sounding

The sounding of the seventh trumpet is a long blast of judgment which will culminate in the Millenial reign of Christ and has therefore been sounding since AD 1794, at the end of the French Revolution. This is very helpful in giving us a distinct landmark in these unfolding events. The details in verse 18 give us the process of this development - the nations being made angry, the Divine wrath which results, “the time of the dead that they should be judged” etc. as Daniel explains in ch.12:2:

“And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt”.

We are familiar with other Scriptures which always associate these events with the second coming of Christ:

“I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom” (2 Tim.4:1).

“For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels; and then he shall reward every man according to his works” (Matt.16:27).

What does the temple mean?

The temple of God (v.19) which was measured off for down-treading in the beginning of the chapter is here at the end of it. Now, however, it is established in heaven, in the position of power - the saints are sitting with Christ in his throne as he promised them. This is a parallel verse with ch.4:1, where John saw a door opened in the heaven and looking through the door, he saw a throne and one sitting upon it.

The verse continues by using language which reminds us of the Tabernacle for worship made by Moses. This had two parts - the Holy Place was separated by an embroidered veil or thick curtain from the Most Holy Place or ‘nave’. Here was placed the ark of the testament (or covenant). The Ark was where God’s glory and presence was symbolised between the golden cherubim over the mercy-seat. Now we have a chance to see the significance of where verse 19 comes in - in order for the ark to be seen in the Most Holy Place, the veil must have been removed - the temple has been opened. The glory of the mercy-seat is seen.

Ever since Jesus ascended to heaven, saints have been grateful that ‘in Christ’, they have had access to this mercy-seat of God. They accept in faith, the merciful provision that has been made for the forgiveness of their sins:

“Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, By a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh” (Heb.10:19,20).
So the veil represents the flesh - mortal man. When Jesus returns, he will make his friends immortal so that the reality of their faith will then be seen - the veil of flesh will have been removed and they will have Spirit nature. Together with the Lord Jesus, they are able to fully manifest the glory of God and they surround him with thanks and worship (vs.16,17). The temple will be opened and others will be able to obtain mercy during the thousand years of the Kingdom Age.

A feature of the Kingdom will be that the nations will be able to worship at a literal Temple which will be built at Jerusalem, where they will be taught God’s truths of salvation (Zech.14:16; Eze.40-47; Isa 56:7 quoted by Jesus in Matt.21:13).

The lightnings, voices and thunderings are the same that burst forth out of the throne, as we saw in ch.4:5. They are symbols for the tremendous storm and earthquake which will overthrow the existing governments of the world when Christ returns. We may remember the angel of the rainbow referring to this time as seven thunders in ch.10:3. Sadly, we know that the governments of the nations will not at first submit to the rule of Christ (Psa.2) and this contributes to a great time of trouble (Dan.12:1) until they are overthrown in the last great earthquake in the Book of Revelation.

The return of the Lord Jesus Christ will begin this wonderful time and we each have the opportunity now to make sure that we have a part in it.
SUMMARY

We have seen the plan of God unfold as a continuous story upon the pages of history.

We have noted the times of Constantine as if an earthquake had occurred. We saw the work of the Two Witnesses provided by God, who stood for freedom of speech even though they did not necessarily agree with the saints, eg. the Donatists. These eased the problems of the saints and kept back some of the waves of persecution. The saints, the true believers, were led to prayer as they were engaged in a struggle against the cruel world in which they lived. We have noticed God’s judgments upon this wicked world as a response to those prayers. We remember that Jesus encouraged them to overcome. As the centuries have rolled by it is evident to us that the enemy of the saints has always been the world - the social, political and religious environment. We are assured in the Book that their prayers were heard and that they will be raised to life again, to help the Lord Jesus set up the true Kingdom of God on the earth.

People saw where they were in history and made predictions on the basis of what they read in this book. The purpose of Jesus’ prophecy was thereby fulfilled:

“And now I have told you before it come to pass, that, when it is come to pass, ye might believe” (John 14:29).

His wonderful predictions given in the Book of Revelation imply that they are read and understood. They are to lead people to look for events. Believe is the same word as faith and these prophecies can lead to conviction which is based on reason and which can be tested.

The amazing thing for us to realise is that it was history written in advance! It tells us there really is a God who has written this by AD 100. He is therefore interested in the world and the claim is that Jesus is in control. This applies to the seals and the trumpets for instance, which we have recently studied. We can now look back and see that all the predictions in the book of Revelation of AD 96 were accurate and history actually did fulfill them.

It is also a powerful witness to read what the early Christians expected the future to bring, on the basis of their reading of the book:

“The writings of Tertullian (162-240) abound with references to the millennium and the coming stone that would smite the image of Daniel’s prophecy. In fact, he makes quite a remarkable prediction stating that on the basis of Scripture he expected an apostate church with temporal power to grow up in Rome, rising from the fragmented ruins of imperial Rome. Hippolytus (died 236) wrote similarly of a revived Roman Empire under a new guise and governing by Roman law” (Alan Eyre, The Protesters, p.13).
We have seen that this expectation was fulfilled. Rome did develop a religious system and it was very much based on the old Roman Empire. In fact the whole Roman Empire became Christianised under Constantine in AD 324. We have also learned that in AD 800 the Pope crowned Charlemagne as Emperor and so began a whole new phase of Roman history. It is these developments and their implications, which we shall be considering in the next chapters.
The Woman, the Dragon & the Man Child
Chapter 12

A Zig-Zag picture
First we are taken back in time from that which we reached at the end of chapter 11, where verse 15 onwards gave us another picture of the final glory. We notice in ch.12:17, the warfare for the saints is still going on, so the chapter must be about details of events leading up to this. We have noticed that this is a feature of the book and discussed it in Section 20.

Ch.12 is sometimes thought of historical at the time of John. But Rev 1v1 says it concerns things which must shortly come to pass. ie subsequent to John’s day. Also that the message being signified was to be in symbols and not therefore to be wholly literal. For instance some hold that the woman is Mary and therefore the child must be Christ because he rules with a rod of iron and is caught up to heaven v5. Why would Christ himself tell John of ascending to heaven when it had already happened? Is it logical that there can be war in heaven v7. Was this true when he ascended? Did Mary flee into the wilderness v6, v14? It is suggested rather that this chapter is not about Christ himself but an imposter who was to usurp him. We have already covered this history in ch 6.

This chapter forms the second half of the book. We are taken back to the sixth seal and the revolution of Constantine, which abolished pagan government and established in its place a system based upon professed allegiance to Christ. So the reader returns to consider the Western Empire after dealing with events in the Eastern Empire under the 5th and 6th Trumpets.

Why do we link back into the same events of history which we have already considered? Because it is now from a different perspective. Namely - how the beast (signifying the Roman empire), was to affect true believers.

This feature too is familiar to us - Daniel 2 describes the history of world Empires right down to the coming of Christ as the ‘stone’ to establish God’s kingdom. Then in chs.7 & 8 we are given more details of the same Empires from the perspective of God - where He sees them as wild beasts.
It will be helpful to look again at Dan.7:7 and remind ourselves of the *dreadful and terrible* fourth beast, which was to continue in some form right up until the time that the *Ancient of Days* came. The notable feature was his ten horns and we remember that we concluded that the beast signified the Roman Empire.

In ch.12:3 we see this beast described as a *dragon* and again we see the tell-tale *ten horns*:

> “And there appeared another wonder in heaven; and behold a great red dragon, having seven heads and ten horns, and seven crowns upon his heads” (Rev.12:3)

**What is the dragon?**

The *pagan Roman Empire* at this time actually used a *dragon* as one of its military standards (see illustration W31.1) and it was this emblem that Constantine replaced on his soldier’s shields with the *Christian monogram*. (This was added to the earlier symbol of the eagle).

The *seven heads* of v.3 are explained in ch.17:9,10:

> “And here is the mind which hath wisdom. The seven heads are seven mountains, on which the woman sitteth. And there are seven kings: five are fallen, and one is, and the other is not yet come; and when he cometh, he must continue a short space”.

So the dragon, at this time, stands for pagan Rome before it became ‘christianized’.

The seven mountains of Rome are Mts. Coelius, Viminal, Aventine, Eaquiline, Quirinal, Capitoline and Palatine (see illustration W31.2).

The seven kings or forms of government of the Roman Empire are: Regal, Consular, Dictatorial, Decemviral, Tribunitial, Imperial BC 31 and Gothic AD 476. (See Section 11). The first five are mentioned by the Roman historian Tacitus in AD 115.

In the time of Constantine, as in the time of John, the head was the sixth Imperial head. This is why the *heads* are said to be *crowned*. In a later phase of the dragon it is the ten *horns* which are crowned and this detail is very useful in helping us decide where we are in history.

**Is the dragon in the Old Testament?**

A note about the origin of the *dragon* in Scripture may help us here. It is found as the crocodile or serpent of the river Nile:

> “... Thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I am against thee, Pharaoh king of Egypt, the great dragon that lieth in the midst of his rivers, which hath said said, My river is mine own, and I have made it for myself” (Eze.29:3)

The dragon thus symbolised the power of Egypt which was full of tyranny, darkness and superstition. When Egypt was conquered by Babylon and later by Rome, we are brought to John’s day. Rome deliberately took the symbol of the dragon (or crocodile) and applied it to themselves. So the great dragon symbol moved to Rome which later became the great ecclesiastical city “spiritually called Sodom and Egypt” as we noted in Rev.11:8. It is interesting to note that Rome was fascinated by ancient Egypt and that the Obelisk standing in the centre of St Peter’s Square in Rome, came from the Egyptian Temple of the Sun god. We shall meet this dragon power again in Revelation in its
progressive stages of growth - always it will be characterised by the seven heads and ten horns, and it always makes war upon God’s people. The final outcome is assured however, and Christ and the saints will be triumphant. The kingdom of God will replace the kingdom of men (Dan.2:44).

Recurring theme of Scripture
The Clue to help our understanding is that the whole of Scripture is about the conflict between Truth and error. This began with the serpent in Eden when a false philosophy was implanted into the mind of God’s children. Later, the virgin daughter of Israel was corrupted by the ways of the surrounding nations. A similar situation arose in the early ecclesias between the seed of the serpent and the seed of the woman as we discussed in Section 18. In Rev.2 and 3 we read the earnest appeals of Jesus, urging the ecclesias of Asia to resist the doctrines and deeds of the Balaamites, Nicolaitanes and Jezebelites who flourished in their meetings, with their human philosophy and vain deceit. For instance the Jezebel class of believers in ch.2 supported idol-worship in order to curry favour with the pagan world. This seduced believers so that when persecution came and this very issue became a matter of life and death, they failed the test. The Apocalypse continues to prophesy of this deadly conflict in order to warn and encourage true believers not to be deceived, but to overcome the world around them.

The dragon was in heaven v.3
From our studies so far, we shall understand that heaven means the dragon was in a position of rulership. The Roman Empire - the dragon - was pagan, and its Emperor was the high priest who bore the title Pontifex Maximus.

A further detail is given us in v.4 - “And his tail drew the third part of the stars of heaven, and did cast them to the earth ...”. The movement of the tail of a beast indicates its fear and anger. At the time of Constantine’s rise to power, we shall remember that he and Licinius were favourable to the Christians and they ruled the western third and the Illyrian third of the Empire. The eastern third was ruled by Maximin, an intolerant pagan and cruel persecutor of the Christians. He decreed by law that all were to partake of food sacrificed to idols; goods offered for sale in the market were to be sprinkled with pagan lustral water; no one was to visit the public baths without throwing incense to the gods whose altars were placed there. He determined to destroy Christianity and initiated a holy war to that end by attacking Licinius but lost his life and his territory. Thus the princes of his realm - the stars of his heaven - were cast out of their positions of power.

A wonder (Gk semeion) means a sign
But verse 1 of this chapter sets out a new situation - it is a symbolic woman who is in heaven, clothed with the sun and the moon under her feet. This is like a summary statement of what is to be achieved when the man child reaches heaven and casts out the Dragon. We know it is the Ecclesia which is called a woman; Paul thought of it as a chaste virgin and ch.21 calls her the bride, the Lamb’s wife. Constantine elevated the Christians to the status of a State-sponsored religion, a position of political power and the sun of imperial royalty in the heaven of the Roman Empire. The moon as a symbol is like a literal moon; it shines in the same heaven as the sun but borrows its light from it. The pagan priests were only sustained by the pagan state, and therefore they were now under the feet of the christian woman. No doubt you will see the connection with ch.6 where the sun, moon and stars of the pagan heaven were overthrown by a great earthquake (see Section 19).
So this chapter is seen to be parallel to ch.6. It describes things from a more detailed standpoint - that of how the revolution in AD 312 affected the friends of Christ.

The crown (Gk stephan) was the coronal wreath and the symbol of victory. There had been twelve Caesars on the imperial throne from Augustus, the first Roman Emperor, to Domitian, the Emperor who reigned when John received the prophecy. As far as John was concerned therefore, the crown destined to be placed on the Church’s brow as a result of her conflict with Paganism, was a twelve-starred crown. There were other Caesars after John’s time, but the number at the date of the vision continued to represent the imperial prize of the conflict that was in progress. (See illustration of book written by Suetonius, born in AD 69 W31.3). So that for one to wear a crown (stephanos) of twelve stars (ruling powers) in the Roman heavens would signify gaining the crown of the twelve Caesars. Note: Some people think that the sun, moon and stars refer to the dream Joseph had of his father, mother and brethren bowing down to him. The woman it is thought, then becomes Israel and man child Jesus. If this were the case, the great wonder or remarkable sign of ch.12:1 would have to be a situation in existence at the time of Jesus’ birth. Yet at this time Israel was subject to Rome and the Jews declared “we have no king but Caesar”. Israel was not clothed with the sun, a figure for strength, rulership and glory. And again Revelation is about things which must shortly come to pass (ch.1:1) and therefore cannot refer to Christ as a baby which was, on any reckoning, at least 60 years previously.

The religious community of the Christians was no longer a chaste virgin however, for she was with child (v.2). From the beginnings of the Ecclesia on the day of Pentecost in AD 33, other influences and errors had crept in and the gestation of the man of sin commenced. Two hundred and eighty years later (the number of ‘day-years’ for gestation) the results were “brought forth” in the birth of the man-child of sin. This was not the literal birth of Constantine, but his ascension to power in the name of Christianity. He was a product of the Roman serpent or dragon together with the Ecclesia, which had been beguiled and drawn away from the Truth, just as Paul had feared (2 Cor.11:3). A mystery of iniquity had been at work (2 Thess.2:7) and the church had developed within itself a party with political aims, which desired to be of the world, to take part in its political movements and had even associated itself with the military organisation of the Empire. We must always remember, however, that there was a remnant of true believers, the original chaste woman, and her destiny is also revealed in this chapter.

Paul’s warnings of deceit in 2 Thess.2 are worth noting: Christian belief would fall away and then reveal the man of sin who would set up a church against God. A power would arise which would be a counterfeit Christianity - and which would be destroyed by Christ at his return. The stark language of v7 shows the power already developing but Paganism was keeping it under cover.

“For the mystery of iniquity doth already work: only he who now letteth will let, until he be taken out of the way.” (2 Thessalonians 2:7).

Strong 2722 letteth = hold back, restrain, hinder = “that which hinders, Antichrist from making his appearance”.

The Book of Revelation
What could be seen to hinder Antichrist, in the form of Constantine, from implementing his ideas of false Christianity? The answer is surely, Paganism. When this was removed out of the way by military conflict, the full extent of the apostacy was revealed.

The tie-up with Daniel’s prophecy is also interesting - the terrible fourth beast was to remain in some form right until the end and speaking blasphemies against God, when it would be destroyed by the Ancient of Days. Could these passages be talking about the same power? V2 describes the period immediately preceding the tolerant Edict of Milan issued by Constantine and Licinius in AD 313. These ten years were the period of the Fifth seal, the great Diocletian Persecution, the severest ever inflicted by the great red dragon upon the professors of Christianity. The Christian Church felt that she must die, if she did not give birth to a deliverer. Constantine was that deliverer and it was by her support that his success was ensured, for the Christians flocked to fight in his legions.

Although the pagan dragon had every intention of devouring the infant man child (v.4), he escaped by his ascension to the rulership of the political and religious heavens of the Roman Empire. This is described figuratively in the terms of v.5 - he was caught up unto God and to His throne. His influence and authority paved the way for emergence of the god of the earth (ch.11:4) and he aspired to this throne, (as is foreseen in 2 Thess.2:2-4 and Dan.11:36). His destiny was to rule all nations with a rod of iron and the next verses tell us how this was achieved.

Some have thought that the language used must mean that verse 5 refers to the Lord Jesus. However, the Revelation was given to John in AD 96 about things which must shortly come to pass; whereas the ascension of Jesus had already taken place in AD 33. Remember the Clue - Titles, Section 16! Constantine ruled as a supreme Emperor in the name of Christ and this explains why the language is from Psalm 2.

Summary
Vs.1-5 show the career of the apostate woman/church – first of all in her position of power v1, and then the means by which this is achieved vs.2-5. It is maintained that v6 deals with the original chaste woman who flees from those in power, whether Christian or pagan, for the 1260 years. References in the remainder of the chapter to ‘the woman’ may refer to either the original chaste woman or to the church woman now in power. The context will determine which is applicable.

Two results of the ascension of Constantine
1 A fleeing woman
V.6 reveals a result of the ascension of Constantine to power and influence. The Christian woman now becomes divided two women! That is, the apostate woman now in power and the original chaste woman, the remnant of true believers. As we have already learned, there were dissenters in the Empire, both religious and political. These now fled, mostly to North Africa, an outlying part of the Empire. The time period of a thousand two hundred and threescore days links with the period in ch.11:3 when the two witnesses would be prophesying in sackcloth (see Section 28). It would be very
comforting to the saints to read this verse, and to realise that God had foreseen their predicament and had already prepared an escape.

2 War in heaven
The symbols of v.7 continue to describe the bid for power in the heaven of the Roman Empire and we need to remember they are just symbols. The Lord God is unable to look upon sin (Hab.1:13) and the idea of a war taking place in His dwelling place is therefore not possible; any more than the idea of babies being born there!

Michael is a title of Christ:

“And at that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people...” (Dan.12:1) (See Section 16).

In this verse, however, it relates not to Christ but to those in the political heavens who fought and ruled in his name. In so doing they foreshadow the work which Christ himself will achieve when he returns. Constantine was opposed by the pagan military power of Rome and its officials - the dragon and his angels (v.7). The Emperor Maximus in the east, and later Licinius himself, launched decisive battles against Constantine in order to win back power but in every case Constantine was victorious.

| Constantine (the pseudo-Christ) and his forces fighting in the name of Christ (the real Michael, ‘One like God’) | and. Licinius and his forces fighting in the name of the gods of Paganism |

“... If the foreign god, (Constantine’s Christ), whom we now deride, should appear the mightiest, we must acknowledge and honour him, and bid farewell to these to whom we have vainly lit wax tapers. But if ours prevail, which is not to be doubted, then, after the victory, we must proceed to war ...” (Licinius, before the battle of Adianople, AD 324).

By AD 324 Constantine was the sole ruler of the whole Empire and the first Christian Emperor. His triumph laid the foundation for the later development of the Popes.

More titles for the dragon
As we saw under the sixth seal, the pagan sun, moon and stars ceased to shine in the Roman heavens, neither was their place found any more in heaven (v.8). The next verse aligns the great dragon with the serpent. In Eden, the serpent had reasoned on the basis of fleshly observation and so led Eve astray. The word can lead to an interesting study and is used in Scripture as representing fleshly thinking in political power. The serpent is called (literally surnamed), the devil. This means false accuser and is directly related to pagan Rome:

“Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour” (1 Pet.5:8)
"Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried ..." (Rev.2:10).

The dragon pagan power had deceived the whole Roman Empire at that time and was now finally vanquished by the victory of Constantine.

**Had the Kingdom of God come?**

Vs.10 & 11 describe the great rejoicings of Christians at the extraordinary ‘salvation ‘ brought by Constantine’s victories; at the termination of their persecutions and their ascension to power and honour. Eusebius, Bishop of Ephesus, was contemporary with the events and saw the triumph of the church as the establishment of the Kingdom of God on earth. (Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History*, book 10 ch.4 *Panegyric On the Splendour Of Our Affairs*).

“The event surpassed all words. Soldiers with naked swords kept watch round the palace-gate. But the men of God passed through the midst of them without fear, and entered the heart of the palace. And they sat down, some at the Emperor’s table, the rest at tables on either side of his. It looked like the very image of the kingdom of Christ; and was altogether more like a dream than a reality.”

As we discovered in Section 22, the millennial reign of Christ and his return to the earth was becoming a dim idea and the language thought of as figurative. The rapidly growing concept was that the Church was the kingdom of God and Constantine’s success encouraged the idea. The concept of “Christendom” began to evolve and was more fully expounded later by St. Augustine in *Civitas Dei* - The City of God.

In actual fact, the whole scene of ch.12 is a splendid parody of what is really coming in the future, when Christ himself sits on the throne of glory.

Most Christians rejoiced that they were no longer persecuted by the pagan state and believed that Constantine had triumphed through the aid of Christ. It was certainly true that apart from the endurance of faithful Christians in resisting the previous persecution of paganism, Christianity whether true or false, would have died out. The proclamation of the truth had enlightened society to the point where it would no longer tolerate the old superstitions, even though subsequently the truth in its purity was not always maintained.

**The wrathful dragon**

The new Catholic rulers of the political *heavens, rejoiced* at their elevation to power (v.12). The pagan powers (the dragon) in the outlying parts of the Empire, however, still persisted in persecuting Christians and resisted, while they still had opportunity, the inevitable change taking place elsewhere (v.13).

**The woman flees**

The protesting section of the church found it necessary to *flee into the wilderness* (v.14) and sought refuge in the extremities of the Empire - the *wings of the great eagle* of the Roman Empire (Deut.28:49). This second woman represents that section of the Christian community which refused to conform to the general attitude of the Catholic church in supporting Constantine. Instead, it
opposed the official “Christian” policy and teaching and found itself in a symbolic wilderness - not only was it excommunicated by the state church but was also denied recognition of any kind.

The fact that the fleeing woman is mentioned twice in v.6 and v.14 indicates its importance. By this time any dissenters were being persecuted by both pagans and the state Christian church.

**A new time period**

She was nourished for a period of a time, and times, and half a time. On the basis that a time is a year, the phrase represents 3½ years. Using the Jewish year of 360 days, and on the prophetic day for a year principle, the period is 1260 years. This of course, is the same time as v.6 allows for the fleeing woman. The interesting clue is that the new way of stating the time period is an echo of Dan.7, which as we know is also a prophecy concerning the rise of the Roman Empire as a great fourth beast. We are being shown the relevance of this chapter in Daniel, for it refers to the work of the extra little horn of the ten-horned beast:

“And he shall speak great words against the most High, and shall wear out the saints of the most High, and think to change times and laws: and they shall be given into his hand until a time and times and the dividing of time” (Dan.7:25).

This is just one of a multitude of hidden clues that the Divine mind of the Almighty has buried in the Revelation as a reward to “them that diligently seek him” (Heb.11:6).

**How can the dragon still be active in vs.13-17?**

These verses imply a significant change in attitude. In v.12 the dragon knew his time was short but here he is able to persecute for a long time. The pagan dragon had lost its power as the character of the Empire changed. Many of the institutions, festivals and doctrines of paganism were superimposed upon the Christian church in order to attract those who had previously opposed it. The church became a state-sponsored, paganised form of Christianity. She bitterly opposed those who refused to conform and who openly proclaimed her errors. Thus a paganised Christianity had supplanted the original paganism, so that now the symbols of serpent and dragon related to the Christianised Empire.

Finally, in about AD 330, Constantine transferred his civil and military headquarters from Rome to Constantinople (previously Byzantium, the centre of pagan resistance), and the dragon became identified with the civil and military power of the Christianised Empire - in Constantinople. It was from the face of this pseudo-Christian serpent-dragon that the woman, (the original Protestants) fled. Religious tyranny had commenced its war to the death with those who opposed it, as we read in ch.11:3. Persecution is described as water as a flood with the purpose of destroying all opposition to the dragon’s power (v.15).

**Who was the earth in v.16?**

In ch.11 we discussed the existence of those called the Two Witnesses in society who are prepared to fight for liberty of speech and belief even though they may not agree with those they defend. At this time, people like the Circumcellions of North Africa rose up in defence of the right of such as the Donatists to worship according to their conscience, and this helped to protect them. They so effectively opposed the armies of Rome that they withdrew and so they are said to have swallowed up the flood sent by the dragon. The earth and the woman therefore, represent the two witnesses of ch.11.
Was the Revelation understood at the time?
A Donatist writer at this very time, in fact at the time of the battle of Bagnia in AD 345, when persecution raged against dissenters to the Catholics, would indicate that they did indeed understand the signs of their time which their Lord had so graciously given them. The writer mentions the suffering of his fellow believer, Marculous, in these terms:

“Behold, suddenly the polluted flood of the Marcarian persecution burst forth from the tyrannical church of king Constans, and two beasts being sent to Africa from thence, to wit, Macarius and Paulus, a most horrible and cruel ecclesiastical war was proclaimed, that a christian people should be compelled by the naked swords of soldiers, by the standards of Serpents or Dragons and by the blasts of trumpets, to unite with Traditors.”

(Note - ‘Traditors’ gave up the Scriptures to save their lives).

The language is very similar to ch.12:15,16 and shows that these believers knew where they stood in relation to the prophecy. (quoted by John Thomas, Eureka, vol.3 ch XII, part 26).

This understanding of the events unfolding as a result of the opening of the sixth seal must have been tremendously uplifting to the believers and they would know that the ‘sealing angel’ of chapter 7 would not miss their faithfulness.

The remnant of the woman’s seed
Within the group called the woman were this small group. They were those who held the Truth in its purity and the Lord tells us that he sees them as a separate group from all others - the remnant of the woman’s seed. The dragon continued to wage unremitting war against them, as we saw in ch.11, where they are the holy city. Down through the ages there have been many different communities which have stood for the Truth until they have been overwhelmed by opposition or apostasy. They will ultimately triumph when they are enthroned in the kingdom of God.

SECTION 32

HISTORY OF ROMAN EMPIRE
Part 3
First, we will recap a little on our previous History Sections 10 and 13. We will remember that soon after Constantine became sole Emperor of the Roman Empire, he moved his capital in about AD 330 to a more strategic position for world power - to the city of Byzantium on the Bosphorus - which he renamed Constantinople.

**The rise in influence of the bishop of Rome**

This removed from Rome the one person who overshadowed the bishop of Rome, who subsequently grew in power and prestige. The bishops assumed a new attribute of a priestly character, the prerogative of remitting sins. Christianity, as interpreted and preached from Rome, spread over western Europe but then came the flood of barbarians, mostly heathens - the four wind trumpets. The eclipse of the western Empire happened in AD 476 when the barbarian Odoacer overcame the western Emperor and took power - the Roman imperial head had sustained a deadly wound. It had lasted since 31 BC when Julius Caesar had become the first Emperor, and was the sixth type of government for Rome.

Odoacer chose Ravenna as his capital, leaving the ecclesiastical head of western Europe almost a secular governor of Rome. The city was reduced, politically, to a second-rate city in the Empire. The next Emperor, the Ostrogoth Theodoric, also ruled from Ravenna. These Goths were Arian Christians, and gradually all the other barbarians accepted Arianism from them.

We remember that this Ostrogoth Theodoric, was the seventh style of government by which Rome was governed. This Gothic style only lasted for about sixty years and then the Emperor Justinian in Constantinople came to the aid of the church and restored its power, by overthrowing the Gothic rule. And so the sixth Imperial style was reinstated - the deadly wound was healed! It was Imperial rule with a difference, however. Although there was only one Emperor, the barbarians in the west continued to establish themselves as independent sovereignties on the territory of the Empire. As we saw in Section 11, by AD 520 there were five main divisions and later these became ten (see maps W32.1, W32.2). These were the foundations of modern Europe. These ten kingdoms are symbolised by the ten horns of Daniel’s fourth beast and the ten toes of Nebuchadnezzar’s dream image, for the history of Europe shows that on average the number of countries have remained at or near ten.

The church was, however, hopelessly divided - Rome as the headquarters of Roman Catholicism was at variance with Constantinople as the headquarters of Greek Catholicism. This division continues to today as the churches are divided on their views of the Trinity. The Greek side refused to accept the decisions of the Councils - they believe the Holy Spirit emanates from God and not from Jesus, whereas Trinitarians believe all to be equal. Discussions have recently taken place between the Pope and church leaders in Romania to resolve these issues - for the first time in 1000 years.

The Emperor Justinian declared himself on the side of the trinitarian bishop of Rome (rather than his Arian rivals) and this favour helped him to maintain his hold over the West. In his Code of AD 529 and again in the Decretal Epistles AD 533, this Emperor Justinian recognised the claims of the bishop of Rome. He declared him to be “Universal Bishop” - the first of all the bishops of the Empire - thus giving him power and legal status.

“Rendering honour to the apostolic throne and to your Holiness ... Therefore we have hastened both to subject and to unite to the Throne of your Holiness all the priests of the whole eastern region ...” (Decretal epistle AD 533)
The city of Rome too was now enabled to regain its prestige and finally came to be recognised now as the ecclesiastical metropolis of the world, with its Bishop, Holy Father or Pope ruling and governing as the vice-regent of Christ.

The supremacy of the bishop of Rome was later contested, but finally confirmed by the Emperor Phocas in AD 608, when he recognised the pre-eminence of the Roman See. The historian Gibbon calls him a brutal ruffian, but he gained power by a revolution and needed to gain the favour of Pope Gregory. Pope Gregory extolled the virtues of Emperor Phocas and erected a column to honour him (see illustration in Section 28).

Justinian had been active in establishing a form of Roman law which was accepted throughout Europe. But this law was intensely hostile to all who opposed the Church, and in giving authority to the bishop of Rome as head of the Church, he enabled him to use such laws against all heretics - those who did not acknowledge his spiritual leadership.

“The Conversion of Constantine is generally hailed as the final victory of the new faith. It may equally be regarded as the triumph of totalitarianism. The church no doubt won not only tolerance and relief from persecution, but also wealth and the right to persecute. The price was clerical endorsement of the existing order on earth.” (Gordon Childe, What Happened in History)

So we see that this marks a new era in the history of the Papacy, for after this the bishop of Rome had no rival in his claims to supremacy. Through the help of the Emperors of Constantinople, the Papacy had gained its prestige and power. Rome was now the religious centre and Constantinople the military headquarters of the Roman Empire.

“In the West, as the sun set on the temporal power of Rome, the Papacy emerged as the heir to a new Empire - Christendom. Little by little the Roman See made itself supreme in temporal as in spiritual matters ... Indeed, Gregory (590-604) - while insisting on the primacy of Rome over other churches - also ruled and defended Italy as a latter-day Emperor ... The Popes could thus consider themselves heirs to ancient Rome.” (McGraw-Hill, Illustrated World History).

“Thus the Holy Roman church and the Holy Roman Empire are one and the same thing, seen from different sides; and Catholicism, the principle of the universal Christian Society, is also Romanism; ... as Romanism it rest upon Rome as the origin and type of its universality ... as Divine and eternal, its head is the Pope, to whom souls have been entrusted; as human and temporal, the Emperor, commissioned to rule men’s bodies ...” (The Holy Roman Empire, Bryce, J.V. MacMillan 1956 p105).

It is fascinating to see how all these developments are reflected in the symbology of chapter 13 - yet we know it was written in advance!
SECTION 33

THE BEAST OF THE SEA
Chapter 13:1-10

John now receives a new vision. Looking out over the Mediterranean he sees a great beast arise out of the sea. This reminds us of Daniel, who saw four beasts arise out of the stormy sea in ch.7:1-3. We shall perhaps not be surprised to learn that John’s beast also had ten horns!

It is indeed Daniel’s fourth beast and we would expect to find it in this prophecy, for we know that it was to continue its existence in some form:

“... till the thrones were cast down, and the Ancient of days did sit ...” (Dan.7:8)
or until “the time came that the saints possessed the kingdom” (v.22).

The beast has now developed further into a new phase. In ch.12 it appeared as a great red dragon, with seven heads and ten horns - and the heads were crowned. This new beast is rather different - the horns themselves are now crowned, rather than the heads (v.1). This was when the horn kingdoms arose on the body of the beast after the seventh Gothic head was overthrown by the eastern Emperor Justinian. The barbarians now established themselves as independent sovereignties on the territory of the Empire:

the beast = Rome
the head = a system of administration (it could only be the 6th, 7th or 8th) over Rome
ten horns = ten kingdoms within Rome - Dan.7:24 “the ten horns (are) out of this kingdom”
crowned = the ten kingdoms exercising independent authority or power

Incidentally, Britain is not a country from the great sea-world from which the Latin beast of the sea arose, and from which the ten horns came; most of the rivers of the territories discharge into the Mediterranean. The British Isles, “afar off”, have no relation to this. As Origen says (AD 230):

“The Britons are divided from our world”.

The Roman Empire is first divided into two parts - eastern and western - the two legs of the image in Dan.2. Then with the successive invasions of the European hordes, the Empire was divided into ten parts answering to the ten toes of the image and the ten horns of the beast in Dan.7 and also in this verse.
Of course, Daniel only describes one head; but behind this one were concealed seven others, which we only know about from the Revelation.

So the Sea Beast with ten crowned horns represents the Roman Empire at a time when there was a combination of an Imperial power (the Dragon) in the East, with the Bishop in Rome. He gradually developed into the Papacy and exercised considerable authority in the midst of ten Barbarian kingdoms. The greatest strength of the sea beast was between the fall of the Goths in AD 553 and the crowning of Charlemagne as Emperor in AD 800.

What is blasphemy?
The heads of the beast bore *the names of blasphemy*. The following are examples of how the Bible defines this:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Israel</th>
<th>Eze.20:27,28</th>
<th>Offered sacrifices in unauthorized places and in unlawful ways.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Edom</td>
<td>Eze.35:12</td>
<td>Gloried in antagonism to God’s land of Israel and spoke lies about it</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>False Christians</td>
<td>Rev.2:9</td>
<td>Professed to be Jews (i.e. literally Christians) when they were not.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

So any system which consists of people who:
- profess to be Christians, whilst in reality they are not
- which persecutes God’s people - the true believers
- which invents a way of its own to worship God instead of His way
- and which speaks lies in the name of the Lord

may be named “Blasphemy”. The names on the heads of the beast of the sea indicates that it was guilty of the above points. The basis of the Empire at this stage was a false Christianity.

The description continues; the beast looks like a leopard, with the feet of a bear and the mouth of a lion. This too links us to Daniel’s beasts in ch.7 - this beast seems to incorporate all the other beasts. All the characteristics of human tyranny are encompassed - it is swift as a leopard, crushing as a bear, with the strength and ferocity of a lion.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nebuchadnezzar’s Image</th>
<th>Daniel 7 Four Great Beasts</th>
<th>Revelation 13 Beast of the Sea</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>38 gold head = Babylon</td>
<td>4 1st beasts = Lion</td>
<td>2 “mouth of a Lion”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>39 silver breast = Persia</td>
<td>5 2nd beast = Bear</td>
<td>2 “feet of a Bear”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>39 brass thighs = Greece</td>
<td>6 3rd beast = Leopard</td>
<td>2 “like unto a Leopard”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40 iron legs = Rome</td>
<td>7 4th beast = “great iron teeth”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

So the vision indicates a connection between the Beast of the Sea and the four world powers of the past - in some sense there is a continuity in the various phases of the Kingdoms of men. In essence
they all represent human dominion as opposed to the Kingdom of God. If God’s kingdom is finally to prevail, it must be by making an end of the kingdoms of men as we read in ch.11:15:

“... The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever.”

There is continuity in another sense also. It is true to say that the pagan beliefs of Babylon and the philosophies of ancient Greece were carried on and became incorporated into the religion of the fourth beast - the Christianity of the Roman Empire.

“There was one further element in the development of Christianity which was absolutely necessary for its victory. This was its acceptance and assimilation of the intellectual traditions of the pre-christian Roman world. Without such an acceptance it is difficult to believe that Christianity would not have simply remained one of the mystery cults of which there were a great number in the Roman Empire. There were those in the early Church who wanted to reject all Roman culture as pagan. They remained in a minority. It simply proved impossible to divorce serious theological thought from the existing traditions and systems of education. From at least as early as the beginning of the third century the great theologians were also learned men, deliberately harnessing pagan rhetoric, science and philosophy to the purposes of Christian thinking and education”  (H G Koenigsberger, A History of Europe - Medieval Europe 400-1500, p.52, Longman 1987).

**A wild beast**

The Greek word used for **beast** is **therion** and signifies a **wild** beast. We remember that in Daniel the kingdoms of men were described as wild beasts because that is how God viewed them:

“... terrifying and frightening and very powerful ... it crushed and devoured its victims and trampled underfoot whatever was left”  (Dan.7:7 N.I.V)

We may like to consider whether the Revelation introduces wild beasts in order to portray how God views **Rome** in all its ecclesiastical phases down through the centuries of time.

The beast came from the **sea** which is a symbol for the nations:

“But the wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt”  (Isa.57:20)

The beast was also introduced in ch.11:7 as the **beast that ascendeth out of the bottomless pit**, or abyss - the Roman peoples of the Empire.

Verse 2 tells us that it was the dragon who **gave this beast his power and seat and authority**. As we have seen, this symbolism accurately portrays the history of the times, for it was the Emperor in Constantinople (the head of the dragon) who saw fit to legalise the elevation of the Pope in the West. So there is a transfer of power from the form of phase one to that of phase two. It is a continuing story (see diagram W33.1). It is also worth noting that even though power is transferred, it does not necessarily imply a loss to the former power.
Verse 3 refers to the brief period when the Gothic kings reigned in Rome, when this seemed like a deadly wound. The wound was afterwards healed when the Imperial rule was restored by the Emperor Justinian. We remember that the Gothic rule was the seventh type of government for Rome, and so when the Goths were overcome, the sixth Imperial type was re-instated.

Verse 4 makes the interesting comment that both the power of the beast and the dragon were recognised and worshipped by the Roman earth or Empire. The Greek for wondered is from thaumazo - to wonder with admiration and being joined with after, means to admire and follow after. The revived sixth head is the papal Imperial head and its success drew to her millions of admirers.

The next verses describe the beast speaking great things and blasphemies. The beast had a dreadful lion-like mouth with which to roar its threats and claims, and with which it was able to devour its prey. The little horn of Daniel’s fourth beast (Rome) also had a mouth - it spake great words against the Most High and this helps us to see how Revelation expands and fills in the detail of the prophecy of Daniel. So the identification of the beast becomes very important. The claims of the Roman church would be blasphemous if untrue, for they claim to be able to remit sins, define essential doctrine, to be Christ’s representative on earth etc. The high priest of the church claims to be “Our Lord God the Pope” The Roman Council of 877 declared that:

“Christ himself willed that the Pope be the head of us all in his stead upon earth.”

The Canon Law of the 17th century stated:

“It is certain that the supreme Pontiff was called God by the pious prince Constantine. It is manifest that Deity cannot be judged by men.”

Since the times of Constantine who presided at the Council of Nicaea, the Church has claimed authority to define doctrine. It is founded on the doctrine of the Trinity rather than the One God of the Israel. Although the great controversy of the fifth century was Trinitarianism versus Arianism, neither reflect the Bible truth, as the Church freely admits:

“ The doctrine (of the Trinity) formed no part of the original message. St. Paul knew it not, and would have been unable to understand the terms used in the theological formula on which the Church ultimately agreed” (Dr W R Matthews, Dean of St. Paul’s Cathedral, God in Christian Thought and Experience).

We have seen in Section 32 how the law codes of the Emperor Justinian particularly helped to create the ability of the Papacy to become so dangerous to anyone who opposed it. This would include not only true believers, but also the various sects of anti-Catholics, and the Jews, for all were considered heretics. The historian Gibbon says:

“His Code, and more especially his Novels, confirm and enlarge the privileges of the clergy, and in every dispute between a monk and a layman, the partial judge was inclined to pronounce that truth, innocence, and justice were always on the side of the church.”

“But in the creed of Justinian the guilt of murder could not be applied to the slaughter of unbelievers; and he piously laboured to establish with fire and sword the unity of the Christian faith” (Edward Gibbon, Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire, ch.47).

The beast was given authority to dictate to the world in spiritual things. The Roman Pontiff, in his official utterances, was this mouth, whose great speakings were blasphemies.
Forty two months again
The beast was to have power to continue for forty and two months (v.5). The Greek for continue is poiesai and means to make, build or construct and this is an important distinction; the margin renders this to make war. It was the authority to make war with the saints (v.7) which was to last for a set period, not the beast itself, which did continue and is still with us, though in a more developed form. This time period is only mentioned twice in the prophecy and links to ch.11:2 where the Holy City community of saints is trodden down by its enemies. The persecuting system rises and falls gradually but the following dates are significant and all encompass the forty two months, or 1260 day-years:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Justinian’s Code &amp; Decree</th>
<th>529 - 533</th>
<th>1260 day-years</th>
<th>1789 - 1793</th>
<th>French Revolution when power of Papacy to persecute is broken</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Confirmed by Phocas</td>
<td>608 - 610</td>
<td>1868 - 1870</td>
<td>End of all Papal temporal power or authority.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is significant to note that in AD 610 the Emperor Phocas gave the Pantheon to Boniface IV and dedicated the old heathen temple to the new “Queen of Heaven” with all the gods and goddesses of the Papal calendar.

Who dwells in heaven (v.6)?
The saints are the holy city, the tabernacle where God dwells. They themselves are sitting in heavenly places:

“And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus” (Eph.2:6).

As the verses show the beast making war with true saints, then it must be in the position of opposing God. This has been a notorious feature of the Papacy. Anyone who encouraged teaching which threatened its pretentions was persecuted. Death in its most painful forms and suffering of the most awful kind have been used by it for the furtherance of its ends.

In time, the power of the Church spread and the Pope extended his temporal power over the countries of Europe, where he was able to dictate the way of life and worship for millions and has been the object of their adoration. as is intimated in vs.7 & 8.

Verses 8-10 were a wonderful encouragement to true saints, for they reminded them that God did indeed “know them by name” and would not forget them. The “book of life” has been in existence since the beginning of creation and Moses refers to it in Exodus 32:32. It is also included in the promise to the faithful in Sardis (ch.3:5). The Lamb, also, was typically slain at the foundation of the world when coats of skins were provided for Adam and Eve.

An understanding of this prophecy was particularly important if those living at the time of the uprise of the beast of the sea were to show the patience and faith of the saints; for the human mind is constituted to work by love or hatred, courage or fear, hope or despair, and these opposing forces move people to action during times of persecution.
The elevation of the church into a *name of blasphemy* was brought about by religious professors in the early ecclesias who were “free thinkers” and “humanist philosophers”, motivated by expediency rather than the plain teaching of Scripture. This brought sorrow and division amongst the Christians and a knowledge of the prophecy of Revelation would have helped the true believers to make right decisions.

They would read ch.13:7 with understanding: *It was given unto him (the Beast) to make war with the saints and to overcome them.* They saw their duty clearly and did not support the zealots or anti-catholic Witnesses, for *he that killeth with the sword must be killed with the sword.* As the Donatists, for instance, were led off into the captivity of exile, they would remember that the Lord Jesus had said *He that leadeth into captivity shall go into captivity.* They were consoled that the enemy would finally be slain and their deliverance was sure. So they manifested patience and faith as they submitted in prayer and witness to their Lord during the forty two months of down-treading.
HISTORY OF ROMAN EMPIRE
Part 4

History ReCap
AD 330 Constantine moved Capital to Constantinople
Bishop remained in Rome
Succession of Emperors in West and East
AD 476 Barbarian Odoacer took Rome then
Goth Theodoric ruled the West from Ravenna – 7th head
DEADLY WOUND IN 6TH IMPERIAL HEAD
After 60 years Justinian overthrows Gothic 7th head – DEADLY WOUND HEALED
West established independent states on territory of Empire - AD 520 five main divisions
AD 533 Bishop in Rome became “Universal Bishop” AD 608 Pope – ‘Supreme’ confirmed by Emperor Phocas

The Franks help the Pope
The military power of Constantinople also now began to gradually decline as the Empire in the east came under pressure from the Saracens and then the Ottomans. The Pope had to look elsewhere for support against the Lombards and found it from the developing Empire of the Franks (see map W34.1).

THE FRANKS
A people well disciplined – organised for battle
Succeeded by CLOVIS who – when nearing defeat in battle prayed to wife’s Christian God – won the battle
Clovis became a Catholic
Franks conquered Gaul – inhabitants welcomed Catholics
AD 511 Clovis succeeded by two sons – Kingdom divided
Eventually Pippin emerged – the Kingdom was united under his son Charles
Charles defeated Saracens in 732 – hailed as champion of Christendom
Pippin son of Charles became King – sanctioned by the Pope
Rome came under pressure from the Lombards – alliance sealed in 754 between Pippin and Pope
Pope crowned Charlemagne Emperor in 800 (see illustration W34.2)

When, in AD 754, the Lombards took Ravenna and approached Rome, the Pope fled to Pippin the Frank, who vowed to assist him. After two invasions of Lombardy, the Franks were able to hand over to the Pope what became known as “the States of the Church”, the three Kingdoms of Italy: the Exarchate of Ravenna, the Kingdom of the Lombards and the States of Rome (see map 34.2).

"Thus did the Pope become an important secular prince by taking over the old Byzantine dominion in Central Italy" (Oman, The Dark Ages, p.331).

This temporal power was represented by the Triple Crown worn by the Popes from this time.

In AD 800, Pope Leo III again needed help against the Lombards. He would not recognise the authority of the eastern head - the empress Irene - for she was a woman. He fled to the new king of the Franks, Pippin’s son Charles. He defeated the enemy and restored the Pope to his temporal possessions. (Charles had already been crowned with the iron crown of the Lombards at Milan). The alliance between the Pope and the Franks was completed at Rome on Christmas Day in AD 800, when Pope Leo crowned Charles as Emperor of the Romans. This laid the foundations of the Holy Roman Empire which was to last for a thousand years.

Empire of Charlemagne, called the Carolingian Empire

“It was a great Empire, from one point of view a state, from another a church; the supreme power of both kinds in the hands of one man ... Charles found the church towering in her pride above the stunted tribal sovereignties; the peculiarity of his life work is that he created a state by extending the church, that he fused together peoples hitherto loosely federated or independent of each other, by making his power the representative of that religion which they held in common” (Davis, Charlemagne, p.16).

The wars of Charlemagne were ‘crusades’ against the heathen for he thought of himself as not only the successor of Constantine, but also as David, king of Israel. For example, the Saxons on the lower Weser were driven into the river, and then told to come out and consider themselves baptised into the true faith! Charlemagne extended his conquests to include the Germanic nations of Central and Northern Europe and gradually the Frankish Empire penetrated into forests of Germany and beyond the Pyrenees into Spain (see map W34.3).

Charles the Great, known as Charlemagne, and his successors provided the military power to sustain the authority of the Papacy. They took the place of the Emperor of Constantinople, who no longer had sufficient military power.

Rome itself was raised from her previous humiliation to a city of imperial sovereignty. Gibbon testifies that the city was:

"revered by the Latins as the Metropolis of the world, and the throne of the Pope and Emperor who from the Eternal City derived their title, their honours, and the right for exercise of temporal dominion”.

The Book of Revelation
So the Holy Roman Empire was a **dual power** and it lasted a millennium from AD 800 until it was overthrown by Napoleon in 1806. As such, it compares with the thousand year reign to come of the Lord Jesus Christ.

After the death of Charlemagne, his Empire began to collapse as lands were divided amongst his children, and the area was attacked by the Norse, Danes, Slavs, Magyars and Saracens during ninth century. The feudal system ruled over by dukes and counts, developed as the political counterpart of the ecclesiastical system, and this held sway till the 19th century.

**Empire of Otto**

France became severed from the other lands which had formed part of the original Holy Roman Empire. Otto I, king of Germany in AD 936, who had established his authority over the dukes of Germany, also conquered the Lombards of northern Italy and was crowned Emperor by the Pope. This Holy Roman Empire was shorn of its western area and was essentially German in character (see map W34.4).

Thus the Empire of the Franks in Europe developed into the Germanic Federation of Nations which for centuries, provided the military power necessary, whilst the Pope represented ecclesiastical authority. It was later given the title “The Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation.” After this, the Emperors of Germany were also crowned Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire. Therefore, it is true to say that it was the First Reich. The Second was Prussian in the 1870s and Hitler tried to establish the Third in the 1940s. We may also note the link with the little horn of Daniel 7, which was to be a continuation of the Roman fourth beast and under whose authority dissenters were downtrodden.

**Expansion of Empire and Church**

The Holy Roman Empire now expanded eastwards and continues to illustrate the dual character of its rule - political and ecclesiastical - in the Middle Ages. The Empire followed the expansion of the Church.

By the middle of the eleventh century Poland, Bohemia and Hungary had not only been Christianised but had been made fiefs of the Empire.

"*With a row of vassal kingdoms extending to the extremest eastward limits of Roman civilisation, the Holy Empire was fast becoming in a very real sense the mistress of the world*” (Tout, *The Empire and the Papacy*, p.61).

The spiritual authority of the Pope extended beyond the limits of the Empire to western Europe, giving him added power and prestige, though it involved him in conflicts not only with the Emperor but with the sovereigns of England, France and Spain.

**Rival claims of Pope and Emperor**
The claim for supremacy meant many struggles, for neither could command the unquestioned obedience of the world. The majority of men regarded them as equals, the one a world-priest, head of the Holy Roman Church, the guardian of men’s souls; the other a world-king, ruler of the Holy Roman Empire, the protector of men’s bodies.

Usually the Church was supreme, as when the Crusades brought all the chivalry of Europe under the influence of the Pope. Western Europe, however, consisted of a unity which was the result of Latinity. The universal language and religion were Latin, the culture and scholarship were Latin, and almost every person who could read and write was a Churchman. In such a situation the Pope was supreme, though in matters secular he was stoutly opposed by kings and Emperor. It is for this reason that we must regard the Middle Ages as under a dual control, a striking illustration of the statement that:

“the whole of European history is embodied in the formula which couples together the rule of Christ and Caesar” (Freeman, Historical Geography of Europe, p.575).
The next beast arises out of the earth, rather than the sea - from the nations of central and northern Europe which are isolated from “the great sea”, rather than nations bordering the Mediterranean sea. In many regards the next beast resembles the Beast of the Sea but it looks quite different. It still affects only the west; the east was weak and suffering from the attacks of the Saracens, and later the Turks, under the fifth and sixth woe trumpets.

It appeared as an innocent and harmless beast with two horns like a lamb for it represented two aspects of power - the Pope as religious enthroned in Rome and the Emperor Charlemagne as military, with his throne in Vienna. The organisation they jointly established looked like a lamb because it claimed to be Christian in character: it was known as the Holy Roman Empire. However, this appearance was deceptive, for it spoke as a dragon (see illustration W35.1).

The story of the beast still continues
The implications are that this lamb-like beast is phase three of the beast we have already met:
• he speaks with the same voice as the dragon of phase one
• he exercises all the power or authority of the beast in phase two (v.12) (see illustration W35.2, W35.3).

How did the beast speak as a dragon?
• His speech showed that despite his lamb-like appearance he was still essentially pagan and opposed to the Truth.
• Another aspect of the phrase is that the imperialistic ambitions of Charlemagne were similar to the military ambitions of the Emperor of Constantinople and by this time he had already invaded, annexed and united all Germany under his Frankish rule, so it is said that he spake as a dragon.

As time went on, there was a shift in the power base which supported the development of the Papacy in Rome. The dragon power in the east (eg Justinian), who had given the papal sea beast his authority, became of no account. Instead, as we know, the new conquering power of the Franks sprang up from among the peoples of Europe and an alliance was made with the Papacy to produce a new phase of Papal power. The King of the Franks, Charlemagne, became Emperor of the Romans.
Coming originally from France, it was now a Germanic Empire and developed into the Holy Roman Empire.

**Dual control**

It had two horns or two contemporary dynasties - Emperor and Pope.

"These were the two leading figures of the Empire, to which the rest of Europe were subject ... It was a dual Empire, a two-horned beast. They were lamb-like horns; that is by profession, they belonged to Christ; between them they were Christendom; but the beast spoke like a dragon for all that. In nature and principles it was thoroughly draconic, though ostensibly holding a lamb-like character. Let anyone study the deeds of the Pope and Emperor and they will see the truth of this symbolism. No more merciless tyranny ever afflicted earth than that which, under the name of the Holy Roman Empire, caused the tears and blood of thousands to flow in dire persecution and oppression, under a pretext of authority from Christ” (R.Roberts, Thirteen Lectures, p.109-110).

The situation of each under their joint rule has been summed up by the historian Bryce, for he describes the Pope as a “spiritual Emperor” and the Emperor as a “secular Pope”. The dual character of the Empire was also shown by the titles borne by the Emperor, such as Head of Christendom, Defender and Advocate of the Christian Church, Temporal Head of the Faithful, Protector of Palestine and of the Catholic Faith etc.

So the beast of the earth was not a distinct and separate dominion from the beast of the sea which began before it, but a new phase and development of it. It was a combination of the revived Roman imperialism (the Pope) and the military might of the Emperor. Each depended on the other.

Verse 12 confirms that the sea beast still existed - and he exerciseth all the power of the first beast before him. This means in his presence or sight (RV). The power of the two-horned beast was established in the presence of the ten horns of the sea beast.

The people of the Empire (those who dwell on the earth) were constrained to recognise and worship the sea beast, with its control in the hands of the Pope. Since Charlemagne owed his imperial position to the Pope, he could allow no-one to question the spiritual claims of the Papacy. The beast of the earth assumed the power which had so far rested with the beast of the sea, and yet instead of detracting from the honour of that beast, he exalted it so that he causeth the earth and them which dwell therein to worship the beast of the sea (v.12). See diagrams of both beasts W35.4, W35.5.

“The sword of Charlemagne was extended not merely to increase his Empire, but to extend Christianity. The Germans became Christians and subjects of the Frankish Empire at the same time. When Charlemagne seized the duchy of Bavaria in 788, the duke was compelled to become a monk ...” (Hamlyn History of the World).

These conversions would be to Charlemagne’s Catholic type of Christianity, of course and not to the Arian. Some excepted themselves from this pressure, as we have seen. Their allegiance was already given to the Lord Jesus and they were in the heavens and not of the earth. They remembered the warning of
their Master in Matt.7:15 “Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves” and were not deceived by the outward appearance of the two-horned lamb.

Was the fire warfare (v.13) ?
*Fire* is a symbol of war and destruction and Charlemagne was victorious in thirty-three campaigns as he overcame the opponents of Rome. These were the wonders (Greek semeia means signs). He was able to enforce his will upon all Europe by the powers for destruction which he possessed. By these signs and miracles the beast deceived them that dwell on the earth into believing that Divine authority was on his side.

The Image - a further phase of the Papacy?
The two-horned beast now proposed that an image should be made of the killed beast that had recovered (v.14).
The Greek word is eikon and means a likeness, as the image of Caesar on the penny brought to Christ (Matt.22:20). As well as this idea of visible representation it also carries the idea of manifestation of character. This aspect is seen in Col.1:15 where Christ is said to be the image of the invisible God.

The Papacy developed such civil and religious power that it was the political likeness of the ancient pagan, Imperial Emperor. He was the visible representation and the manifestation of it and became the God of the earth (ch.11:4).

We may compare this with Christ, who is the visible representation and the manifestation of the God of heaven.

The Papal States
In the new alliance with Charlemagne as Emperor in AD 800, the Pope became an exact likeness of the old Roman Emperors of the sixth head - he was chief magistrate in the dominion of civil law and, at the same time, chief Pontiff (Pontifex Maximus) of the national religion as the Emperors had been when the Empire was pagan. He was, to all intents and purposes, an image or ghost of the defunct imperialism of the west. This was especially true in the territory of the Papal States (see map in Section 34). When Charlemagne crushed the Lombards in Italy he restored their territory to the Pope and:

“firmly established the temporal power of the Papacy, a curse to blast Italy for a thousand years” (Oman, *The Dark Ages*, p.244).

Over this territory the Pope was the sole and absolute ruler as if he were the Emperor which had been based in Rome. It was a small scale replica of the ancient Roman Empire and epitomised the influence he later developed in the European world.

The Image lives and speaks
The victorious Charlemagne had the power to give political vitality to the Papal image of the beast. The image was not a lifeless block of stone or metal for the lamb-like beast now enabled it to live (v.15). There were two main results. The image responded by:
1. speaking its own binding Papal decrees to ensure that its will to be worshipped by all was enforced
2. and subdued and killed opponents, including the true believers.

The Empire supported this authority with the sword. Men were compelled to worship the Papacy - to give it unquestioning endorsement. This living power has been commented on by historians:

“The power of the great Latin patriarchate was a form, the ghost, it has been said, of the older Empire ... but really vital because capable of wonderful adaptation to the character and wants of the time” (Hallam, Europe during the Middle Ages, p.368).

The form that was vital is another way of saying it was a living image. The quotation is remarkable for another reason; Hallam alludes to a writer who uses the word ghost - this was an early writer called Hobbes:

“And if a man consider the original of the great Ecclesiastical dominion, he will easily perceive that the Papacy is no other than the ghost of the deceased Roman Empire, sitting crowned on the grave thereof; for so did the Papacy start up on a sudden out of the ruins of that heathen power” (Thomas Hobbes, The Leviathan early 1500s).

Did the two horns always agree?

Section 34 referred to the rivalry which developed between the Pope and Emperor as they tried to gain authority over one another. The Papacy gradually grew in power from the tenth to the thirteenth century until the Pope became an Imperial autocrat supreme over Kings and Emperors. For instance, when King Henry 1 offended the Pope he soon realised that his kingdom could not survive unless he sought forgiveness. The haughty Pope made him wait for three days in alpine snow, clad only in his shirt, before he would grant him an interview.

The belief in the immortality of the soul meant that the spiritual claims of the Papacy over men’s lives would inevitably triumph over the temporal claims of the Emperor. By 1073 the Pope in Rome claimed:

“the divine right to be supreme in all temporal and spiritual affairs. Pontifex Maximus”

This title had first been held by the pagan Roman Emperors.

Although often stoutly opposed by Kings and Emperors, it was the Living Image which was the supreme power in the world. A line of strong Popes ensured that its speaking commanded the attention of the world. It claimed to dispose of, at will, all the lands and kingdoms of the earth. Certainly, from the time of Innocent III (1198) to Boniface VIII (1303):

“Rome inspired ... all the terror of her ancient name. She was once more the mistress of the world, and Kings were her vassals” (Bryce, Holy Roman Empire, p.418).

Pope Boniface declared:

“The church is one body, and has one head. Under its command are two swords, the one spiritual, the other temporal; that to be used by the supreme pontiff himself; this by kings and knights by his license and at his will. But the lesser sword must be subject to the greater and the temporal to the spiritual authority” (Thorndyke, Mediaeval Europe, p.414).
As an article of necessary faith, he insisted on the subjection of every human being to the See of Rome and while seated upon a throne, complete with sword, crown and sceptre, proclaimed:

“I am Caesar, I am Emperor”.

We may have noticed an echo in the phrase See of Rome of Daniel 7:8 where the little horn out of the fourth beast had:

“... eyes like the eyes of man, and a mouth speaking great things.”

Indeed the existence of the two-horned beast gave opportunity and power for the Papacy to further develop into the little horn of Daniel ch.7, to the point where it could:

- speak and have eyes v.20
- make war with saints v.21
- displace three horns v.24
- speak against God, wear out saints, change times and laws v.25

The following comment by a historian is an interesting summary:

“In many ways, indeed, the Church was comparable to the Roman Empire of old, whose territorial and administrative organization it had taken over, and whose official language, Latin, it still maintained in its services, records and literature. Both were international in character. Everyone recognized the Pope as everyone had worshipped the Emperor. The Church had its legal system and courts ... Its missionaries and crusaders on the frontiers of Christendom were like the ancient legionaries on the Roman borders. Its monasteries were scattered over the face of the land as thickly as had been the administrative bureaucracy of the Empire, and at the head and centre of it all, watching over the whole world, interfering in everything, exercising temporal as well as spiritual power, receiving reports and questions and appeals from all quarters, and reserving to himself the settlement of all questions in the last resort, sat Innocent III, with an authority quite comparable with that of a Trajan or a Diocletian” (Thorndyke, Mediaeval Europe, p.414).

(See map W35.6)

The Beasts Coexist

It is important to realise that each of the three beasts of chs.12 & 13, plus the Image, continue on historically at the same time, as shown below:

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Dragon in Constantinople →
- the Eastern Emperor
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The Book of Revelation
### Great Red Dragon  vs. Beast of the Sea

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Great Red Dragon</th>
<th>Beast of the Sea</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6th Head</td>
<td>7th Head &amp; 6th Revived Head</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pagan Rome</td>
<td>Papacy &amp; 10 Barbaric Kingdoms from AD476</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>becomes Christian</td>
<td>AD 324</td>
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### Beast of the Earth

<table>
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<th>Beast of the Earth</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Papacy in Rome</td>
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<tr>
<td>Emperor in Vienna</td>
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<tr>
<td>Holy Roman Empire</td>
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<tr>
<td>AD 800 - 1806</td>
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### Image of the Beast

<table>
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<th>Image of the Beast</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pope Supreme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>as Imperial Autocrat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>from approx AD 1073</td>
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- In the east the dragon was enthroned at Constantinople
- In the west there was the beast of the sea with the name of blasphemy. Its Latin kingdoms were deeply influenced by the increasing authority of the Pope.
- In the centre and to the north there was the beast of the earth, the Holy Roman Empire, its dual liaison causing constant increase in the prestige of the Pope.
- Finally, the States of the Church were an ecclesiastical temporal dominion. Though small, the influence and power was great as a real earthly kingdom - an image of the beast.

Later in the prophecy we shall see a further phase of the Roman beast, when it is described as a Scarlet coloured beast. Each beast represents a different phase of the development of Rome, just as each phase of the moon illustrates a different aspect of the one lunar body.
15 And he had power to give life unto the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak, and cause that as many as would not worship the image of the beast should be killed. 16 And he causeth all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond, to receive a mark in their right hand, or in their foreheads: 17 And that no man might buy or sell, save he that had the mark, or the name of the beast, or the number of his name. 18 Here is wisdom. Let him that hath understanding count the number of the beast: for it is the number of a man; and his number is Six hundred threescore and six.

We have seen in ch.13 the uprise of the Beast system in some of its various phases:

Sea Beast - rise of Catholic Imperial Rome
Earth Beast - Holy Roman Empire
Image of the Beast - Papal states
Saints - outcast and persecuted.

In v.15 it was confirmed that the Beast of the Earth, the Holy Roman Empire, was able to compel men to worship Catholicism by the power of the sword. They were to give its decrees unquestioning endorsement - there was no opt-out clause from the state church.

What is the mark (v.16)?
We now come to some intriguing details which help us to identify this power further. The word mark is only used once in the rest of Scripture - in Acts 17:29 it is rendered graven. It occurs seven times in Revelation and is always applied to the mark of the beast.

We probably know that it was the custom of slave-owners to brand their slaves with a sign on the forehead or hand to indicate ownership and servitude. Often this was also done to soldiers. The right hand symbolises action and power and the forehead symbolises thought. The worshipping of the
image of the beast (v.15) was to be universal - the religion would completely dominate both their actions (hand) and their minds (forehead).

The mind

The forehead is used as a symbol for the thinking of the mind. As we saw in Section 18, God sees only two opposing types of people - the wise and the foolish. As we might expect, the thinking of these types is very different. The wise are enlightened by the Word of God in Scripture and their thinking is spiritual - they have the mind of the Spirit. But the foolish have only natural human innate reasoning - they are unenlightened and this thinking is condemned - it is the mind of the flesh.

“For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace” (Rom.8:6).

As we have seen, the struggle for control of the mind started in Eden (Gen.3:1-6). The serpent taught a false doctrine, telling Eve that she would not die but become like the gods or angels. This challenged the truth of God’s word and implied that God was a liar. The serpent tried to divert Eve’s thinking away from God’s commandment with deceitful and false reasoning.

We can be given an indication of the condition of the mind by looking at the forehead. In Jer.3:3 it is said of Jerusalem:

“You hast a whore’s forehead, and thou refusedst to be ashamed.”

Jerusalem had played the harlot (Jer.2:20) and showed no shame or remorse in her state of mind.

Faithful minds

When giving the Law to Moses, God made sure that the High Priest of Israel always had impressed on his mind the words Holiness to Yahweh. The priest was to wear a gold plate on his forehead with these words engraven on it - this was the only way he could be acceptable to God. He would remember that he must have his thinking attuned to God’s holiness.

The idea of writing something upon the mind is also found in the Bible. In Eze.9 there were those who sighed and who were upset by all the evil which surrounded them in Jerusalem. They saw that their fellow Israelites had ignored the true worship given by God in His Word and had substituted ideas of their own. So the faithful separated themselves from this false worship and God arranged for His mark to be set upon their foreheads.

Strong says this is the idea of a mark or signature being put upon their foreheads - the signature showed that the state of mind reflected that of God, who wrote or signed - it is the seal of God in their foreheads, as we read of the faithful in Rev.9:4. Those in any age, who have the mark or signature of God’s Name in their foreheads - that is, a state of mind which reflects His - will escape the judgments which are to fall upon those who rebel against His word. In ch.14:1 the faithful have the Father’s name written in their foreheads.

We can see the same state of mind in the Lord Jesus - we remember he wept over the coming destruction of Jerusalem (Luke 19:41). The apostle Paul too, wept over the false teachers which he knew would arise to delude the flock to their destruction (Acts 20:29). The issues are just as clear in Revelation. In ch.7:3 the judgment waited until the servants had been sealed in the forehead with the
mark of the living God. In ch.9:4 judgment came on those who had not the seal of God in their forehead.

**The mark in ch.13:16**

We find more information in ch.14:11 where the mark is more specifically described as the mark of his name. The name of the beast was given us in ch.13:1 as the name of blasphemy. The word blasphemy is from two Greek words - blapto meaning to injure and pheme meaning speech. So it literally means to injure by speech. To defame, speak evil of or slander - and this is a characteristic of the beast system. We read of it in v.5,6:

“And there was given unto him a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies; and power was given unto him to continue forty and two months. And he opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme his name, and his tabernacle, and them that dwell in heaven.”

In our studies so far, we have seen that the warnings of the apostles were amply fulfilled - the Roman beast system of false christianity arose in the days of Constantine. This system teaches doctrines which challenge the truth of God’s word - this is blasphemy for it slanders God. Whilst claiming to be Christ’s representative it displayed intense anti-semitism, it instituted the Inquisition, banned the Bible and burnt at the stake those who sought to make it available to the common people. This blasphemy is such a prominent feature of the beast system that we are told that it is his Name.

The Greek word for mark is charagma, literally an impress (as in Heb.1:3 where the margin has impress for image) similar to the Greek charakter. So we are back to our minds again! The mark of the beast is the impression formed upon a person’s mind by the blasphemous teaching carried out for, or to promote, his name.

We have seen that God writes His name upon the foreheads or minds of believers through the Truth:

“Wherefore lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls” (James 1:21).

In just the same way, this Roman Beast which is false Christianity, impresses its principles upon men and women so as to govern their thinking and practice. We have the choice ourselves what we put into our minds - and it will very much affect the kind of mark or character that we have - it is how our attitudes are formed. This will also find expression in our actions - the right hand.

The Popes expected universal recognition. In order to achieve this, the Jesuit writer Malachi Martin has explained that “a unitary mind was created” in society by the Roman Church.

Pope Boniface declared every human being to be subject to the See of Rome and Pope Gregory VII said, when elected Pope in 1073, that his ideal was to establish a universal monarchy of the Papacy:

“Human pride has created the power of kings, God’s mercy has created the power of Bishops. The Pope is the master of Emperors and is rendered holy by the merits of his predecessor St. Peter. The Roman Catholic Church can never err, and to resist its will is to resist the will of God” (Bryce, The Holy Roman Empire, p.418).
This policy is still current as we shall see when we reach ch.16. As the prophet Daniel has taught us to expect the Roman beast to continue until the coming of the Ancient of Days, we shall not be surprised to find it is still deceiving those who receive the mark of the beast at the time of its final overthrow in ch.19:20. They will have the mind-set of the seed of the serpent. The danger is for us today and is not just of historic interest, for the ideas and doctrines of the world around us is gathering together in an ecumenical movement to worship the beast.

Also a literal mark

There is an amazing literal application of this matter of the mark. As you probably know, the sign of the cross is much used in the Roman church and they have adopted it as their distinctive mark. It is made on the hands of priests at their ordination, on the foreheads of babies when christened, and worshippers at Mass make the sign on their foreheads and bodies to indicate devotion. They are dedicated to work and think only for Rome. The Cross appears prominently in the decorations of their churches, both inside and out, and on the priests’ vestments etc. It is also used as a sign of the Trinity in Roman Catholic ritual. Those having the sign or emblem of the Roman church are indeed its slaves, and worship its head, the Pope. The cross is spoken of as ‘the blessed cross’ yet Scripture associates it with a curse, not a blessing, and with the hanging on a tree (Gal.3:13). The sign of the cross is not a christian institution, having existed in various forms in ancient Egypt in the worship of Osiris, and in South America as the symbol of the god of rain. It did not assume its present form until some centuries had elapsed.

The book of Revelation has continued to enlighten and warn believers down the centuries. Here is a quotation from the 17th century:

“The Empire is described by one beast coming out of the sea, who hath seven heads and ten horns: yea also in this beast is comprised the Pontificality, being the reviver of the wounded head. This beast hath his arms, from the four beasts in Daniel 7. For Rome having subdued all those countries that those beasts ruled, and being like them for idolatry and cruelty in afflicting the holy city, is a monster compounded of all four … Boniface the third Pope of Roma, obtained by the help of the murderer Phocas, to be called universal Bishop. And this universal supremacy did so increase until the tenth century. The Pope’s canon law telleth that none may live under the Empire but by yielding to the Pope’s laws, in his subscribing to his Imperial and Ecclesiastical supremacy, and oath of fidelity as a mark on the hand, and some open token of communion with him, and profession of his decrees as a mark in the forehead” (Edward Holyoke, The Doctrine of Life, died 1660).

Buying and selling

The authority of the Church became essential to the holding of any office, or the exercise of any trade, in church or state. Rome recognises only its priests as being authorised to practise religion - its ‘spiritual merchandise’. In this way the Church maintains its power over the hearts and minds of men.

Literal trading also was limited by papacy in the Middle Ages to those who possessed the church’s mark - hence both literally and symbolically the papacy extended its power over the minds and actions of those within the confines of the Holy Roman Empire. (It has been said that trade was
controlled through such organisations as the Hanseatic League and the Freemasons). It was a restriction of trading in every form as is shown in the following quotation:

“Roger Horenden relates of William the Conqueror that he was so dutiful to the Pope that he would not permit any one in his power to buy or sell anything whom he found disobedient to the Apostolic See. So the decree of the Council of Lateran under Pope Alexander III, made against the Waldenses and Albigenses, enjoins, upon pain of anathema, ‘that no man presume to entertain or cherish them in his house or land, or exercise traffic with them ... so that in selling or buying, they being deprived of the comfort of humanity, may be compelled to repent of the error of their way’” (Bishop Thomas Newton 1754).

So we can see that this verse had a very practical impact upon people’s lives. It was also a confirmation that the Beast spoke like the Dragon for the pagan Emperor Diocletian had published a similar edict in the persecution against Christians in the years prior to Constantine:

“They had not the power of buying or selling anything, nor were they allowed the liberty to draw water itself before they had offered incense to detestable idols” (Bede, writing on the hymn of Justin Martyr).

One could say that the Cross became a sort of Trade Mark as of a flourishing business. It is certainly true that during the last Millennium, the Church has amassed fabulous wealth, as the verse would lead one to expect. One source of income has been the custom of indulgences. These were to remit the debt of temporal punishment due to sin after its guilt had been forgiven and a credulous populace gladly paid the Church for this supposed benefit.

Summary
Thus these verses show a new system in a symbolic way. The authority of the Papal image would be made essential to the holding of any office, or the exercise of any trade, in church or state. This authority was conferred by signing the cross on the forehead or right hand of an acceptable person and so the cross became the outward sign of the mark of the beast.

The enigma of the number 666
The number of the name of the beast is an equivalent symbol of the mark of the beast. Those who know the name or the number are in the secret as to what system is meant by the symbol. It is the number of a man (v.18), meaning that when we have found the system represented by the name of the beast, we will find the system is centred in a man, although the man and the system are two things. The verse tells us that it is a matter of wisdom and understanding to be able to discover this enigma:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>wisdom</th>
<th>Gk. sophia - insight into the true nature of things</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>under</td>
<td>Gk. nous - mind, comprising the faculties of perception and understanding.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

We can be in no doubt that the Lord Jesus not only thinks it is possible for his servants to discover the identity of the beast, but that it is vitally important for them to do so:

“... If any man worship the beast and his image, and receive his mark in his forehead, or in his hand, the same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God ...” (ch.14:9,10).
There has been a great deal of guessing and speculating over the centuries on this subject - only recently a man called Aleister Crowley, who wrote extensively on the practice of Magick (died 1947) claimed to be the Beast! A resultant CD and paperback of his *Confessions* has sold thousands of copies in the 1990s.

The difficulty which most people have had in finding out the enigma is due to the fact that we are apt to think that because the Roman church is so old, large and influential, that it must be right. However, these Seminars are meant to encourage us all to read the Bible in an objective way, keeping prejudice and preconceived ideas at bay. In this course on the book of Revelation, God has given us abundant opportunity to test our understanding with the events of history.

We have certainly seen so far that the leading figure of Christendom claims to reign as Christ’s representative and to have supernatural authority. Is there any way of applying the number 666 to this figure? And what has counting to do with it?

We may not realise that in some languages, letters have a numerical value (see illustration W36.1). From the earliest times this has been the basis of the understanding of this verse. It can be traced back to Irenaeus, a friend of Polycarp (born AD 70), who was a disciple of John himself. Greek was the language spoken when the Revelation was given, and each letter in the Greek alphabet has a numerical value. The verse tells us that the numerical sum of the value of the letters in the name of this system would total six hundred and sixty six. The word *Lateinos* answers to this numerical total and means *Latin*. This accurately describes the character, origin and language of the Roman Catholic system. It was in 600 that Gregory 1 established that the Latin language should be used in prayer and worship.

Irenaeus says :

*"The number given in the text is unquestionably 666. This is the name of the last of Daniel’s four Kingdoms (the Roman), they being Latins that now reign"* (Elliott, Hora Apoc., Vol.3,p.206).

This summarizes the Lord’s view of this whole system. In Bible numerology, six is the number of flesh, of mortality and therefore represents man. It is therefore significant that this system, whose authority and power is vested in one man, has a number 666 - the number of flesh tripled. Our studies have shown us that this Latin system arose on the basis of man’s ambitions, and of compromise with its pagan past. It claimed the authority to develop the truth of the Scriptures and became oppressive to those who denied this authority. It is therefore based on flesh and is human and so it is appropriate that the number of his name is the number of mortal man.

It is true that other names can be made to yield the same number, but in order to fulfil the prophecy, it must be a name in connection with a one-man system which has wielded a compulsory authority in all the earth in past centuries as we have seen it unfold in the first half of the book. The Papal system is the only such system. It is significant that this name is applied after the revival of the wounded sixth head, and so it identifies the Papal Image of the Beast. It is clear from v.8 that the many people admire various features of the Roman system such as its antiquity, its learning and music, its wealth, its political status, its history etc. The verse continues to warn us however, that these people are misled. It is for us to continue to weigh the evidence.
We have spent some time in this chapter 13 during the last two weeks. It would be difficult to imagine anything more remarkable than the parallels which history gives to the symbols of the chapter. The historical events themselves are very involved, and yet the symbols reflect the variations exactly. The chapter is a wonderful condensation of the inter-relationship of the civil and religious powers in western Europe from the 7th to the 19th centuries. Such evidence is a challenge for each of us to decide whether the prophecy is indeed what it claims to be - of divine origin and inspiration.

**Significant Footnote**
The latest ruling from Brussels is that throughout the European Union, the labelling of ingredients on cosmetics and toiletries must be in LATIN! This is "to ensure standardisation" and is no doubt the first of many such rulings, which could result in the resurrection of a dead language. *(Daily Telegraph, p.1, 19 May 99)*.
To continue our brief review of history, we remember that Charlemagne and the Pope founded the Holy Roman Empire in AD 800 and that it became largely based on Germany (see illustration W37.1). After the death of Charlemagne, the dynamics of feudalism allowed a number of its greatest vassals to establish themselves and Counts made themselves hereditary rulers and in this way, France gradually became separated from the Frankish kingdom in Germany. The dynasty of Charlemagne, often called the Carolingian, was eventually succeeded by Otto 1 who had himself ‘elected’ king in Aachen, Charlemagne’s city in AD 936. He granted more secular powers to the bishops and abbots, was crowned emperor by the Pope in AD 962 and was succeeded by Otto II and III. The seals now bore the legend ‘the Revival of the Roman Empire’ and the Christian empire began to flourish. It was called ‘the Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation.’ Christianity appealed to the Roman world with its promise of eternal life and spiritual peace for life was hard, painful and short. People also believed themselves beset by evil forces and demons which the Christian theologians claimed the power to overcome. Thus the power of the Church over men’s thinking continued through all the unstable and changing politics of the times. In this section we briefly review some of the outstanding developments associated with the developing Roman Empire and Church between the 11th and 16th centuries AD.

Gradually, changes in society became evident as the influence of the Church grew. She began to break down the traditional customs and values of the agrarian society. For instance, as the sole dispenser of the sacrament of marriage and the sole judge of its maintenance, she gained a great deal of control over individuals - this was at the expense of the kinship groups of extended families which had been the previous pattern. The pagans had buried their most precious possessions with their dead but:

“churchmen denounced these burials as pagan and tried to persuade people to leave their valuables to the Church. Although monks and nuns took vows of poverty, the monasteries, convents, churches and cathedrals and also the bishops themselves, were bound by no such vows. For them the glory of the Church consisted in the collection and display of splendid treasures, of golden chalices and silver crosses, of ivory carvings of crucifixions, of silken..."
banners and vestments. Not until the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries was there any persistent criticism of this attitude and when it came the Church reacted violently in defence of its traditions.” (H G Koenigsberger, Medieval Europe 400-1500, p.77).

The year 1033 was anticipated with some trepidation, for it was a millennium since Christ had died:
“Comets and eclipses were thought to foretell disasters and upheavals or the overthrow and death of great men. The heavenly bodies seemed to be at war, the devil and his demons fighting the powers of light. In the great chain of being which St. Augustine had elaborated, all events in the universe were inter-connected. The monks ... were not slow to point to the moral and religious decadence of their own age ... for some the end of the year 1033 seemed to signal the passing of a cosmic crisis.” (H G Koenigsberger, Medieval Europe 400-1500, p.136).

Schism with the Greek Church
The great aim of the western Church was to make it truly independent. To this end it was considered necessary to abolish clerical marriage and simony (the sale or purchase of offices in the Church), and to establish the authority of the pope over the whole of Christendom. The new spirit in Rome led rapidly to a complete breach with the Greek Church in 1054, when a dispute developed over the insistence by Rome of the adoption of an earlier Spanish formulation of the doctrine of the Trinity. The Holy Spirit was now said to ‘proceed’ from the Father and the Son - *filioque*, in the Latin creed. Other differences surfaced, attempts at diplomatic relations failed and the breach began a permanent schism between the Greek and Latin Churches.

We may, however, be witnessing a significant change in this situation brought about by the spirit of ecumenism we see in the world today. In his encyclical on unity dated 25 May 1995 the Pope called for an end to this historic schism:
“... the Catholic Church desires nothing less than full communion between East and West.”
“No Christian community can exempt itself from this call. The Church must breathe with her two lungs.”

The photograph from the Daily Telegraph (W37.2) records the historic meeting between Pope John Paul II and the Patriarch of the Orthodox Church in Romania in early May 1999 - the first time in nearly a thousand years.

Growing power of Papacy
A succession of reforming popes greatly strengthened the authority of Rome over the whole Church in the west and this was acknowledged by William the Conqueror who wanted papal support for his conquest of England, and repaid it with lavish gifts to the Church. This authority was tested and confirmed in an open conflict between Pope Gregory VII (Hildebrand) and the Emperor Henry IV at Canossa. Here the Pope felt sufficiently strong to first excommunicate the Emperor and then make him wait barefoot in the snow for three days, before granting a pardon. This is now called the Investiture Contest and was finally settled in 1122. Gregory’s ambition for absolute power was attained by Innocent III (1198-1216) who stated that it was the Pope’s authority to accept or reject the Emperor elect. Thus the position between Pope and Emperor was entirely reversed. The image of the beast had been given vigorous life and all were called upon to worship it, although the struggles for supremacy between Pope and Emperor continued in Latin Europe. The popes were now often
Germans and Frenchmen and the Church represented a highly specialized set of professional skills. The Church became an international organisation effectively controlled from Rome, with the Pope himself elected exclusively by the college of cardinals, his chief advisers.

Italy and Germany had become the economically most advanced parts of Europe by the twelfth century and trade between them was carried on by skilled professional merchants. These used the international language of Latin, as did the Church. (By contrast, the Eastern empire used Greek). The centres of learning were dominated by ecclesiastics and France came to be the centre of European intellectual life. This was furthered by only a small group of men, who spoke and wrote Latin as a living language for all sermons, legal textbooks, histories and literature. Greek and Arab writings were translated into Latin.

Society was considered to have been created by God as divided into three estates, those who prayed (the clergy), those who ‘protected’ society by fighting (the knights) and those who worked (the great mass of the common people). Serfs were not allowed to become priests and this was enshrined in canon law, the law of the Church.

The medieval Pope Innocent III (1198-1216) stands out as the most imperious and politically most successful. Of the relation of the papacy to the state he wrote that:

“as the moon derives its light from the sun ... so too the royal power derives its splendour from the pontifical authority”.

The papacy appeared to the Christian world to have reached its highest point. However, the monarchies of many countries resented ever increasing papal interference and a clash was precipitated by Philip IV of France (1285-1314) who imposed taxes on the Church. Pope Boniface VIII (1294-1303) issued the bull Unam Sanctam in 1302 which contained the most advanced claims ever yet made for papal supremacy:

“Therefore we declare, state, define and pronounce that it is altogether necessary to salvation for every creature to be subject to the Roman Pontiff ... whoever obeys not ... let him die the death” (Boettner, Roman Catholicism, p.480; Watchman! p.63).

The Crusades

The idea of a holy war first began to develop in Spain and the First Crusade began in AD 1095 when the eastern Byzantine Emperor Alexius I appealed to the Pope Urban II for help against the Seljuq Turks in Asia Minor. The Pope saw this as a splendid opportunity for regaining the spiritual and political initiative and promulgated the Christian duty to liberate Jerusalem and Christ’s tomb from the Turks. Christians should now emulate the deeds of Charlemagne against the infidels.

“For several hundred years ... the preaching of the clergy and the mood of Catholic Europe was unequivocal. The very name of Jerusalem, the centre of the orb of the world, the city of the twelve pearly gates whose streets were pure gold (Rev.21:21) seemed to promise both heavenly glory and earthly riches ... The reality was, inevitably, more sordid. For the clergy had provided the justification for men’s traditional inclination for aggression. Adventure, plunder and slaughter could now be pursued with a good conscience. One could make a good beginning even at home by turning on the Jews. The Church granted full indulgence to
those who took the crusading oath, i.e. it remitted the temporal penalties of sins forgiven in the sacrament of penance” (H G Koenigsberger, Medieval Europe 400-1500, p.187-188).

From this time the military orders were set up and attracted gifts and bequests of property over much of Europe, which contributed to the wealth the Church was amassing. Two further Crusades followed; a failed attempt in 1145-49 and a more professionally organised effort of Latin Christendom in 1189. Saladin the Muslim succeeded in holding Jerusalem but agreed to allow Christian pilgrims to visit it unmolested. This was the meagre result which the combined might of Latin Christendom was able to achieve. In Christian Europe the crusades led to the first great pogroms against the Jews since Roman times. More Crusades followed; some against Constantinople. Often the pilgrims were encouraged to continue by the finding of ‘relics’.

Franciscans and Dominicans
New religious movements now began to appear and Francis of Assisi (1181-1226) began the most famous and most immediately popular. For generations people had deplored the worldliness of the Church and the ostentatious living of the higher clergy and the demand for a return to the simplicity of the early Church had been a most effective propaganda weapon of the emperors against the papacy. At a similar time the Dominicans were founded, who were firmly dedicated to preaching and to fighting heresies and by the middle of the thirteenth century, members of these two orders occupied many chairs of theology in the universities. The Papacy, to whom they were directly responsible, had gained a very powerful new weapon.

Heresies and the Inquisition
The attacks of the barbarians on the western empire, which had continued after its fall in AD 476, often brought chaos and ruin and the result was that “ignorance, if not complete, was vast and widespread” (Stubbs & Bligh, Sixty Centuries of Health and Physick, pp.86,87).

It was in these conditions that the Holy Roman Empire had emerged as a system in the European heartland in the Middle Ages which strictly controlled every aspect of people’s lives, both religious and civil. Strong control was exerted on not only political and religious thinking but also cultural, economic and even scientific thought. The result was that in time everyone followed the same thought patterns and any form of independent thought was virtually out-lawed. This was relatively easy to achieve as most people were illiterate. The Church controlled all education and so came to control the mind of the masses in forming public opinion, and society had a ‘unitary mind’.

There are always independent people who resist this type of authoritarianism - we noted these religious and political agitators as the two witnesses in ch.11 (Section 28). They were treated with great cruelty under the Inquisition by the use of such tortures as the rack or were burnt alive. Amongst these were true believers and whilst suffering under this horrifying and dreadful power, their faith and patience was maintained by the knowledge that God would judge and destroy the whole system and those that worshipped it (ch.14:9-13).

Those who resisted the Church were branded as heretics and a Bull was issued against them by Pope Innocent III (1198-1216). In this, such people as the Waldenses were “to be crushed like venomous
snakes”. In a crusade against them, all participants were “absolved from all ecclesiastical pains and penalties ... and promised remission of all their sins ...” (see illustration W37.3).

The beliefs of the Cathars, also called Albigenses, were a complete denial of the authority of the Catholic Church and they were dispossessed of their property and lands and thousands massacred by order of Innocent III in 1200. This ‘crusade’ encouraged religious fanaticism in the heart of Europe and was strengthened by the infamous Inquisition, which had been set up in 1184. The Inquisition was a widespread system of torture which lasted in Spain for 350 years. Torquemada (1420-98) a Dominican monk, burned 10,200 victims, and condemned to perpetual imprisonment 97,000. The Jews also suffered greatly under it - 30,000 were burned at the stake. Many Jewish settlements in England were founded by refugees from the Spanish Inquisition in the seventeenth century (see illustration W37.4, W37.5).

The Spanish king, Ferdinand III of Castile, was made a saint in 1671 and was praised by the Roman Church:


“(If) anyone infected with heresy ... could be set forth and manifest to all, that the moment a man is convicted or held in grave suspicion of heresy he must not be favoured with honours or wealth but be put down from these benefits. And if a few examples could be made, punishing a few with the penalty of their lives or with the loss of property and exile, so that there could be no mistake about the seriousness of the business of religion” (Obras Completas de San Ignacio de Loyola, edicion Biblioteca de Autores Cristianos. Trans. by Dwight Cristoanos, (Madrid, 1952), quoted in Boettner, Roman Catholicism, p.506).

The Inquisition was described as:

“a sublime spectacle of social perfection” ( “Civilta Cattolica” [a Jesuit publication] 1885, Vol.1, p.55)

and the first inquisitor and others of the judges have since been canonized by the Roman Church.

By the mid fourteenth century the Papacy, now ruling from France, were more powerful than ever. They pronounced on matters of faith and doctrine with complete authority. They extended papal taxation of the clergy and perfected their financial control. They appointed bishops and abbots all over Christendom. Because of the relative weakness of secular states and the fact that few beside the clergy were literate, they were enabled to impose not only its spiritual but also its political and administrative control over the whole Church. Men identified this international organisation with the spiritual unity of Christendom.

However, as Europe grew richer and more educated the local clergy felt papal power to be irksome. A great schism developed and three popes tried to rule simultaneously. The schism was healed in 1415 and the universal Church pursued its policy of total papal authority with skill, even reuniting with the Greek Orthodox Church (1439) and other eastern Christian churches for a time.
Modern historians can see the yearnings for the lost splendours of the ancient Greek and Roman worlds throughout European society from the collapse of the Roman Empire in AD 476. The Renaissance in Italy is thus seen to have developed gradually into the fifteenth century from the cultural achievements of the Middle Ages. But this awareness was limited to the educated few and meanwhile the increasing power of the Catholic Church and the pretensions of the Papacy produced a system that made war on the saints and held in subjection the minds and bodies of all but a few.

The Renaissance and the Reformation

The Crusades and the Arab conquest of Spain acquainted Western Europe with much learning and civilisation, which had been developed at a time when Western Europe was lying in darkness. Trade began to revive, knowledge began to be disseminated, travel increased and with these movements the Renaissance commenced. Men began to study independently and produce literature. Architecture, painting and the arts revived, so did music and poetry. For two hundred years the greatest masters of the Renaissance exhausted all the resources of their art upon St.Peter’s in Rome, while forty Popes lavished their treasures on this unparalleled sanctuary, which stands on the Circus of Nero where thousands of Christians in the first century suffered martyrdom. (Significantly, it apparently measures 666 feet long!). A visit to the Vatican Museum reveals extraordinary wealth in art, precious stones and priceless gifts, from Emperors, Sultans, Czars, Kings and Princes from all lands during the long Christian era.

Seeds of reformation

From 1378 Wycliffe had published books proposing the transformation of the Church hierarchy into a community of believers; he also denied the doctrine of transubstantiation. This undermined the basis of the spiritual position of the Church and the holy orders of the priesthood as the sole guardians of the keys to the kingdom of heaven, as authorised by Christ and was heresy. The Church had always believed:

"Into this fold of Jesus Christ no one can enter if not under the guidance of the Sovereign Pontiff; and men can securely reach salvation only when they are united with him, since the Roman Pontiff is the Vicar of Christ and represents His person on this earth" (Pope John XXIII Coronation Address 1958, quoted in Boettner, Roman Catholicism, p.480).

When Constantinople fell in 1453 to the Ottoman Turks, the Greek (Septuagint) Old Testament Bible of the early church, written about 250 years before Christ and which had been read and preserved by the Greek Orthodox Church through the centuries, was taken by the fugitives to the West. Within five years Greek was taught in the University of Paris.

Erasmus (born 1466), using Greek manuscripts discovered during the Renaissance, showed certain of the church’s teaching appeared to be based on the translation of words and phrases included in the Catholic Jerome’s Latin Vulgate version of AD 400, which the Greek did not seem to support. Instead therefore of men being compelled to trust in a translation of this Latin Vulgate version, they could translate direct from the Greek Septuagint. In the case of the New Testament, translations could now be made from the language in which the original gospels and epistles were written. This has great significance for us today as it enables us to discover the true meanings of Bible words, and therefore of the truths God has revealed to us for our salvation, and these seminars have tried to encourage this aspect of Bible study.
Men began to think and reason for themselves as the shackles that ecclesiasticism had placed upon human intellect were broken. Many reformers, such as Luther in 1517, had no intention of usurping the authority of the Church - merely of reforming it, especially from the widespread immorality of the clergy and the scandals of the open sale of indulgences to sin.

At the same time the invention of printing meant that Bibles were able to circulate in many languages and countries. The Reformation inevitably followed as men began to compare and talk of the differences between the teaching of the Bibles they read and the things they were told by the Church, who claimed to be the sole teachers of religion and interpreters of the Bible. The Bible was no longer a closed book as it had been for generations, forbidden to the laity (see map W37.6 & copy W37.7).

William Tyndale made the great declaration:

“I defy the Pope and all his laws; if God spare my life, ere many years I will cause the boy that driveth the plough shall know more of the Scriptures than thou dost”.

His translation of the Bible was publicly burned at St. Paul’s Cross about 1526, and bonfires of many more thousands of copies followed. Tyndale himself was strangled and burned at the stake in 1536 (see W37.8).

In 1555 many more Protestors were burnt, including Rawlins White. The plaque commemorating the death of this Bible believer who protested against Rome, can be seen preserved in its original form inside a shop named David Morgan, in Cardiff, Wales, UK.

Modern studies have revealed details of many small groups which have existed down through the ages (see illustration W37.9). For centuries troops harried the Alpine valleys in their hunt for outlawed believers called the Vaudois. In 1393, Val-Louise was depopulated completely and hundreds of infants suffocated in their cradles. The Brethren also found refuge in the Swiss Alps and through intense persecutions from Catholics, and later from Protestants also, maintained their individual witness through the simple faith of the Word of God. In 1525 the Brethren in Zurich were ordered to christen all children or go into exile in eight days.

We referred to St Bartholomew’s Massacre of AD 1572 in Section 28 when we considered the long era of papal persecution depicted in ch.11. (See illustrations W37.10, W37.11).

A question of authority - the Bible or the Church?
The position of the authority of the Bible as opposed to the Church was brought into sharp relief in the Reformation. The Bible was translated into the common tongue of Latin by Jerome in AD 400 but by 1198 the reading of the Bible in the common vernacular was condemned. In 1229 the Bible was forbidden to laymen, and placed on the Index of Forbidden Books by the Council of Valencia.

Even in England Henry IV, under political pressure, brought in the Heresy Act in 1401. This was against the influence of the Lollards who had arisen since Wycliffe translated the Bible. The Act made it legal to burn anyone at the stake, who was convicted of heresy by an Ecclesiastical Court:

“The Lord King granted that none within the realm presumed to preach unless the licence of the Bishop of the Diocese had been first asked for and obtained. Nor shall he preach, hold,
teach or instruct either openly or in private, or make or write a book contrary to the Catholic faith or the determination of the Holy Church.

And if any person refuses to adjure his heresy so that according to the holy canons he ought to be handed over the secular court, then the Sheriff shall be personally present to carry out such sentence. he shall receive such persons, all of them, after such sentence shall be promulgated, and cause them to be burned in a high place, so that such punishment may strike with fear the minds of others and by this, no such wicked doctrine or heretical and erroneous opinions shall be sustained or in any way suffered.”

In 1546 the Pope and his Cardinals held The Council of Trent. It decreed the following:

“(The Pope) hath all power on earth ... All temporal power is his; the dominion, jurisdiction and government of the whole earth is his by divine right. All rulers of the earth are his subjects and must submit to him.” (Boettner, Roman Catholicism, p.478).

1. The Latin language was to be the language of the mass (remember, the number of a man)
2. Tradition was given equal authority with the Scriptures.
3. The use of Scripture without permission forbidden
4. Only Roman Catholic translations were allowed.

The attitude is summed up:

“If all the books of the Bible and all the copies thereof were blotted out, she (the Roman Church) would still be in possession of all the truths of Christ and could still continue to preach them as she did before a single word of the New Testament was written ...” (O’Brien, The Faith of Millions, p.55).

Claims of the Papacy

In 1534 Ignatius Loyola founded the Jesuit organisation - the Society of Jesus. Missionaries were sent out and colleges established in many countries, including England. Many crimes, intrigues and conspiracies committed and perpetrated by the Jesuits resulted in their expulsion even from predominately Roman Catholic countries. The Piltdown Man fraud, which claimed to be evolution’s ‘missing link’, was perpetrated by the Jesuit priest Pierre Teilhard de Chardin. It was the Jesuit Ribera who, in the time of the Reformation in 1580, promoted the belief in the future Antichrist. This was in order to deflect attention from Rome as being the Beast of the Apocalypse, which was believed by Protestants at the time. Other Catholics continued the work:

“There is today, we think, no danger of anyone supposing that the visions of the Apocalypse are meant to represent a series of historical events succeeding one another chronologically ... The real renaissance of scientific study of the book took place in Spain in the sixteenth century, and the Jesuits themselves were largely responsible for it, especially Alcazar, 1614 and 1619, and Mariana, about the same time.” (Antichrist, C.C. Martindale 1948 pub.Catholic Truth Society).

As men began to rely on other political structures rather than the Church, the spiritual claims of the Church increased in order to retain its influence. The pretensions of Pope Leo X, who excommunicated Luther in 1530, are here illustrated W37.12.
The Pope is called:


Pope Pius X when Archbishop of Venice.

“The Pope is not only the representative of Jesus Christ, but he is Jesus Christ Himself hidden under the veil of the flesh. Does the Pope speak? It is Jesus Christ who speaks...”

“The Lord our God no longer reigns; He has resigned all power to the Pope” (Tetzel, *The History of Protestantism*, Vol.1, pp.255-260)

“The Pope is of so great a dignity and so exalted that he is not a mere man, but as it were God, and the Vicar of God... The Pope is as it were God on earth... Chief king of kings having plenitude of power” ((Pope John XXIII Coronation Address 1958, quoted in Boettner, *Roman Catholicism*, p.480).

The challenge is for each of us to decide how the God of heaven views these claims - are they blasphemy?

The world around the Church continued to change, however, and the French Revolution came as a mighty earthquake which rocked its foundations. What happened then is the subject of ch.16 which we shall consider later.
THE LAMB ON MOUNT ZION
Ch.14:1-13

1 And I looked, and, lo, a Lamb stood on the mount Sion, and with him an hundred forty and four thousand, having his Father's name written in their foreheads. 2 And I heard a voice from heaven, as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of a great thunder: and I heard the voice of harpers harping with their harps: 3 And they sung as it were a new song before the throne, and before the four beasts, and the elders: and no man could learn that song but the hundred and forty and four thousand, which were redeemed from the earth. 4 These are they which were not defiled with women; for they are virgins. These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth. These were redeemed from among men, being the firstfruits unto God and to the Lamb. 5 And in their mouth was found no guile: for they are without fault before the throne of God.

This verses are a refreshing contrast to chs.12 & 13. They told us of the dark night described by Jesus as the times of the Gentiles during which believers were preyed upon by fearsome beasts for more than a thousand years. We are assured that although: 

“... weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning” (Psalm 30:5).

The Beast system will be overcome and the Lord will establish his righteous rule despite all opposition - this too is a continuing encouragement to us.

As we begin to read this chapter we see a striking picture of Christ and the saints in Zion. He is portrayed as the Lamb and we met this in ch.5:5 (Section 14) where he was the Slain Lamb – he will only become King because he was the slain lamb. The main theme of this chapter shows that the Lamb’s work has now been fruitful and many brethren have been redeemed.

Although the Lord will be literally enthroned in Mount Zion in Jerusalem on David’s throne as we see in Psa.132:

“For the LORD hath chosen Zion; he hath desired it for his habitation. This is my rest for ever: here will I dwell; for I have desired it” (Psa.132:13,14)

Mount Zion is also symbolic of the New Jerusalem, the ecclesia/saints:
“... For this Agar is mount Sinai in Arabia, and answereth to Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children. But Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the mother of us all” (Gal.4:25,26).

“But ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels” (Heb.12:22)

This is in contrast to Rome. We remember that in the fourth trumpet, the literal river Euphrates represented the Turkish empire, and so Mount Zion, a literal element in the kingdom of David, is used symbolically to represent the kingdom.

The symbolic Israelitish number of the 144,000 is one we have already met in ch.7 (Section 21). The basis of Israel was the twelve tribes. 12 x 12 is the four square camp of Israel and multiplied by a thousand shows us a multitude. They have already been sealed in the forehead - now they are redeemed and shown to be spiritual Israel. They are literally a great multitude - many waters (v.2), that no man can number (ch.7:9). They are in the ruling places of the new heaven (Isa.65:17,18) and the sound of thunder, symbolical of war, reminds us there is work to be done by Christ and his saints before peace can be brought to the world.

The Father’s name written
In ch.13 John saw a multitude with the mark of the beast in their foreheads, now he sees another multitude with the Father’s name there. We discussed in Section 36 that this signifies the wonderful truth that the saints reflect their Father’s outlook and attitudes and believe His truths. No longer alienated by ignorance (Eph 4.18), they have:

“... received with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls (James 1:21)
and have acted on the advice of Romans 12:2:

“And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.”

By continually exercising their minds and hearts in study, meditation and prayer, the outlook of God is impressed on their understanding and affections and this results in faith and obedience. Only these will be given the wonderful gift of immortality and share the divine nature.

What are harps?
This beautiful figure shows that the true Israel will no longer be in tribulation and distress, as when the Jews hung their harps on the willows of Babylon (Psa.137:1,2) but now rejoice with the new song of deliverance and triumph. The saint himself is a harp of God:

“... speaking to yourselves with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and strking the strings with your heart unto the Lord” (Eph.5:19 Rotherham).

A mind impressed with the Word and a heart full of joy and thanksgiving will cause the ‘saint-harp’ to become an instrument of pleasure to God. We met this symbol in ch.5:8 (Section 14) and ch.14:2. The new song (v.3) was referred to in ch.5:9 and its prospect sustained the Lord Jesus in Psalm 22:22-25.
“Praise ye the LORD. Sing unto the LORD a new song, and his praise in the congregation of saints. Let Israel rejoice in him that made him: let the children of Zion be joyful in their King” (Psa.149:1,2).

It is new because it is a new deliverance - the angels could not sing it as they have not been redeemed by the Lamb. Only the saints are redeemed and are now appointed kings and priests with their Lord.

In v.4 we are reminded that the faithful have remained true to him. We have considered ‘women’ already Section 18 and seen that the ecclesia is the bride of Christ. In ch.12 we saw the church woman gain political power and the ecclesia became divided - there were now two women. The faithful saints fled to the wilderness as the remnant of the seed of the woman (ch.12:17). She continued to be the chaste virgin, the bride of Christ and there was no fellowship between her and the church woman in power. Adultery is a Bible metaphor for involvement with foreign nations and especially the worship of their gods.

“For of old time I have broken thy yoke, and burst thy bands; and thou saidst, I will not transgress; when upon every high hill and under every green tree thou wanderest, playing the harlot” (Jer.2:22).

“Surely as a wife treacherously departeth from her husband, so have ye dealt treacherously with me, O house of Israel, saith the LORD” (Jer 3:20 20).

The fact that the verse mentions women rather than a woman gives us a clue to the meaning. Rome for centuries was the universal church but at the time of the Reformation in the sixteenth century, other churches broke off from her. These are numerous throughout the world and now include all national churches and all sects and denominations which recognise fellow christians. Rome calls herself the Mother Church - at the Council of Trent in 1563 she declared “The Roman Church is the Mother and Mistress of all churches” - and these other churches are her daughters. Lutherans and Calvinists, although being Protestants, persecuted many small groups of Bible believers, who were characterised by their non violence and earnest desire to have no other authority for their beliefs or way of life than the Bible.

The spirit of the Protestants in the Reformation is largely now dissipated. During the last forty years especially, we have seen the increasing success of the Ecumenical movement - the protestant churches, including the Church of England, are showing great eagerness to join once more in fellowship with their mother. The spirit of Christendom today is toleration, human rights, and the spirit of unbelief of God’s Word covered over by a seeming respect for that Word. To have fellowship with them therefore, is to be defiled with women (v.4).

It has indeed been a characteristic of the varied groups of Bible believers down the ages that they have not been involved in the national and popular churches. They follow the Lamb (v.4) and have nothing in common with those who do not obey his commandments or believe his wonderful gospel. Those who choose to follow now in this time of humiliation will follow him in all his glory then when he reigns on Mount Zion and is gracious to share his throne with them:

“... for them that honour me I will honour, and they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed” (1 Sam.2:30).
We honour God by believing His truth and obeying His commandments. Those given the gift of immortality when Jesus returns will be the firstfruits of his work of salvation. The promise is of a full harvest to be gathered in at the end of the Millennium.

The third characteristic of those accepted by the Lord as his friends is that they speak no guile or deceit. As this is a common failing of human nature, strong effort and faith is needed to recognise our double-mindedness, for we often try to please both God and ourselves. Only the Word of God reveals to us our self-deception.

The wonderful time of joy and glory for Christ and his bride will last for ever - they are united to him for ever in spirit nature. They are now one with him as he desired of his Father:

"Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; that they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us ..." (John 17:20,21).

The rest of the chapter will show us in summary form what must happen in order to achieve the situation where the Lamb rules on Mount Zion.

The Midheaven Proclamation (v.6)
Once Christ and his now immortal saints - the multitudinous Christ Man we saw revealed in ch.1 (Section 7) - are enthroned on Mt. Zion in Jerusalem, they can begin the task of bringing the world into subjection. They have laid the basis for the new heavens but the heavens in which the beast rules still holds sway over much of the ‘earth’. For this reason, the ‘angel ambassadors’ are said to fly in the midst of heaven. They are described as an angel or messenger and this refers to the angel of the rainbow we saw in ch.10:1 (Section 27). The gospel proclaimed (RV) is good news of mercy for those who will submit to the king but warns of judgment for those who will not. This is the time of Psalm 2:10

"Be wise now therefore, O ye kings: be instructed, ye judges of the earth. Serve the LORD with fear, and rejoice with trembling. Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all they that put their trust in him"

and was the basis of the gospel preached by Paul in Acts 17:31:

"Repent ... Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead."

It is significant that all - both governments and the common people - are called upon to give glory to the great Creator of heaven and earth, for the feature of present-day society is the belief in the theories of Evolution and hence the rejection of a Creator at all.

What is Babylon? (v.8)
The work of the saints continues in the missions of the second and third angels which follow, as we are shown different facets of how they fulfil God’s purpose. V.8 reveals that some nations will not listen to the merciful proclamation and that Babylon now falls. No details are given at this stage of
the prophecy. This is the first time we have met this name but we remember that it was in the city of Babel, above the Persian Gulf, that the ziggurat was built (Gen.11) which resulted in God confusing their languages. The city was characterised by rebellion against God and false worship. This was epitomised in Babylon - the head of gold of Dan.2. God’s punishment is described in the prophets:

“Come down, and sit in the dust, O virgin daughter of Babylon, sit on the ground: there is no throne, O daughter of the Chaldeans: for thou shalt no more be called tender and delicate” (Isa. 47:1)

“The word that the LORD spake against Babylon and against the land of the Chaldeans by Jeremiah the prophet. Declare ye among the nations, and publish, and set up a standard; publish, and conceal not: say, Babylon is taken, Bel is confounded, Merodach is broken in pieces; her idols are confounded, her images are broken in pieces. For out of the north there cometh up a nation against her, which shall make her land desolate, and none shall dwell therein: they shall remove, they shall depart, both man and beast” (Jer.50:1-3).

Bel and Merodach were some of the gods of Babylon. In their seventy year captivity in Babylon, Israel were influenced by Babylonian ideas, such as the Devil from Zoroaster. They brought these back from exile and such philosophies then entered the first century ecclesia with the Judaisers. These same ideas were the seeds of the apostacy, and so Rome inherited the same way of thinking. Since Babylon was the source of the religion of man, Rome is called Babylon the Great. The system of worship of the ancient historical Babylon is reflected very closely in the teaching and institutions of Rome and so this is why it is used as a code name for Rome (see Hislop, The Two Babylons).

Theme of Two Cities
The Revelation contrasts the destinies of two cities - Rome and Zion. Catholicism is founded on the city of Rome and the kingdom will be set up on Mount Zion in Jerusalem - see chart W38.1.

The third angel (v.9) then proclaims the doom of those who still persist in worshipping the beast and are signed in their forehead - they continue to give allegiance to that system, which has survived the overthrow of the city. The warning indicates that there may be some who finally realise how they have been deceived and they will find a merciful provision of living in the Kingdom of Christ as mortal subjects. The fire and brimstone (v.10) are symbols of the war undertaken by the Lamb and his ambassadors. The smoke is said to continue for ever and ever (v.11) but this does not mean the popular idea of ‘eternal torments’. Their fate will be like that of Sodom, which Jude says suffered the vengeance of eternal fire (v.7). It does not mean the fire will burn forever, but until it is consumes and completely destroys Rome and its influence.

Summary
The scenes in this chapter so far describe the opening events of the judgments when Christ appears and show us the sequence of events:

1. the enthronement of the Lamb and the 144,000 on Mount Zion
2. the summons addressed to the nations to fear God in view of the arrival of the hour of judgment

The Book of Revelation
3. its enforcement by the overthrow of Babylon
4. the issue of a warning to the world at large as to their attitude towards the beast and image system of things in Europe.

The reward for faithful following
The final prospect is of a world at peace with Christ ruling supreme. Vs.12 and 13 tell us that this glorious vision sustains the obedient and patient saints in every age, especially if they have been killed by the beast - cp ch.13:10. They are assured that God will avenge His own elect. They have died in the Lord. But their blessing is not granted at death as we know from the rest of Scripture. The blessing will be from henceforth (v.13) - in the time of that glorious Kingdom when their labours in the work of the ‘three angels’ has resulted in the total destruction of the beast and his worshippers.

The phrase their works do follow them (v.13) is rather different when rendered from the literal Greek, which can be - “their works he goeth in aid of with them”. The Spirit of the Lord will aid them as already promised:

"... Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the LORD of hosts” (Zech.4:6).

The work of the ‘three angels’ will be work done under the guidance of the Spirit and this will ensure success. Once that is accomplished, they can indeed enter into the Millenial Sabbath rest from the trials of their mortal life (Heb.4:9). This also will not be spent in idleness, but in the joyous and fulfilling work of teaching the subdued nations how to worship the great King enthroned on Mount Zion, as we see in Isa.2:

"And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the LORD'S house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it. And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. And he shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people: and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more” (Isa.2:2-4).

SECTION 39

THE HARVEST & THE VINTAGE
Ch.14:14-20
14 And I looked, and behold a white cloud, and upon the cloud one sat like unto the Son of man, having on his head a golden crown, and in his hand a sharp sickle. 15 And another angel came out of the temple, crying with a loud voice to him that sat on the cloud, Thrust in thy sickle, and reap: for the time is come for thee to reap; for the harvest of the earth is ripe. 16 And he that sat on the cloud thrust in his sickle on the earth; and the earth was reaped.

A righteous cloud of witnesses
We are now given more details as to how the Lord will accomplish this work of subduing his enemies in order to be enthroned in Zion. John looks and sees a new scene. The white cloud reminds us of Heb.12:1 where the saints are described as a cloud of witnesses and Rev.1:7 where it is proclaimed of the Lord Jesus: Behold he cometh with clouds. The glorified saints wear white robes of righteousness ch.19:8,14 and are as dew which rises with the warmth of the Sun of righteousness to become a cloud (Malachi 4:2). Christ is the judge because he is the Son of man (John 5:27) and this is also a title of the multitudinous Son of Man we saw in ch.1 (Section 7).

The time has come for the work of retribution - the harvest of the earth is ripe (v.15). Although it may seem that God is indifferent to the present wickedness in the world, it is a sign that the end is near. As we watch evil and godlessness spread in society, we know that the time is near that the grapes are fully ripe (v.18).

The sickle represents the act of reaping and several Scriptures use this analogy. The word harvest of the earth suggests the reaping of grain (v.16).

"But they know not the thoughts of the LORD, neither understand they his counsel: for he shall gather them as the sheaves into the floor” (Micah 4:12).

"Let the heathen be wakened, and come up to the valley of Jehoshaphat: for there will I sit to judge all the heathen round about. Put ye in the sickle, for the harvest is ripe: come, get you down; for the press is full, the fats overflow; for their wickedness is great. Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision: for the day of the LORD is near in the valley of decision” (Joel 3:12-14).

This language of reaping is summed up in the meaning of the Hebrew word armageddon, which we shall meet in ch.16. This word literally means:

Arma : A heap of sheaves
Gai : Valley
Don : Judgment

So it is a heap of sheaves in a valley of judgment. Joel 3:12 above refers to the valley of Jehoshaphat. This word means the judgment of Yah. So Armageddon can be thought of as a code name for the Valley of the Judgment of God. (See also Eze.38, Dan.2, Joel 3, Zech.14).
It is the angel coming out of the temple (v.15) which calls for the sickle to be used. These words describe the saints in another aspect. We have learned that the temple itself is representative of the saints, and in the work of this verse, they act as messengers calling for the reaping to begin. It will be noticed that the temple is not yet in heaven as it is by v.17 - the saints have not yet gained the rulership of the political heavens. The conquest of the world is by stages and this reaping of the harvest is the first phase (v.16).

Ezekiel.38 is a description of this first phase of Armageddon:

“And thou shalt come up against my people of Israel, as a cloud to cover the land; it shall be in the latter days, and I will bring thee against my land, that the heathen may know me, when I shall be sanctified in thee, O Gog, before their eyes” (Eze.38:16).

Here the prophet explains that the attack happens at a time when the Jews are back in their land - this is an amazing sign in our time. The prophet also says they will dwell in the midst of the land (v12), whatever deals we see being made currently between the Palestinians and the Jews. This battle will be considered more fully when we consider ch.16 in Section 50.

17 And another angel came out of the temple which is in heaven, he also having a sharp sickle.
18 And another angel came out from the altar, which had power over fire; and cried with a loud cry to him that had the sharp sickle, saying, Thrust in thy sharp sickle, and gather the clusters of the vine of the earth; for her grapes are fully ripe. 19 And the angel thrust in his sickle into the earth, and gathered the vine of the earth, and cast it into the great winepress of the wrath of God. 20 And the winepress was trodden without the city, and blood came out of the winepress, even unto the horse bridles, by the space of a thousand and six hundred furlongs.

The temple now in heaven (v.17)
The glorified Redeemed saints are now in power and established as the government of Jerusalem - they are enthroned in Zion (v.1) as the new heavens. The various angels in these verses are symbols of the saints in different aspects of predicting, warning or executing judgments. The angel in v.18 comes from Christ, the altar, in response to the prayers of the saints as we saw in ch.6:9. The time has come at last for the final vindication of their faith. The quotation from Joel 3 above sums up the position at this time:

“The sun and the moon shall be darkened, and the stars shall withdraw their shining. The LORD also shall roar out of Zion, and utter his voice from Jerusalem; and the heavens and the earth shall shake: but the LORD will be the hope of his people, and the strength of the children of Israel. So shall ye know that I am the LORD your God dwelling in Zion, my holy mountain: then shall Jerusalem be holy, and there shall no strangers pass through her any more” (Joel 3:15-17).
The Vintage (v.18)
The next harvest is a gathering in of the grapes to the winepress, for they ripen after the grain. It is another symbol of divine judgment and depicts a second phase:

“Therefore prophesy thou against them all these words, and say unto them, The LORD shall roar from on high, and utter his voice from his holy habitation; he shall mightily roar upon his habitation; he shall give a shout, as they that tread the grapes, against all the inhabitants of the earth 31 A noise shall come even to the ends of the earth; for the LORD hath a controversy with the nations, he will plead with all flesh; he will give them that are wicked to the sword, saith the LORD 32 Thus saith the LORD of hosts, Behold, evil shall go forth from nation to nation, and a great whirlwind shall be raised up from the coasts of the earth. 33 And the slain of the LORD shall be at that day from one end of the earth even unto the other end of the earth: they shall not be lamented, neither gathered, nor buried; they shall be dung upon the ground” (Jer.25:30-33).

The winepress is trodden without the city (v.20), meaning that judgment extends beyond the confines of Rome into all nations. It will reach to those guiding the horse - the rulers of the nations. In Bible language the horse represents the nations at war:

“And I will overthrow the throne of kingdoms, and I will destroy the strength of the kingdoms of the heathen; and I will overthrow the chariots, and those that ride in them; and the horses and their riders shall come down, every one by the sword of his brother” (Haggai 2:22, also Zech.10:5).

A further detail is given us in the symbolical measurement of v.20. This could well be an indication of the time these judgements will last. Sixteen hundred is the square of forty. The number forty in the Bible is frequently associated with humiliation, affliction and punishment. It is the number of probation Deut.25:3. Moses, Elijah and Christ fasted for forty days (Deut.9:9,18; 1 Kings 19:8; Matt.4:2). Israel was afflicted for forty years in the wilderness (Num.14:33,34), and after forty years of preaching the Gospel, the Jewish state was destroyed in AD 70. So the symbol seems representative of the period of probation by which the nations will be humbled in preparation for Christ’s universal rule.

These verses depict a time of unprecedented bloodshed and destruction and confirms all we read in Scripture of the time of trouble such as never was (Dan.12:1) when the Lord Jesus returns. He compares it to the flood and the destruction of Sodom and knew that men in general would take no heed

until the thunders of divine wrath begin to spread terror through the world:

“And they shall go into the holes of the rocks, and into the caves of the earth, for fear of the LORD, and for the glory of his majesty, when he ariseth to shake terribly the earth” (Isa.2:19).

“... The LORD shall roar from on high, and utter his voice from his holy habitation ... he shall give a shout, as they that tread the grapes, against all the inhabitants of the earth ... for the LORD hath a controversy with the nations, he will plead with all flesh; he will give them that are wicked to the sword, saith the LORD ... And the slain of the LORD shall be at that
“day from one end of the earth even unto the other end of the earth: they shall not be lamented, neither gathered, nor buried; they shall be dung upon the ground” (Jer.25:30-33).

These dreadful scenes have to be enacted on the earth before the promised blessing can come. In that day it will be evident that those who are blessed are those who put their trust in Him in their day of opportunity. They know that the world can never be brought to God or His kingdom established until the kingdoms of men are destroyed:

“... for when thy judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness. Let favour be shewed to the wicked, yet will he not learn righteousness: in the land of uprightness will he deal unjustly, and will not behold the majesty of the LORD” (Jer.26:9,10).

In the language of Daniel 2:44:

“And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever.”

The two legs of Nebuchadnezzar’s image have thus been judged in the two phases described. They are two series of battles – the first known as Armageddon against the attack by Gog on Israel and the second extending out from the opposition mounted at Rome, to the rest of the world. This will be considered in more detail in Sections 50 – 52.

God is not willing that any should perish and is mercifully giving us early warning while we have the day of opportunity.
"And I saw another sign in heaven, great and marvellous, seven angels having the seven last plagues; for in them is filled up the wrath of God. And I saw as it were a sea of glass mingled with fire: and them that had gotten the victory over the beast, and over his image, and over his mark, and over the number of his name, stand on the sea of glass, having the harps of God. And they sing the song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints. Who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name? for thou only art holy: for all nations shall come and worship before thee; for thy judgments are made manifest.

In this vision of coming glory God encourages us that Armageddon is not the end and His purpose will be fulfilled.

The first verse of this short chapter is a wonderful contrast to ch.12:1 - here it is the faithful woman, the bride of Christ, who is redeemed at last and in glory. In ch.12 the sign or wonder showed the selevation of an apostate system to a position of authority - the heaven v.1 - and many claimed the kingdom of God had come. Now the Ecclesia is elevated to rule with Christ and the true kingdom will soon be established - the triumph is a great and marvellous sign. The seven angels or messengers are sent forth by God - they are a symbol we met in ch.5:6, the seven spirits of God sent forth into all the earth - and describe His omniscience and omnipotence (see Section 14).

The word used for plague (Gk. plegas from plesso) means “a flattening out by pounding or by smiting”. So it is not necessarily an epidemic but describes a stripe, a smiting. The word is used in Luke 12:48; Acts 16:23,33 etc.and translated stripes. So it describes punishment designed to correct. - here it describes the seven last strokes, or smittings, of God designed to discipline the nations and change their ways. They are called the last plagues because they bring to a climax the purpose of God and end the present order on earth by establishing the kingdom of God on earth instead. The wrath of God will then be finished - filled up (from Gk.teleo). This brings tremendous encouragement for we are living in the era of the sixth vial, and the judgments of God are nearing completion.

The sea of glass - John then sees a beautiful picture of the finality - instead of the wicked nations being a troubled sea (Isa.57:20,21) they are now crystal calm and at rest. They have been involved in
fire - a symbol for war - but it is now a glassy sea. The redeemed stand in rulership on this glassy sea, and rejoice in their deliverance. (We considered the use of harps in ch.14:2). They are victorious, having overcome, as Jesus exhorted them in his letters to the ecclesias (chs.2,3 Section 9). They have overcome the world around them, with all its subtle pressures to conform in thinking and in practice - in social, political and religious aspects. They have kept separate from the whole of the beast system.

Their song is the song of Moses and of the Lamb. This refers back to the mighty deliverance of Israel from the land of Egypt through the Red Sea. They saw their enemies dead upon the sea shore and were led by Moses and Miriam in song and dance. The complete fulfilment of Moses’ Song is yet to be fulfilled - it speaks of being brought in and planted in the mountain of Yahweh’s inheritance (Exod.15:17) and of the Redeemed dwelling in the Sanctuary. It is the Lamb who will achieve the fulfilment of these marvellous promises. Paul refers to the sanctuary, the true tabernacle which the Lord pitched and not man (Heb.8:2), and we know the saints are living stones for the temple of God.

The visible token will be the House of Prayer for all nations, to be established after Christ’s return

“For thus saith the LORD unto the eunuchs that keep my sabbaths, and choose the things that please me, and take hold of my covenant; Even unto them will I give in mine house and within my walls a place and a name better than of sons and of daughters: I will give them an everlasting name, that shall not be cut off. Also the sons of the stranger, that join themselves to the LORD, to serve him, and to love the name of the LORD, to be his servants, every one that keepeth the sabbath from polluting it, and taketh hold of my covenant; Even them will I bring to my holy mountain, and make them joyful in my house of prayer: their burnt offerings and their sacrifices shall be accepted upon mine altar; for mine house shall be called an house of prayer for all people” (Isa.56:4-7).

The song extols God’s works at this time as great and marvellous and addresses God as Lord God Almighty (as do the four living creatures in ch.4:8). There are many titles by which God is addressed in Scripture, each with a different meaning, which is not evident in the English Authorised Version. The Hebrew of this title is Yahweh Elohim Sabaoth and means “He Who will be Mighty Ones of Armies”. This shows us that He will be manifested in a multitude of mighty ones organised into an Army. We know that the redeemed have been taken ‘out of the nations for his name’ (Acts 15:14) and have been ‘sealed in the forehead with the Father’s name’ (ch.14:1). In ch.7:9 they are a multitude and in ch.19:14 this army follows their leader, clothed in white linen.

We also see in their song that they again endorse God’s ways and believe that true justice belongs to Him. They rejoice that all nations will finally choose to worship Him with reverential fear (v.4), when the intended result of the judgments has been achieved:

“... for when thy judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness” (Isa.26:9).
EVIDENCE OF HISTORICAL WRITERS

We have already referred to a Donatist writer in AD 345 (at the end of Section 31), which shows that they knew where they stood in relation to the prophecy of Revelation - at the end of ch.12. This timing is very specific for it could only have been relevant after Constantine became sole Emperor in AD 324.

Later in history, when the Bible became available again in the Reformation, many writers before the French Revolution, showed how an event of that character was expected on the basis of Revelation 11. For example:

**Joseph Mede (1649)** identified the great earthquake of Rev.11 as “a great commotion of the Nations, and alteration of politic affairs”. He refers to a man named Philipus Nicolaus who understood the phrase “the tenth part of the city” as referring to “the ten kingdoms subject to the dominion thereof, which (forsooth) in this stir of the nations, should fall away from Rome...”. This is in line with the correct interpretation.

**In 1685 Peter Jurieu** went further, to predict the approximate timing of the Revolution:

“The tenth part of the city which here fell will, at some future time, appear to be the Kingdom of France, where a Revolution will take place about the year 1785, and a separation from the Papacy follow, when the names of Monks and Nuns ... shall vanish, and brotherly love make all men equal.”

- **100 YEARS BEFORE IT HAPPENED!**

**Robert Flemming (1701)** observed that there was a “step by step” rise of papal power and saw a corresponding gradation of its fall. These stages in the fall of papal power he expected to occur in the years 1794 (period of the Revolution when the Church was dethroned) and 1848 and added:

“yet we are not to imagine that those events will totally destroy the Papacy, although they will exceedingly weaken it...”
He expected a final end in 2000 (2018 in Julian years) after which the saints would reign on earth for a thousand years. \textit{(Rise and Fall of Rome Papal, 1701)}.

\textbf{We may comment that it is \textit{not}} true to say that Bible students have always expected Christ to return in their day. It was encouraging for them to see where they stood in relation to the Divine Plan and to know that all things were leading to the great consummation promised. Until the time of the French Revolution, they knew that 1260 day-years would have to elapse. They did not always know, of course, how long future events would take to unfold after this and neither do we.

\textit{H Gratton Guiness (1880)}

“A considerable number of expositors agreed, in indicating long before their arrival, the remarkable years AD 1866-70, as years of crisis in the downfall of despotic power in Europe…” \textit{(The Approaching End of the Age, 1880, p.475)}

Indeed they were. 1848 saw revolutions in Europe and the years 1866-70 saw the fall of the Pope’s temporal power.

\textit{Thomas Newton (1754)} identified the period in which he lived as the sixth trumpet, or second woe trumpet of the Revelation:  

“These seven last plagues (ie the vials of Rev.16) must necessarily fall under the seventh and last trumpet, or the third and last woe trumpet; so that as the seventh seal contained the seven trumpets, the seventh trumpet comprehends the seven vials ... If then these seven last plagues synchronize with the seventh or last trumpet, they are all yet to come; for the sixth trumpet is not yet past?” \textit{(p.630-631)}.

The great earthquake in France, signalling the end of the second woe or sixth trumpet, was then just 35 years in the future.

In another passage he comments upon the picture given in Rev.17, where we read of “a woman sitting upon a scarlet coloured beast, full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns.” He says “The beast therefore, upon which the woman rideth, is the Roman government in its last form.” In reference to the ten horn-kingsdoms of this Roman beast (Rev.17:12,13), Newton pointed out that they were future to the days of the old Roman Empire:

“It is upon the seventh or last head of the beast that the horns are seen growing together, that is, upon the Roman Empire in its seventh or last form of government; and they are not, like the ‘head’, successive, but contemporary kingdoms. ‘These have one mind, and shall give their power and strength unto the beast’”.

Newton was saying that this prophetic beast was a symbol for the Empire of Rome, in a new and revived last form. The difference in the final form of the Empire would be that it would be brought into being by “ten horns” or nations who would voluntarily combine “their strength” for the larger ideal.
He also notes several contemporary writers who identified the Massacre of St. Bartholomew’s Day 1572 with the death of the witnesses in France, such as the Huguenot Peter Jurieu. The Massacre started the “war” which ended in the death of the witnesses by the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes in 1685 (see Section 28 on ch.11).

Peter Jurieu (1687)

“The (ten) kings, who yet remain under the Empire of Rome, must break with her, leave her solitary and desolate. But who must begin this last revolt? ‘Tis most probable, that France shall ... It cannot be any country but France ... Seeing the tenth part of the City which must fall, is France, this gives me some hopes, that the death of the two witnesses hath a peculiar relation to that kingdom...”.

His hopes continue:

“It is one of the keys of the Revelation to understand that the Great City signifies not Rome alone, but Rome in conjunction with its Empire. This being supposed and proved, then in my opinion, we cannot doubt that the ‘tenth’ part of the city is France. It is also the ‘street’ or place of the city, that is, the most fair and eminent part of it. I lay not down the exact time of the resurrection of the witnesses, but I strongly hope the three and a half days began at the time of the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes.”

(Accomplishment of the Scriptures, pub.1867 in English)

A hundred years later another Bible student was able to see that the hopes of Jurieu had not been unfounded:

Bicheno 1793, a Baptist pastor of Newbury. He suggested that the interval between 1685 and 1790 being 105 years was significant if regarded as lunar. A moon-day is 30 earth-days so $30 \times 3\frac{1}{2} = 105$ day-years. The period would equate to the three & a half days in ch.11 during which the two witnesses were dead. He perceived the resurrection and ascension to power of the witnesses to be taking place in the then current Great French Revolution.

It is most remarkable to realise that in fact Peter Jurieu had also correctly understood that the $3\frac{1}{2}$ days represented 105 years. In his two previous quotations he states:

- that he hoped the $3\frac{1}{2}$ days had started in 1685, at the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes
- and that therefore the French Revolution would happen at about 1785

Sir Isaac Newton (1642-1727) (see portrait W41.1)

“We have Moses, the Prophets and Apostles, and the words of Christ himself; and if we will not hear them, we shall be more inexcusable than the Jews. For the Prophets and Apostles have foretold, that as Israel often revolted and brake the covenant, and upon repentance renewed it; so there should be a falling away among the Christians soon after the days of the Apostles; and that in the latter days God would destroy the impenitent revolters, and make a new covenant with his people. And the giving ear to the Prophets is a fundamental character of the true Church. For God has so ordered the Prophecies, that in the latter days...
the wise may understand, but the wicked shall do wickedly, and none of the wicked shall understand (Dan.12:9,10).

The authority of Emperor, Kings, and Princes is human. The authority of Councils, Synods, Bishop, and Presbyters, is human. The authority of the Prophets is divine, and comprehends the sum of religion, reckoning Moses and the Apostle among the Prophets; and if an Angel from heaven preach any other gospel, than what they have delivered, let him be accursed (Gal.1:8,9).

Their writings contain the covenant between God and his people, with instructions for keeping this covenant; instances of God’s judgments upon them that break it: and predictions of things to come. While the people of God keep the covenant, they continue to be his people: when they break it they cease to be his people or church, and become the synagogue of Satan, who say they are Jews and are not (Rev.2:9). And no power on earth is authorized to alter this covenant.

The predictions of things to come relate to the state of the Church in all ages: and amongst the old Prophets, Daniel is most distinct in order of time, and easiest to be understood: and therefore in those things which relate to the last time, he must be made the key to the rest.”

(Sir Isaac Newton, Observations upon the Prophecies of Daniel and the Apocalypse of St. John, printed in English in 1733).

He also understood the symbolic elements of Revelation in broad outline:

“For understanding the Prophecies, we are, in the first place, to acquaint ourselves with the figurative language of the Prophets. This language is taken from the analogy between the world natural, and an Empire or kingdom considered as a world politic. Accordingly, the whole world natural consisting of heaven and earth, signifies the whole world politic, consisting of thrones and people...For the heavens, and the things therein, signify thrones and dignities, and those who enjoy them...”

Newton wrote in the region of a million words on religious topics, much of it on the highest level of scholarship. He sifted through early christian and patristic sources, bringing to bear his acute critical qualities of intellect. He produced studies such as “Paradoxical Questions” concerning the morals and actions of Athanasius and his followers, in which he shatters any illusion that theological honesty was the keynote of the fourth-century church councils. Another was entitled “Twenty-Two Queries regarding the word ‘Homousios’”; and perhaps most noteworthy of all, his unpublished “Two Notable Corruptions of Scripture”, which dealt with corruptions of the text of the New Testament in the same period in the interests of trinitarianism.

Alexander Keith 19th century wrote a book bearing the lengthy title:

“Evidence of the Truth of the Christian Religion, Derived from the Literal Fulfilment of Prophecy.”

Keith points out in considerable detail how that Bible prophecies concerning many ancient peoples were literally and completely fulfilled. Among these were prophecies concerning ancient Judea,
Jerusalem, Ammon, Moab, Edom, Nineveh, Babylon, Tyre, Egypt, the Arabs - and even early Christian churches. So accurately were they fulfilled that men said they must have been written after the events - but this cannot be sustained.

Paul Best (approx. 1645) published a tract entitled:

“Mysteries Discovered; pointing out the way from Babylon to the Holy City, for the good of all such as, during the night of general error and apostacy, have been misled with Rome’s hobgoblins.”

Best, an Englishman, was brought to Westminster for trial but ‘persisted in his errors’ and was left to languish indefinitely in confinement.

Thomas Hartley (1764) wrote a work entitled:

“Of Christ’s Glorious Reign on Earth - A Testimony to the Doctrine of the Blessed Millennium, with some Considerations on its Approaching Advent from the Signs of the Times”, later republished as “Paradise Restored”.

Harriet Livermore, of Philadelphia 1830s edited the “Millennial Tidings” wherein she insisted on the necessity of a Jewish return before the consummation of God’s purpose. She also included an exposition of the Letters to The Seven Churches in the Apocalypse, where she identified the seven stages of apostasy in the christian church.

John Epps, born in London 1805 spoke of the larger Protestant churches as being the “harlot daughters of Rome”.

This continued the witness of the Brethren in Europe in the seventeenth century. For many interesting details of their beliefs see The Protesters by Alan Eyre.

A thrilling analysis of the times was written by Gratton Guiness just ten years after the ending of the temporal power of the Pope in 1870.

H Gratton Guiness (1880)

“When Pagan Rome fell, Papal Rome rose. Corruptions, heresies, abominable practices abounded. The teachings of Christ were forgotten and the teachings of the church put in their place. It became a sin to believe the truth and serve the living God... The saints were persecuted...Vials of wrath were poured out on the Papal kingdoms of Christendom...the sore judgments of God led them not to repentance. The crowning crime came at last, and the Papacy, which had decreed the ‘immaculate conception’ of an idolatrously worshipped woman, proceeded to decree the ‘infallibility’ of a sinful man

By the consent and decree of the Ecumenical Council of 1870, the Divine title of infallible teacher of faith and morals was given to the Pope of Rome. After twelve centuries of heresy and hypocrisy, corruption and persecution, the ‘man of sin’ seals all his awful errors, and all his flagrant and revolting crimes, with the seal of ‘infallibility’, and claims for all his doctrines of devils the authority of Divine inspiration!"
While the words were yet in his mouth, judgment fell....The temporal power of the Papacy was swept clean away, the throne of a thousand years was overturned, the Pope became ‘a prisoner in the Vatican’. The long drama of the Papal temporal power is ended; there remains that its spiritual power be also destroyed. The Lord has consumed it by the spirit of his mouth, He is to destroy it by the brightness of his coming ... out of the closing judgments of these ‘Times of the Gentiles’ whose thunders are already breaking on our ears and whose lurid lightnings are already flashing in our skies, shall spring the restoration of Israel, the return of Israel’s Messiah, the resurrection of the dead in Christ... the times of the restitution of all things, the millennial reign of Christ.”

“And after that I looked, and, behold, the temple of the tabernacle of the testimony in heaven was opened: 6 And the seven angels came out of the temple, having the seven plagues, clothed in pure and white linen, and having their breasts girded with golden girdles. 7 And one of the four beasts gave unto the seven angels seven golden vials full of the wrath of God, who liveth for ever and ever. 8 And the temple was filled with smoke from the glory of God, and from his power; and no man was able to enter into the temple, till the seven plagues of the seven angels were fulfilled.”

The opening words are an indication that John is to witness a new phase of the vision. This is not just a question of prophecy as we might read in the Old Testament - of history in advance. God is showing him the principles by which He will manifest His glory in the earth. He does not say the exact time the temple had been opened in heaven. After the music of the harps and voices of the glorious choir upon the glassy sea, had ceased its ravishing harmony, John’s attention is simply diverted to another scene in order to concentrate upon the judgments to be made manifest (v.4).

The word used here for temple (v.5) is different from earlier use. We met the temple in ch.11:1 and 13:6 and understand that there it represented the saints in their present mixed and imperfect condition, trodden under foot of the Gentiles. They are the tabernacle of the testimony because they bear witness by the Word for Jesus and the Faith. They are the Holy Place of the tabernacle. The word used here for temple, however, is the same as in ch.11:19 (see Section 29) and means the nave of the temple - the Most Holy Place. In the Tabernacle of Israel the Most Holy Place was behind the veil and housed the Ark of the Covenant with the overshadowing wings of the cherubim. This was the dwelling place of Yahweh the God of Israel - only the High Priest was allowed to enter. Once a year he entered, with incense as a cloud, which prevented him seeing what was there. So in this verse it represents the saints clothed with immortality. They have been elevated into the political heavens, the government of the age to come. The One Body of believers is shown in two states - “as it is” before the Lord’s return: and “as it will be” afterwards.

This is a summary verse showing the final consummation and as is normal in the Revelation, the means of achieving it follow after.
The word *angelos* means *sent forth* and that is why the immortal saints of this nave are called *angels* (v.6). They have a mission to perform and they go forth girded and accompanied by the Spirit, to execute it. In ch.1 (Section 7) we saw the linen garment and golden girdle of the Son of Man was a symbolic representation of the multitudinous saints in the day of their immortality. They will not only have almighty power but will also be girded as their Lord:

“And righteousness shall be the girdle of his loins, and faithfulness the girdle of his reins” (Isa.11:5).

These valuable qualities will mean they are equipped, not only to discipline in mercy but also to teach and reform the nations so that:

“... with righteousness shall he judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth: and he shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked”. (Isa.11:4).

**A Living Creature reappears (v.7)**

We first met this symbol in ch.4:6 and 5:8-10 (Sections 12 & 14) and remember that it represents the saints. The fact that the seven angels also represent the saints is a further indication that the theme of this book is that of God Manifestation. John is not describing in detail how these events will be accomplished, but rather, the reason for their accomplishment and the ultimate purpose to be achieved in the manifestation of His glory in the earth. The wisdom of the infinite divine mind often gives us more than one symbol to represent the saints or the Lord Jesus, as we saw in ch.5, where he is described as the One on the throne *and* as the slain Lamb.

We last saw the *living creatures* as a symbol of the Redeemed in ch.6:7 (Section 17) where each of the four beasts has opened one of the seals of the closed scroll. It may well be that after this epoch the symbol was withdrawn because at that time the Ecclesia succumbed to increasing apostasy, and the candlesticks were *removed out of their place*. Paul certainly expected that the gifts of the Spirit would be withdrawn (1 Cor.13:8) when Scripture had been completed and the spirit-guided apostles and their immediate followers died out.

The living creatures represent the Spirit of God manifest as ‘encamped in the saints’ as it were, just as God dwelt among the foursquare camp of the armies of Israel. It is the military emblem of the glorified saints and so the living creature is represented as giving the golden vials of wrath to the seven angels. The time has come for the conflict to be renewed and determined, in the presence of the Spirit. The language of the prophets would certainly lead us to expect more direct divine intervention in the later stages of the conquest of the nations, eg. Eze.38:22,23 and Zech.14:3  When the *sea of glass* is achieved, no more is heard of these living creatures for this aspect of the saints’ work has been completed - the nations are finally at peace.

The Greek word for *vials* is *phials* and means bowls. They are connected with faith (ch.13:10) and so are golden.
The smoke (v.8) of the ‘Temple Nave’ describes God’s glory and power. We are shown more details of the lightnings, voices, thunderings etc. of ch.11:19 - these vials of His wrath are to lead to the consummation of His eternal purpose. Thus the glorified multitudinous body of the Son of man is full of burning anger and indignation:

“Behold, the name of the LORD cometh from far, burning with his anger, and the burden thereof is heavy: his lips are full of indignation, and his tongue as a devouring fire .. For Tophet is ordained of old; yea, for the king it is prepared; he hath made it deep and large: the pile thereof is fire and much wood; the breath of the LORD, like a stream of brimstone, doth kindle it” (Isa.30:27 & 33).

“And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power; When he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe (because our testimony among you was believed) in that day”. (1 Thess.1:7-10).

The saints have submitted in faith and patience in their days of trial and probation. When made immortal they are able to execute God’s judgments with perfect righteousness and justice and mercy:

“To execute upon them the judgment written: this honour have all his saints. Praise ye the LORD” (Psalm 149:9).

“The LORD shall send the rod of thy strength out of Zion: rule thou in the midst of thine enemies. Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power, in the beauties of holiness from the womb of the morning: thou hast the dew of thy youth” (Psa.110:2,3).

They will be willing because they empathise with and condone the Lord’s outlook. This sometimes difficult aspect of the saints’ work was also discussed in Section 27.

Another aspect of the smoke
The smoke had the effect of hiding the glory of God and His power that would otherwise be revealed from the temple in heaven. The symbol of smoke in this verse is also based on the Old Testament where we can read about a similar effect taking place on the days of dedication in Israel. A cloud filled the Tabernacle and Temple so that the priests could not minister on behalf of the people:

“Then a cloud covered the tent of the congregation, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle. And Moses was not able to enter into the tent of the congregation, because the cloud abode thereon, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle” (Exod.40:34,35).

“And it came to pass, when the priests were come out of the holy place, that the cloud filled the house of the LORD. So that the priests could not stand to minister because of the cloud: for the glory of the LORD had filled the house of the LORD” (1 Kings 8:10).

“And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy, is the LORD of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory. And the posts of the door moved at the voice of him that cried, and the house was filled with smoke” (Isa.6:3,4).
So the symbol suggests that in this last phase of God’s judgments, which will definitely usher in the kingdom, the time for priestly intercession on a national basis as it were, is past. There is no hope for the world as such until the divine judgments are completed - although there is always opportunity for individuals to escape the wrath of God by coming out of the world:

“Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man” (Luke 21:36).

When the pouring out of the vials is completed, however, we know that the remaining nations will be invited to worship before the King in Jerusalem. They will then find access to the ‘Most Holy’, for the saints are to minister to them as kings and priests (ch.5:10).

“And it shall come to pass, that every one that is left of all the nations which came against Jerusalem shall even go up from year to year to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, and to keep the feast of tabernacles” (Zech.14:16).

The saints will minister in the new temple to be built at Jerusalem, as we see from the details given in Ezekiel’s prophecy. This will be the House of Prayer for all nations referred to by Jesus.

**When are the saints involved?**

Naturally, the question arises - are the saints involved in the pouring out of all the vials? We know from the following chapter 16 that they are not - the first five vials and much of the sixth have taken place before v.15 indicates that the Lord returns to raise the saints.

It is by the power of His Spirit that God accomplishes His whole purpose:

“They answered and spake unto me, saying, This is the word of the LORD unto Zerubbabel, saying, Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the LORD of hosts” (Zech.4:6).

His purpose is accomplished by a variety of means however, as we have seen down through history. God’s judgments upon the nations are administered by men like Alaric, Attila, Napoleon and others but in the sense of the Revelation, they are simply the agents working on behalf of God and His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ - as Cyrus was (see Section 16).

At a point in time (Acts 17:31), however, the Lord will return and raise the saints. Together, as the multitudinous man, they will become the agent girded with the power of the Spirit, and will be enabled to complete the work needed to subdue the earth. Ch.16:16 is the clue to show us when this phase begins - it is toward the close of the sixth vial period - the time in which we now live. Their operations are limited to the 1600 furlongs (ch.14:20 Section 39) - probably the last forty years of the great and marvellous sign in the heaven. The power to achieve all things is the same Seven-Spirit power in the outpouring of all the seven vials, although the agents employed are diverse. This is why all the vials are said to be given to the seven angels, but the saints do not actually come upon the arena until towards the close of the sixth vial period.

In ch.11:13 we saw that the seventh trumpet begins to sound immediately after the French Revolution (Section 28). The vials in ch.15 and 16 are the details of this seventh trumpet and the first five vials
then poured out, in fact concern the military campaigns of Napoleon in Europe at the beginning of the 19th century, following the French Revolution. The sixth vial has taken place over a longer period and is not yet finished. So the seventh trumpet is still sounding, and the forces have been set in motion which will inevitably bring the return of the Lord, and the seven thunders which were unwritten (ch.10:4.7), to usher in the Kingdom.

The end results of this chapter are wonderful to contemplate and reassure us that despite all opposition, God’s purpose will soon be brought to its glorious climax. Nothing can frustrate His declaration:

“For the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea” (Hab.2:14).

This prophecy has been given to warn and instruct us, so that the wise may be stimulated to:

“Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man” (Luke 21:36).

W42.1 shows a thematic outline of the Apocalypse.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SIGNIFICANT DATES IN REVELATION</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>96 AD</td>
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<tr>
<td>312 AD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>324 AD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>330 AD (approx)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>376-395 AD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>476 AD</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Book of Revelation
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Revelation Verse</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>533 AD</td>
<td>Emperor Justinian in Constantinople decrees Pope in Rome Universal Bishop</td>
<td>Rev. 8:12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>610 AD</td>
<td>Emperor Phocas confirms Justinian decree</td>
<td>Rev. 13:3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>800 AD</td>
<td>Emperor Charlemagne in Vienna supports Papacy in Rome. Holy Roman Empire commences</td>
<td>Rev. 13:11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1572 AD</td>
<td>Massacre of Huguenots on St. Bartholomew’s Day in France</td>
<td>Rev. 11:7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1789-94 AD</td>
<td>French Revolution</td>
<td>Rev. 11:13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1806 AD</td>
<td>Napoleon overthrows Papacy</td>
<td>Rev. 16:10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1870 AD</td>
<td>Pope loses temporal power</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>96 - 324 AD</td>
<td>Unfolding of 6-sealed Scroll</td>
<td>Rev. 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>324 - 1790 AD</td>
<td>Sounding of 6 Trumpets</td>
<td>Rev. 8-9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1790 - Return of Christ</td>
<td>Pouring out of 6 Vials</td>
<td>Rev. 16</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The number seven - known Biblically as the number of completion - plays a leading role throughout the book.

As we have already noted, the seven-sealed scroll which contains the prophecy of the book of Revelation has been well likened to a telescope of seven portions shut up. When shut up, the outer case of the telescope contains all the inner ones. The end of the outer ones is the end of all the inner ones; yet in the drawing out of the inner one, the instrument is several times extended beyond its original length.

The whole of the contents of the prophecy are all contained within the seven-sealed scroll. At the seventh seal we are at the end of the programme in a general sense; yet as this seventh seal contains seven trumpets, we have to traverse the trumpets to get to the end of the seventh seal. And yet in the seventh trumpet, we are not at the final end, for the seventh trumpet contains seven vials - this is the next portion of the telescope - and then again seven thunders.

As each of these various interior portions of the whole are shown to us, it involves the arrival several times at the consummation of God’s plan. This also necessitates the going back again, to pick up the story of another portion of the telescope.

The last portion of the telescope is the smallest - the pouring out of seven vials. Throughout the book there is a gradual increase in the intensity of the symbol as events thicken and God’s purpose matures in the progress of time.

1. **Seven seals** are opened, giving power to the opener - the Lord Jesus Christ - to control events, and reflecting the nature of the times

2. **Seven trumpets** are deliberately blown, as in a military summons and this brings people at war into action

3. **Seven vials** are then poured out, bringing intense and speedy destruction
4. **Seven thunders** finally consummate the overthrow of the kingdoms of men and open the way for the kingdom of God.

The seals cover a relatively short period of time as do the seven vials. There appear at least two main reasons for this. The first is that they are for the encouragement and enlightenment of believers at crucial times in history. As the prophecy began to unfold in actual events after John had received it, the believers needed to see evidence of the meaning of the symbols in events around them and gain confidence in the understanding of the book. A similar situation applies to our own day for the vials take place after the French Revolution. It is a rapidly changing world and we need to be assured that God’s plan is on track and to be warned of the influences that endanger us.

The second reason is the rather obvious one, that if all the symbolic details of the book could be seen to relate to regular, evenly spaced events in the world’s history, then all believers would have known when Christ was going to return! This would have been discouraging for those in past ages and dangerous for those at the end and so the varying lengths of time covered by the visions is an evidence of the loving care of God for the saints.

Interspersed between these historical events are **seven visions** of the glory which awaits the saints - of the ultimate manifestation of God in the Lord Jesus Christ and the saints. This involves the gift of immortality to them and their consequent work with Christ in establishing the kingdom. These were considered more fully in the *Clue - Visions of Final Glory* (Section 20). The visions introduce new phases of the prophecy and are for the purpose of encouraging the saints living at those particular times. Each vision emphasises a different aspect of the future work of the saints.

It is important to understand the place and importance of these visions of glory as they occur in the book. It helps us to realise that the prophecies are not haphazardly jumbled together but proceed in a logical manner, with the future glory interspersed between by design.

The design of **seven** is evident on every level in the book as the following chart will show.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Septiform Construction of the Apocalypse</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“Blessed are they who Read, Hear and Keep these Words” ch.1:1-3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

The Book of Revelation
Learn to Read the Bible Effectively

| 1 | Apocalyptic Son of Man | 1 | Seven Letters Commendations Warnings and Promises | 1. Ephesus  
2. Smyrna  
3. Pergamos  
4. Thyatira  
5. Sardis  
6. Philadelphia  
7. Laodicea | 2 & 3 |
| 2 | God’s Kingdom Established. Throne in Heaven | 4 & 5 | Seven Seals | 1. White Horse  
2. Red Horse  
3. Black Horse  
4. Pale Horse  
5. Souls under Altar  
6. Earthquake and Eclipse  
7. Seven Trumpets (ch.8.9) |
| 3 | White-Robed Multitude No Man can Number | 7 | Seven Trumpets | 1. Hail and Fire - Earth  
2. Burning Mountain - Sea  
3. Falling Star - Rivers & Fountains  
4. Third of Sun, Moon & Stars dark  
5. Sun & Air dark - Locusts  
6. Four Euphratean Angels Loosed  
7. Seven Vials (ch.11:15 & 16) |
| 4 | Rainbowed Angel | 10 | Seven Phases of Ecclesiasticism | 1. Two Witnesses  
2. Woman and Manchild  
3. Dragon cast from heaven - Paganism dethroned  
4. Beast of Sea  
5. Beast of Earth  
6. Image of Beast - 666  
7. Babylon, Mother of Harlots |
| 5 | Lamb on Mount Zion 144 Thousand | 14 | Seven Vials | 1. Earth - Ulcer  
2. Sea - Blood of Corpse  
3. Rivers and Fountains - Blood  
4. Sun - Men Scorched  
5. Seat of Beast  
6. Euphrates - Dried Up  
7. Air - Seven Thunders |
| 6 | “Thy Judgments are Made Manifest” | 15 | Seven Thunders | “Seal up those things the Seven Thunders uttered and write them not” |
| 7 | Marriage of the Lamb | 19 | Seven Final Phases | 1. Destruction of “Eighth Head” & 10 Kings  
2. Fall of Babylon  
3. Beast & False Prophet destroyed  
4. Devil & Satan loosed after 1000 years  
5. Great White Throne; the Second Death  
6. New Heavens & Earth - no more Death  
7. Throne of God and of the Lamb |

The Book of Revelation
### SECTION 44

**VIALS ONE TO THREE**  
Ch.16:1-4

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**THE ROMAN EMPIRE**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>476</td>
<td>Rome falls to Barbarians. Deadly wound in head - Gothic rule - Odoacer, Theodoric.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>533</td>
<td>Justinian overthrows Gothic rule - restores single headship of Empire - deadly wound healed. Pope becomes Universal Bishop.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>608</td>
<td>Decree of Phocas - Pope becomes “Supreme Head”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>754</td>
<td>Lombards (Arians) attack. Franks (Trinitarians) who come to aid of Pope.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>800</td>
<td>Franks invade Lombard territory - and subdue Lombards - three States of Italy presented to Pope. Western Empire &amp; Pope under attack from Lombards again turn to Franks for help - delivered by Charles - Charlemagne. Pope crowns Charlemagne - builds Empire by ‘crusades’ - <strong>Holy Roman Empire</strong> (till 1800’s) (See map W44.1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>814</td>
<td>Charlemagne dies - his dynasty rules. France lost from Empire Empire becomes Germanic.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>962</td>
<td>Otto crowned Emperor by Pope. Creates stable and long-lasting framework for Germany the first <em>Reich</em> - Ottonian Empire ensues.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1054</td>
<td>Schism with Greek Church - Western Church grows in learning and trade - strength and wealth increase. Idea of Holy War begins in Spain - liberate Jerusalem from Muslims. Eastern Emperor appeals to Pope for help against Muslims.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1095</td>
<td>Military orders set up - First Crusade to Holy Land.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1145</td>
<td>Second Crusade.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1189</td>
<td>Third Crusade. Wealth and learning increase - religious longings develop - not satisfied by Crusades or Bishops.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
We remember that chs. 12 & 13 explained how a system of false Christianity was set up in Europe in AD 312 and held sway for centuries over thousands of men and women. Ch.14 gave us a wonderful vision of the victorious saints as they prepared to take the Kingdom and ch.15 shows us how this was to be achieved - seven angels were to pour out seven golden vials full of the wrath of God. Ch.16 now details the effects of these vials and we may wonder how to place this in history.

Ch.11 gives us the clue, for this chapter took us up to the French Revolution in 1789 - the end of the second woe trumpet - the great earthquake of v.13. The next verse says that the third woe cometh quickly and so it proved to be.

**Three great earthquakes introduced by :**
1. seven seals - God’s judgments on pagan Rome leading to Constantine
2. seven trumpets - God’s judgments on Catholic Rome leading to French Revolution
3. seven vials - God’s judgments on the Papal Roman system leading to the Kingdom

**Summary of vials** - the first five vials are judgments on Europe by which the Holy Roman Empire was brought to an end. The sixth vial diverts attention to the Middle East, during which vial Christ returns as a thief. The seventh vial climaxes in Armageddon where east and west are brought together. God’s command to the angels to pour out the vials, proves that the decisive events of history are under the supervision and guidance of angels and not chance, as God has already claimed in Dan.4:17.

An interesting feature of the vials is that the symbolism is very similar to that used in ch.8 for the trumpets - both sets of judgments are focused on the same areas, for example the alpine lakes of Europe in the third vial.
1st Vial 1790 - poured onto the Roman earth (v2) whose power is now vested in the Papal Roman system. This produces a grievous sore (or ulcer) upon those identified with the Beast (the Holy Roman Empire) and who worshipped its image (the Papacy). The French Revolution was the beginning of a running sore which affected many nations outside France, for all the powers of false Christianity were guilty before heaven - they had all, in the 1260 years of the Papacy since its institution by Justinian, committed fornication with her and their populations had all been made drunk with the wine of her fornication (ch.17:2, 18:3). The nations of Europe massed on the borders of France in support of the nobility who had been overthrown and these wars brought the French general Napoleon to the fore. He crowned himself Emperor in the presence of the Pope in France, and sought to be a second Charlemagne. His military genius achieved outstanding victories in campaigns throughout Europe (the Roman Catholic countries) - but he faced defeat whenever he exceeded this divine commission which he unconsciously fulfilled. His Middle East and Russian campaigns were disastrous, and he finally fell whilst trying to overcome Protestant England.

2nd Vial - The Sea becomes Blood - from 1793 - the sea represents the basis of the maritime interests of nations and the effects of the vial were a mingling of both the literal and the figurative. The British were used by God as another agent of his judgment, and they destroyed 541 ships by 1802 and 569 by 1814, including the triumph of Nelson over Napoleon in the Middle East. Much suffering was inflicted on those living on the land, since the commerce of France, Spain and Portugal was reduced to stagnation upon the sea - in the same way as the blood of a dead man is stagnant and ceases to circulate.

3rd Vial - The Rivers become Blood - from 1796 - the Rhine, Danube and Italian Lake country, where Attila the Hun had been the “Scourge of God” in the 5th century under the third trumpet, now became the area of Napoleon’s Italian campaigns. Eventually, the defeats suffered by the emperor of Austria, also called the Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire, virtually brought the Empire to an end. These were the judgments of God on the Papal system and its worshippers, which had been very cruel in its persecutions against the saints of God, such as the Waldenses, Albigensians, and Hussites, who held (or were very close to) the Truth.
The title in v.5 *O Lord, which art, and wast, and shalt be* reminds us of the theme of God-manifestation introduced in ch.1:4. These events were not merely history in advance; God is claiming to be manifesting himself through the work of Napoleon, and using him to bring judgments on the Papal system and its worshippers. Like Nebuchadnezzar, Cyrus, Alexander the Great etc, Napoleon did not understand this mission but acted in his own ambition. The saints of God at the time, however, were encouraged that God was still active in the happenings of the nations and would soon establish His glorious Kingdom. The title shows that He is changeless. His purpose means that although at various times His Glory - His mercy and His judgment - are manifested in various ways, His true saints of all ages can always see His love being shown on their behalf. The weakening of papal power enabled the non-conformist sects to develop and finally to result in the re-discovery of the great truths of the Bible.

The voice from the altar
This reminds us of the powerful prayers of ch.6:9, uttered hundreds of years before and now answered. As we have noted, the altar represents Christ and the saints. They recognise God’s involvement in the events around them and react in praise and thanks to Him as they endorse His actions - *true and righteous are thy judgments* (v7). Whilst being greatly saddened by the suffering around them, they pray for the ultimate manifestation of God when He will send the Lord Jesus to set up His Kingdom and bring peace to the world at last.

4th Vial - Men Scorched with Fire - 1805
We have learned that the sun is an apt symbol for the supreme power of a political universe (see Section 19 re.ch.6 6th seal). We have learned that at Rome in AD 800 the Pope crowned Charlemagne, and so reinstated the Imperial sun in the form of the Holy Roman Empire, afterwards centred in Vienna. The Emperor of Austria was the political head of the Holy Roman Empire and he rallied from his defeats to fight the French, so causing the sun to increase its heat. In involving the armies around him in war, they became burned. Isa.42:24,25 uses fire as a symbol for war and Europe now became engulfed in war; by 1805 Napoleon became the undisputed ruler of Europe (see map W45.1). In 1806 the Holy Roman Empire was dissolved and replaced by the German Federation.

Did the people repent and praise God? v9

The Book of Revelation
We are reminded of Egypt in the time of Moses (Exodus 5-11), for people generally failed to see the punishment of God on the iniquitous papal system in the events of their time, and so missed the opportunity for repentance which would have brought God’s mercy to them. Like Pharaoh, the nations today are hardening their hearts against God more than ever before, and therefore the intensity of the “plagues” will increase until the Lord Jesus returns.

5th Vial - Judgments on the Seat of the Beast - 1808-1815
The word *seat* (v10) is better rendered *throne* (RV). We met the *beast* in ch.13:11 where it is portrayed as the papal-dominated *beast of the earth with two horns like a lamb* though he *spake as a dragon* - the Holy Roman Empire. Napoleon now invaded the Papal States of Italy, where the Pope in Rome sat on the throne of this European system. Napoleon annexed them to the French Empire. Ecclesiastical wealth and property was confiscated and churches were given up to public use. Pope Pius VII was taken captive to Avignon in 1809 and later exiled to Fontainbleau. The Austrian emperor had already been overcome in 1806 and so the throne of the beast was also now plunged into political darkness. The two-horned beast had been destroyed and Rome itself was degraded to the status of a second class city in the French Empire.

Napoleon had fulfilled his mission, and after being defeated in Russia, was finally overcome at Waterloo in 1815. In the ending of the Holy Roman Empire, a thousand years of blasphemy and violence against those who sought to worship God according to their conscience, was fulfilled. How different will be the millennium soon to be ushered in by the return of the Lord Jesus, when he will reign with his faithful saints over a world at peace who will learn to worship him in truth.

More blasphemy v11?
In 1814 a crowning act of blasphemy occurred:

“Catholicity having deserted him, four heretical kings (Russia, Prussia, England and Sweden) bore the Pope back to Rome”  (De Pradt)

So the pope was restored to his pontifical throne and kingdom, which it had cost so much blood and misery to darken. This reminds us that even Protestants stem from the “mother church” (ch.17:5).

The Pope renewed such blasphemies as to decree the worship of the virgin Mary, the saints of the Romish calendar and relics, in the vain notion that they could help. In 1854 the doctrine of the immaculate conception was propounded, in 1858 miracles at Lourdes were publicised and in 1870 papal infallibility was declared. He was especially wrathful against Bible societies - the circulation of the Scriptures unaccompanied by Romish interpretations was denounced by Leo XII in 1824 as “poisonous pastures”.

However, the Papacy never fully recovered from the shattering effects of the fifth vial and was a mere shadow of its former self, until it finally disappeared with the ending of its temporal power in 1867-70.
SIXTH VIAL
Ch.16:12

The great river Euphrates
This symbol ties up exactly with the sixth trumpet where we saw the Middle East inundated with a flood of invaders (see ch.9:13,14 Section 25). Eventually the Ottoman Turkish Empire was established in the area. The principal river of this Ottoman Empire was the river Euphrates, in the same way that the Nile is that of Egypt or the Thames that of England:

"... the Lord bringeth up upon them the waters of the river, strong and many, even the king of Assyria, and all his glory: and he shall come up over all his channels, and go over all his banks: and he shall pass through Judah ..." (Isa.8:7,8).

Scripture often associates empires with their principal rivers. Now v12 prophesies that the reverse process is to take place - a gradual evaporation of the power and resources of the Empire.

What is the evidence of history?
At the height of its power, the Turkish Empire extended deep into Europe, occupied part of southern Russia, dominated the whole of the Middle East, ruled over Egypt and Arabia and extended throughout North Africa (see maps W46.1, W46.2). During the 19th century however, many nations gained independence and wars such as the Crimean, weakened the Empire further. Turkey became known as the ‘Sick man of Europe’. Britain was concerned, for Turkey had been a barrier to Russia’s ambition to gain a sea port in the Mediterranean and to reach India via the Suez canal. This ambition still holds true today - which is why wars in Bosnia etc. are significant.

Some key events in the weakening of Turkey are:
- 1820 Greek revolt, Ottoman never again at peace
- 1828 war with Russia, Moldavia, Wallachia and Serbia independent
- 1842 France annexes Algeria
- 1853 Crimean war
- 1882 Britain occupies Egypt
- 1883 France annexes Tunis
- 1917 British occupy Palestine
By the first world war, Turkey had “dried up” to such an extent that she was reduced to a limited zone around Constantinople and Adrianople. During this war she lost Adrianople and also Arabia, Palestine, Syria etc. After General Allenby took Jerusalem from the Turks, the historic Balfour Declaration of 1917 opened the doors of Palestine to Jewish exiles, thus fulfilling many other prophecies. It is evident that from this point and forward the land and people of Israel has now come back into Revelation (W46.3, W46.4).

To most people this development came as a surprise:

“… who could have foreseen that far more astounding colonisation in the eastern Mediterranean, the creation of the state of Israel? We may like it or not … We may deplore it as the last western crusade, the latest venture of western imperialism, seeking not trade but settlement … but we cannot deny that it is an extraordinary historical achievement. How little the British who listened to its early advocates foresaw the present consequences …” (Hugh Trevor-Roper, *History and Imagination: essays in honour of H.R. Trevor-Roper*, London, 1980 p.366-7).

A coin was struck to mark the end of the Turkish Empire - one side shows the date as 1917 and the reverse as 1335 (see Dan.12:12). Bible students expect the present Republic to be annexed by Russia to complete the drying up process.

**Waters and water in Revelation**

A note here may help our understanding. The symbol of *waters* (ch.17:15) is used for *peoples, and multitudes and nations and tongues*. However, in the singular, *water* represents military power (ch.12:15). Hence the dissipation of the military power of the Ottoman Empire is described as the drying up of the water of the river.

**Who are the kings in v12?**

This literally means “the way of the kings who are out of a sun’s risings”. We know that the sun is a symbol for a supreme ruler and that the sun rises in the east.

It may help us to realise that the symbology of the sixth vial is based upon the overthrow of the literal city of Babylon by the Persian king Cyrus. He was enabled to enter the city by actually diverting the course of the river Euphrates which flowed through the city and thus entered into Babylon by the dried-up watercourse. Isa.44:27 predicted this and God had described Cyrus as a “king of the east” in Isa.41:2. Isa.45:1-4 speaks of Cyrus in very similar terms as to those used for the Lord Jesus Christ - we may say he is spoken of as a *type* of Christ.

It is not too difficult therefore, to see that the actual triumph of Cyrus in overcoming the literal city of Babylon was typical of the way in which Christ will overcome the spiritual Babylon spoken of in Revelation. Thus the political *river Euphrates* has been partially dried up so that *Babylon the Great* may be attacked. The *way* or route is the Middle East and the Promised Land in particular. Christ will first reveal his power in Jerusalem and from that centre will move out against *great Babylon* (Rev.16:19). The political *river Euphrates*, the Turkish Empire, was *dried up* from the Land of
Promise, the *way* of v12 in 1917, when the British under General Allenby drove the Turks from the land. Since then, with the return of the Jewish exiles, and the revival of Israel as a modern nation (even though in unbelief as Bible students predicted), that *way* is in course of preparation.

*The kings of the east*, (Greek anatole helios). The “kings who are out of a sun’s risings” therefore, will be those who will be granted immortality at the resurrection.

“All that springs up out of the earth is caused to rise by the power of the sun acting on the seeds therein. Everything therefore brought up from beneath, or from darkness into view, is a ‘rising (or raising) of the sun’” (John Thomas, Eureka vol.3,ch.16).

They are to be *kings and priests* (ch.5:10), who are associated with the rising of the *Sun of Righteousness* (Mal.4:2) and will shine forth as the *sun in the kingdom* (Matt.13:43) as they live and reign with Christ a thousand years (ch.20:4).

Historical commentators on Turkey encourage us to feel this is a well-grounded interpretation:

**Joseph Mede 1586 - 1638**

“*Why should not now this Euphrates of the vials, by the same reason be understood as the Turks? ...*”

**George Stanley Faber 1806**

“Let us only advert to the present state of the Turkish power, and we shall be convinced, that for some years the symbolic Euphratean waters have been gradually drying up. The approaching termination indeed of the Ottoman Empire is so manifest … its extinction cannot be far distant.”
THREE SPIRITS
Ch.16:13,14

To understand this allusion we need to go back to remember the history of the Franks, the people from whom sprang Charlemagne. They originated in the marshy lands of Westphalia, Germany and their name is from the Latin *francus*, meaning *free*. They invaded the Roman Empire, overran Gaul and established the nation we know as France. Rather appropriately, their heraldic symbol was three frogs: as shown on shields and coins by Pharmond, reigning in Treves in 420, Childeric 456 and Clovis 466-511. The banner of Clovis can be seen in a beautiful tapestry which is still on show in the Cathedral of Rheims (see illustration W47.1). The conversion from paganism to Trinitarian Catholicism of Clovis, the grandfather of Charlemagne, and first Christian king of France was celebrated in 1996 - the 1500th anniversary (see Section 13). After his conversion Clovis began to introduce the emblem of three fleur de lis (see illustration of his shield). This emblem stems from ancient Egypt, as an attribute of the god Horus, a member of the Osirian trinity; in 1376 Charles V of France dedicated the emblem to the honour of the Catholic trinity (Enc.Brit.11th edn). It seems clear that the frog heraldry represented the barbarian spirit of the Franks, and the fleur de lis followed later in order to represent Catholic France.

The philosophy of the ancient Franks is significant:

“*The love of liberty was the ruling passion*” (Gibbon).

“... they stubbornly clung to their tribal attitudes toward law and the rights of the individual, - and thereby preserved a priceless tradition until the time for democracy was ripe ... (they) led all others in personal freedom ... The very concept of progress - the belief in the inevitable and continuous betterment of man - can be traced to ideas born in the barbarian epoch” (Gerald Simons, *Barbarian Europe*, Time-Life Books p13).

What are spirits?

However, John did not see three frogs, but *spirits like frogs*. In Scripture, *spirits are teachings*:
“Beloved, believe not every spirit, ... because many false prophets are gone out into the world” (1 John 4:1) and so verse 6 says we must discern between “the spirit of truth and the spirit of error”.

God has promised:

“I will cause the prophets and the unclean spirit to pass out of the land” (Zech.13:2,3) because they “uttered lies in the name of the Lord”

So false prophets teach lies and a deceptive vision or philosophy - we are therefore not surprised to realise that one source of the spirits like frogs is the mouth of a false prophet. These teachings will have the devastating effect of gathering the nations together for war.

As we know, France became intensely Catholic and the liberty-loving Franks in converting to Catholicism, found their liberties eroded away. As the people groaned in penury whilst the ruling classes of church and state lived in splendour and decadence, Rousseau and Voltaire developed their French philosophies which led to the French Revolution. These ideas are still the source of current thinking in many areas, including the bringing up of children - “in every man there is the light within.” In other words, if all restraints were removed, it would lead to a true life for all. It was a cry for society - a social doctrine - and it echoed the spirit of the ancient barbarian Franks or “Freemen” - “Liberty, Equality, Fraternity.”

“It is the Madness that dwells in the hearts of men ...” (Thomas Carlyle, The French Revolution).

Pharoah’s false promise

There is an interesting parallel with the plague of frogs in Egypt, the only other occurrence of frogs in Scripture. There were two main effects. The frogs literally infiltrated every level of society, from the chambers of their kings (Psa.105:30) to the mixing bowls in the kitchens (Ex.8:3), just as philosophies spread to all people. The result however, was corruption - “and the land stank” (v.14). Psalm 78:45 comments “… frogs, which destroyed them” - here the Heb.shachath means to cause decay, ruin - to corrupt.

The other effect was that it produced a promise of freedom and liberty for the Jews by Pharoah, which afterwards was later seen to be a lie (Ex.8:8,15).

The final effect of the plague was the same as that brought about by false teachers in the early church:

“While they promise them liberty, they themselves are the servants of corruption …” (1 Pet.2:19).

The French Revolution promised liberty, but brought corruption and some of the most terrible bloodshed in history:

“Insults and the most gross licentiousness are now considered as proofs of the existence of the Liberty of the Press. Nothing is sacred - nothing escapes calumny” (The Times, March 14, 1791).

Soon Napoleon too used the deceptive cry of liberty and brought godlessness, corruption and terror, as the absolute monarchies of Europe were eventually replaced by democratic republics. Around the world ever since the same cry to achieve ‘freedom’ has brought countless wars and suffering.

The Book of Revelation
“In a political sense it is still proper to date the age in which we live from the French Revolution. The shock carried by that Revolution and the spread of its principles has produced repercussions ever since.” (Larousse, *Modern History*).

The tremendous changes in the world since then amount to ‘miracles’ in the areas of education, inventions, industry, arts, science, ethics and religion and all aspects of social and political life has been transformed. Even the Berlin Wall and the USSR have disintegrated! Today the whole of society is infected by these philosophies and we can see the outworking of these ideas - no longer limited to France - in godless Humanism. The lowest common denominator is elevated and norms of acceptable behaviour are constantly being reset, so that today’s philosophy can be summed up by the words of Scripture “every man did what was right in his own eyes” (Judges 17:6). These *unclean spirits like frogs* come in various ideological and political shapes but have one common feature - they falsely promise, or speak in the name of, *liberty of the people*. Mankind has not found true liberty; but rather the liberal philosophies in society today are corrupting its stability.

The modern terms for Liberty, Equality and Fraternity are Nationalism, Socialism and Humanism and it is these principles which have wrought chaos amongst the governments of Europe, destroying old systems in east and west. It has been an unprecedented time of turmoil and change:

- 1848 Year of Revolutions throughout Europe
- 1870 Fall of temporal power of papacy
- 1914-18 Fall of Kaiser’s Germany, Ottoman Empire, Russian Czarist regime, Orthodox Church
- 1939-45 Nazi Germany finally destroyed hopes of ever reviving old order in Europe.

**Where do the spirits come from?**

Three sources are mentioned - the mouths of the dragon, beast and false prophet. A mouth is appropriate in this context, as words spread ideas, philosophies and policies. The first two are familiar to us and the chart as at the end of section 35 will help:

The Beasts of chs.12 & 13

<table>
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<th>Dragon in Constantinople</th>
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<td>➔</td>
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<td>- the Eastern Emperor</td>
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The Great Red Dragon is associated with the Beast of the Sea, which underwent significant transformations. Initially, the Beast of the Sea was associated with Pagan Rome, which became Christian in AD 324. The Papacy & 10 Barbaric Kingdoms from AD 476 replaced Pagan Rome. The Papacy & 10 Barbaric Kingdoms from AD 476 then evolved into the Papacy in Rome, with Emperor in Vienna. The Holy Roman Empire, which lasted from AD 800 to 1806, further evolved into the Papacy in Rome. The Image of the Beast, which was associated with the Papacy in Rome, became the Beast of the Earth when the Papacy in Rome became Imperial Autocrat from approx. AD 1073.

The Dragon - The Dragon represents the first pagan authority centered in Rome, which later became the Christian emperor. When this city was taken by the Ottomans in 1453, the symbol of the dragon moved to Moscow, where it remained until 1473. Christians in the eastern empire had the declared intention of revenging the capture of Constantinople by the Moslems and of returning the Cross to the Dome of St Sophia once more. Because of its strategic position, the military power of the dragon is well aware that this city holds the key to the Bosphorus and entrance into the Mediterranean.

The Beast - Daniel’s fourth beast was first seen as the Beast of the Sea above, on the territory of Europe; it survives in various forms and is always linked in some way to the Papacy. Power was transferred to the Beast of the Earth, the Germanic Holy Roman Empire with its centre in Vienna; when this was ended in 1806, the newly created German Federation ruled from Berlin. The Beast will be seen once more in ch.17 in the form of a scarlet-coloured beast.

The False Prophet - The Pope has always claimed to be the vicar of Jesus Christ and to speak for him. If this is untrue, then he is a false prophet. It is interesting to note that when his temporal power over the papal states ended in 1870 he immediately proclaimed the Doctrine of Infallibility, which ensured the continuance of his influence.

These three centres are influenced in their policies by the spirit of the French Revolution and are increasingly coming together.

The spirits of demons - V14 says these teachings are the spirits of demons (Greek daemons); it is a demoniacal spirit, a confused state of mind, such as human wisdom produces:
“This wisdom descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, demoniacal. For where envying and strife is, there is confusion (tumult) and every evil work” (James 3:16).

The term ‘demons’ was applied to people suffering from mental diseases and epilepsy because of the ancient theory of Greek medicine which claimed that demons were the cause of the illness. So the spirits of demons refers to the insanity among the nations driving them on to the battle of that great day of God Almighty (v.14). In Scripture, the nations are described as ‘mad’ in Jer.51:7 & 25:16. The ‘madness’ amongst the nations today is a sign (v14 miracles AV) that the Lord’s return is near and that he alone can cure them.

It is significant to realise that it was the wild spirit of barbarism that created such upheaval and confusion within the Roman Empire, and eventually destroyed it. Since the French Revolution the same spirit of liberalism has wrought amazing changes in the structure of Europe and this can be considered as the first phase in the work of the three unclean spirits like frogs. The second phase is to gather the nations to the battle (v14).

Who are the kings of the earth?
We have seen in previous chapters that the earth refers to the Roman earth, but verse 14 goes on to include the whole world. The Greek word oikoumenee means the whole inhabited earth so all nations are involved.

The implication of these two verses is that there are two elements which are involved in gathering the nations for the battle against God - one political (the dragon & the beast) and the other religious (the false prophet). The worldly powers are seen to gather (Gk. sunago, as in synagogue) together in response to the policies and teachings of these two elements. The spirit which comes out of their mouths is ecumenical (oikoumenee) - it gathers all nations and so the assembly is convoked by both political and religious leaders.

As we discussed in Section 39, there are two stages in the confrontation between Christ and his enemies. This preliminary gathering of nations takes place before the first stage in the conflict, and other Scriptures show us that the gathering has strong religious overtones. For instance Eze.38:1-7 prophesies of a leader called Gog, who prepares himself and his great company (v7). The word company is from the Heb. Qahal rendered congregation in Lev.16:17 etc., this is synagogue in the Greek Septuagint. The congregation are to be assembled (v7), the Heb. means called together, convoked. This too, has religious overtones.

We are familiar with the great ecumenical movement of our time:
“We call this world-wide endeavour to gather together “the whole inhabited world” (Greek Oikumene) for Christ, the ecumenical movement” (Unity, Catholic Enquiry Centre in the UK).
“... this movement ... has been given the name of the ecumenical movement. Its active members are those who call upon the God who is Three, and who acknowledge Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour” (De Oecumenismo (Decree on Ecumenism), Second Vatican Council 1965).
Thus “the whole inhabited world” is to be “gathered” around this central belief, which has resulted from ecumenical Councils to produce “historic Christianity” - a false version of the faith of the Apostles, as we have already seen. The prophet Joel speaks of the nations assembling for war and uses the phrase Prepare war (ch.3:9) and the Hebrew means Sanctify war - in other words, they call for a holy war, a just war.

The battle of the great day of God Almighty
This refers to the day of which the prophets often speak, when God’s purpose will come to its climax and His promises will be vindicated at last.

“For the day of the LORD of hosts shall be upon every one that is proud and lofty, and upon every one that is lifted up; and he shall be brought low”’ (Isa.2:12)
“For behold, the day cometh, that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble ...” (Mal.4:1)
“Behold, the day of the LORD cometh, and thy spoil shall be divided in the midst of thee. For I will gather all nations against Jerusalem to battle ...” (Zech.14:1. See also chs.12-14 for many references to this Day).

It will be the Day when He will judge the world in righteousness through Christ (Acts 17:31) - the wise will prepare now for this great time, as the Lord Jesus warns us in the next verse of ch.16.
“Behold, I come as a thief. Blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame”.

We have had the fascinating experience in our study of Revelation so far, of seeing prophecy come true in history. We have had the opportunity of checking the evidence for ourselves to see whether or not the predictions have been accurate. We now realise that history has caught up - we are actually living in the days of v14! The nations are gathering in response to the three unclean spirits amongst them and the next event is the return of Jesus in v15.

We can learn much from this verse. Firstly we notice that we will not be given another warning, in the same way that no-one is going to inform us that a thief is going to break into our house this evening. When he does come he says “Surely, I come quickly.” Rev 22 v 20, with the implication of coming suddenly rather than soon. Jesus will return secretly and unheralded to the world and he has already warned us to be ready:

“And take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares. For as a snare shall it come on all them that dwell on the face of the whole earth. Watch ye therefore, and pray always ...” (Luke 24:34-36).

It is true that we are not meant to know the actual day or hour of his return, for we should always be ready:

“Watch ye therefore, for ye know not when the master of the house cometh, at even, or at midnight, or at the cockcrowing, or in the morning” (Mark 13:35).

We have, however, had the privilege of receiving the Revelation, which has shown us how the purpose of God has advanced through history. We can see from this that we are in the ‘last days’, and this agrees with many other prophecies of Scripture such as the return of the Jews to their land, which has only happened in the last fifty years.
So the message of Jesus to his friends in the rest of the verse is very relevant - those will be **blessed**, or happy, who keep **watching** the signs around them **and** let this have an effect upon their lives - they **keep** their garments. This **watching** has to be twofold - watching ones own life to conform to Christ’s standards and watching the signs of the times so as to be **ready**.

True happiness is only found in the things of God, both now -

> "Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing ...” (Rom.15:13)

and in the future -

> “Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust” (2 Pet.1:4).

**How did they obtain their garments?**

The Lord Jesus refers to these garments in the Letter to Sardis (Section 9), where the faithful believers **had not defiled their garments** (ch.3:4). There can be no approach to God unless sin has been atoned for (or covered) in the way which God has appointed. We remember that in the Garden of Eden, it was God who shed blood by making garments of animal skins to cover Adam and Eve after they had brought sin into the world. Scripture tells us of this fundamental principle:

> “... without shedding of blood there is no remission (forgiveness)” (Heb.9:22).

The Lord Jesus Christ became the perfect sacrifice when his blood was shed on the Cross, and believers become identified with this when they make the decision to be baptized. They then **put on Christ** as a garment:

> “For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ” (Gal.3:27)

and are then purged from their sins if they continue to try to live like him.

We have many examples in the Acts of the Apostles of people who, having heard the gospel, responded by being baptised:

> “Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do? Then Peter said unto them, Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins ...Then they that gladly received his word were baptized ...” (Acts 2:37,38,41).

An interesting example is that of Cornelius in Acts 10. God arranged for him to hear Peter speak **".. words whereby thou and all thy house shall be saved "** (Acts 11:14).

Peter's saving words included the claim that God had raised Jesus of Nazareth from the dead and that they were themselves witnesses of his life, death and resurrection. The prophets had all spoken of him as being the one through whom believers could obtain forgiveness of their sins, and God had ordained him to be the Judge of both the living and the dead.

It is humbling to realise that although this God-fearing man Cornelius was full of good deeds which were pleasing to God and were noticed by Him, they alone could not save him. There had to be knowledge and belief in the work and mission of Jesus Christ as the basis of salvation. He is

> "the only name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved" (Acts 4:12).
There is a most significant sequel to this story. Even though the people in Cornelius’ house had received the Holy Spirit, Peter still commanded them to be baptised:

"Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptised, which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we? And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord" (Acts 10:47,48).

The following inevitable conclusions follow:
2. Baptism is also essential to salvation (Acts 10:48, see also Mark 16:15,16).

It is above all, an act of humble obedience, a sincere response to God’s loving offer of salvation:

"The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God) ... " (1 Pet.3:21).

Note: The word 'BAPTISM' is derived from the Greek word 'BAPTISMA' (908) which means to 'dip' or 'plunge into', in order to cover completely. The word originates particularly from the dyeing trade, where an article is completely immersed in the dye so that it acquires a totally new complexion.

Here are some more Bible references which indicate:
1. that baptism requires complete immersion (in water) and
2. that it is for adults after confession and belief in the things concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ (Acts 8:12).

- Matthew 3:16; Mark 16:16; John 3:23; Acts 8:36-39; Romans 6:3,4; Colossians 2:12.

How should baptized believers live?
A good example is shown in Acts 2:42:

"And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers".

If, however, they afterwards walk in disobedience and uncleanness, they defile their garments as many of those in Sardis had done:

"And others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire, hating even the garment spotted by the flesh" (Jude 23).

It is a personal responsibility to keep our own garments - the word tereo means to watch over, preserve, guard. It had relevance to a custom relating to the Temple guard, with which the apostle John would be familiar. The Jewish religious historian says:

“During the night, the captain of the Temple made his rounds. On his approach the guards had to arise and salute him in a particular manner. Any guard found asleep when on duty was beaten, or his garments were set on fire” (Alfred Edersheim, The Temple - its Ministry and services as they were at the time of Jesus Christ”).
So to *walk naked* (v15) is to be rejected at the Judgment Seat of Christ, and so denied the clothing of immortality (see 2 Cor.5:3). It is a disgrace and the Lord Jesus warned the believers at Laodicea of this possibility (Rev.3:17).

Those who overcome themselves and the world - a *patient continuance in well doing* (Rom.2:7) - and keep their garments *unspotted from the world* (James 1:27) are to be the Bride of Christ:

“... the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready. And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints” (Rev.19:8).

In this day of glory, they will be clothed upon with immortality (2 Cor.5:2,4) and be like him at his appearing (1 John 3:2, Rom.8:21). They will then become part of the multitudinous Christ man of ch.1 as we discussed in Section 7. They will be ready to appear as the mighty angel clothed with a cloud of ch.10:1 (Section 26) and to *take the kingdom*:

“But the saints of the most High shall take the kingdom and possess the kingdom for ever, even for ever and ever” (Dan.7:18).

We are not told how long the judgment of the saints, both the resurrected and the living, will last. The world will continue to be *gathered* until Christ, with his now glorified saints, intervenes at the great battle. This too is a stealthy, unheralded coming to the world, and is all encompassed in v15.

“But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise ...” (2 Pet.3:10).
We shall now consider a strange passage in 2 Thess.2 and see whether it may have some bearing on our studies in Revelation.

A falling away
The Apostle Paul knew that a departure from the true faith would come, as we discussed way back in Section 8:

“For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them” (Acts 20:29,30)

“For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables” (2 Tim.4:3,4).

So they were to reject God’s truth and turn to fables and lies. The apostle John speaks of one very serious lie which denied that Jesus Christ was a partaker of our human nature, and says it was spread by many antichrists already in the world

2 Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God:
3 And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that spirit of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world.(1 John 4:2,3).

And again:

18 ¶ Little children, it is the last time: and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time.
19 They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us.(1 John 2:18,19).

Jesus uses the word ‘spirit’ in the sense of being the vital principle – the personality of man. He had already warned of deceivers who would come in his name (Luke 21:8).
Our chapter in Thessalonians is part of a letter Paul sent to the young ecclesia and ch.2 begins by explaining that Jesus was not to return to them very soon - other events had first to happen:

“Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition” (2 Thess.2:3).

The words *falling away* (Gk. *apostasia*) mean apostacy; in Acts 21:21 it is translated *forsake*. So Paul is saying the same thing - he is worried that this development would deceive believers. He speaks of the *mystery of iniquity* (v7) which has echoes for us of the description of the whore’s name in ch.17:5. Paul says this process had already begun and goes on to give more details of the evil system which that would develop:

“... whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness” (2 Thess.2:9,10).

We know from our studies that this *falling away* did take place and that by AD 324 the whole Roman Empire had become allied to a Christianity which had radically moved away from its foundations. We saw for instance, how the Lord’s prohibition on the use of physical force (John 18:36; Matt.26:52) was turned upside down. In AD 312 at the battle of Milvian Bridge, it was through the use of armed force that Christianity became the recognized religion of the Roman Empire! Instead of looking for Christ’s kingdom, these Christians had joined themselves to the world and had taken up arms for the kingdom of men (James 4:4; 2 Cor.10:3,4). So this could well have been the *counterfeit system* about which Paul warned believers - a false Christianity.

Other *fruits* of the false beliefs of this system followed down through the Christian centuries, as we have seen, with such results as:

- the Inquisition which persecuted and killed anyone who opposed the Roman church
- the banning and burning of Bibles
- Anti-semitism

Vs 6,7 - *let* is an old English word meaning *prevent* - an evil force was at work and seething beneath but hidden; it is suggested that once the power of Paganism was removed - this force would be revealed.

**A man of sin with a destiny of perdition**

In our verses in Thessalonians, Paul explains that this system would reveal a *man of sin, the son of perdition* (v3). The ‘man of sin’ describes a system founded on lies and deceit which has the truth in some way but has lost the ‘love of the truth’. This is highlighted in the letter to Ephesus where Jesus says, “Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love”. Rev 2:4. This man of sin system would appear to be a further decline away from the truth already observable in those early Ecclesias.

The word *perdition* (Strong No. 684) is translated *destruction* in Peter’s letter, where he writes of the results of these false beliefs:
“... there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction. And many shall follow their pernicious ways ...” (2 Pet.2:1,2)

Paul says that destruction would be the destiny of this man of sin also, by the hand of the Lord at his return:

“And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming” (2 Thess.2:8)

This man of sin is one:

“Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God showing himself that he is God” (v4).

These are the well-known claims of the Roman church:

• The Pope is called ‘Our Lord God the Pope’

• “Into this fold of Jesus Christ no one can enter if not under the guidance of the Sovereign Pontiff; and men can securely reach salvation only when they are united with him, since the Roman Pontiff is the Vicar of Christ and represents His person on this earth” (Pope John XXIII, 1958)

• “The Pope is of so great a dignity and so exalted that he is not a mere man, but as it were God, and the Vicar of God ... The Pope is as it were God on earth ... Chief king of kings having plenitude of power”

(for sources of quotations, see The Man of Sin, Ron Abel, p.66).

Worshippers of the Roman church are taught:

“So that when the Pope speaks we have no business to examine. We have only to obey. We have no right to criticize his decisions or discuss his commands” (See the Catholique Nationale, 13 July 1895. Quoted in The Man of Sin, Ron Abel, p.55).


Little Horn compared with Man of Sin

Do similarities exist between the ‘man of sin’ of Thessalonians and the little horn speaking great things of Daniel?

The Man Of Sin... What is to be the destiny of each?

THE LITTLE HORN “I beheld till the thrones were cast down, and the Ancient of days did sit ... I beheld then because of the voice of the great words which the horn spake: I beheld even till the beast was slain, and his body destroyed, and given to the burning flame” (Dan.7:9,11).
“And through his policy also he shall cause craft (deceit) to prosper in his hand: and he shall magnify himself in his heart, and by peace shall destroy many: he shall also stand up against the Prince of princes; but he shall be broken without hand” (Dan.8:25).

THE MAN OF SIN
And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming:
9 Even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders,
10 And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. (2 Thess 2)

Points for Consideration
Powerful through words of deceit
By peace (prosperity) will destroy (corrupt)
Slain by Ancient of Days (Jesus) – given to flame

Man of Sin 2 Thessalonians 2
Lying wonders ... all deceivableness
With all power – influence from riches and wealth
Lord consumes with brightness of his coming

Links with Daniel
At the beginning of this Seminar on the book of Revelation we spent some time looking at the prophet Daniel and this helped us to pinpoint the Roman Empire as the great and terrible fourth beast with ten horns of Dan.7 (Sections 4 & 6). Does Daniel have anything to say about this religious turn of events?

“I considered the horns, and, behold, there came up among them another little horn ... in this horn were eyes like the eyes of man, and a mouth speaking great things”

“I beheld, and the same horn made war with the saints, and prevailed against them ...”

“And he shall speak great words against the most High, and shall wear out the saints of the most High, and think to change times and laws ...” (Dan.7:8,21,25).

This certainly sounds like echoes of the verses about the Man of Sin. Some version translate this as man of lawlessness (RSV) - showing himself to be a god, he will claim to be above law.

Is the destiny of the horn the same?
His destruction is also described by Daniel:

“I beheld till the thrones were cast down, and the Ancient of days did sit ... I beheld then because of the voice of the great words which the horn spake: I beheld even till the beast was slain, and his body destroyed, and given to the burning flame” (Dan.7:9,11).

“And through his policy also he shall cause craft (deceit) to prosper in his hand: and he shall magnify himself in his heart, and by peace shall destroy many: he shall also stand up against the Prince of princes; but he shall be broken without hand” (Dan.8:25).
More echoes from Daniel 11:36,37 can be seen in 2 Thess.2:4 already quoted above.

Test the facts!

1. Prophecy requires an identifiable power to remain in existence from beyond Daniel’s time “until the Ancient days came ...”

2. The teaching of Jesus is to be subject to change and a “man of sin” revealed who exalts himself against God and who will be destroyed at the Lord’s coming.

Have these things happened? Here are more clues for us each to consider carefully:

1. There would be a departure from the original True Faith.
2. Many Christians would be deceived.
3. A counterfeit system would arise, recognizable by its fruits.
4. It would precipitate the rise of a “son of perdition”.
5. His identity merges with that of Rome.
6. The system will mature into a power among the ten European horns.
7. He will claim to be above law (probably on religious grounds).
8. Beginning as a system in the first century AD, it will continue to exist until the coming of Christ.
9. The system would promote “another gospel” and “another Jesus” (which had not really come in the flesh).
10. There would be a claim to Apostolic status and authority.
11. They would claim to be Christ’s representatives.
12. Such predictions and subsequent developments are beyond coincidence and form the basis of confidence in the unfolding Revelation.

It can be seen that history reveals an apostate system which centres in a succession of men of sin, the popes, within the Roman Catholic system. Paul indicates that this system is to endure through history only to be destroyed by the hand of the Lord himself at his coming.
“16 And he gathered them together into a place called in the Hebrew tongue Armageddon.
17 ¶ And the seventh angel poured out his vial into the air; and there came a great voice out of the temple of heaven, from the throne, saying, It is done. 18 And there were voices, and thunders, and lightnings; and there was a great earthquake, such as was not since men were upon the earth, so mighty an earthquake, and so great. 19 And the great city was divided into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell: and great Babylon came in remembrance before God, to give unto her the cup of the wine of the fierceness of his wrath. 20 And every island fled away, and the mountains were not found. 21 And there fell up on men a great hail out of heaven, every stone about the weight of a talent: and men blasphemed God because of the plague of the hail; for the plague thereof was exceeding great.”.

Where is Armageddon?
After the remarkable placing of v15 warning us of the Lord’s return, v16 continues with the logical outcome of v14 - the nations actually assemble for the battle at a place. The fact that the place is called in the Hebrew tongue Armageddon is a clue that it is to be interpreted according to the Hebrew language and not according to the Greek, and indicates the land of Israel. It further implies the revival of the Hebrew language at the time of the end - this is amazing, as it has only happened during this century. We know from many prophecies that the nations are to be gathered to Jerusalem itself:
“For I will gather all nations against Jerusalem to battle ...” (Zech.14:2, Joel 3:2).

Armageddon is a compound word made up of:

- **Arma**: A heap of sheaves
- **Gai**: Valley
- **Don**: Judgment

So it is a heap of sheaves in a valley of judgment - it is a symbolic name for the judgment of God on the nations who have come to oppose His purpose in His land. Ezekiel 38 tells us they have come to
take a spoil and a prey (v12), to come up against my (God’s) people of Israel ... and I will bring thee against my land ... “ (v16). The implication of this is that sadly, anti-semitism will reappear.

As we saw in Section 39, many Scriptures speak of this time of God’s threshing:

“But they know not the thoughts of the LORD, neither understand they his counsel: for he shall gather them as the sheaves into the floor” (Micah 4:12).

"Let the heathen be wakened, and come up to the valley of Jehoshaphat: for there will I sit to judge all the heathen round about. Put ye in the sickle, for the harvest is ripe: come, get you down; for the press is full, the fats overflow; for their wickedness is great. Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision: for the day of the LORD is near in the valley of decision (mg.threshing)” (Joel 3:12-14).

Jesus speaks in the parable of the Tares of them being separated at the harvest and burned.

“Let both grow together until the harvest: and in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them: but gather the wheat into my barn.” (Matt 13:30).

So the battle of Armageddon is to eliminate those nations which have come against God’s people and prepare the land as the first stage for the reign of the new King Jesus Christ.

There have been many thoughts as to the location of Armageddon.

Sometimes identified with “Megiddo” RV “Harmagedon” mountain or hill not plain. Megiddo is North Israel near plain Esdraelon. The Greek spells “Megido” - with a single ‘d’ no actual derivation of Armageddon. The evidence is that the battle will be near Jerusalem – South not North.

It is more likely to be the same location as referred to in the Old Testament as the valley of Jeshophat

The valley of Jehoshaphat (meaning Yahweh’s Judgment) is just outside of Jerusalem. Many conquerors, such as Sennacherib, Nebuchadnezzar, Vespasian and the Roman generals Gallus and Titus have each established their headquarters on the heights called Mount Scopus overlooking this valley. The great enemy will fall on these mountains of Israel, “… yet he shall come to his end, and none shall help him” (Dan.11:45). Daniel also uses the same language of reaping and threshing for the judgments of God on the nations. He says that the great metallic image will be ground to powder and blown away like the chaff of the summer threshing floor (Dan.2:35).

**Ezekiel 38:8,9**

Ezekiel shows of a latter day attack against the Land of Israel. Could it be any other – against the mountains of Israel lately with people gathered out of many nations. The place of the attack is unmistakable and the time is plainly after the Jews have been wandering into all nations for nearly 2000 years – all as predicted by the Prophets.

Ezekiel is equally clear about which nations are to attack in verses 1-6. The leader or “chief prince” of the armies is called “Gog”. Reference of the names of the countries who are led by Gog through Heroditus and the Jewish historian Josephus gives identification of the nations currently occupying these lands who will invade Israel:
Gog of land of Magog, Rosh, Meshech & Tubal stand for Russia and her confederates. Persia, Ethiopia & Libya stand for Iran, Sudan, Ethiopia and other N African states. Gomer is now the West European states – Spain, France, Italy, Germany and some of Eastern Europeans. Togarmah is present day Turkey

**The battle of the great day of God Almighty**

This refers to the day of which the prophets often speak, when God’s purpose will come to its climax and His promises will be vindicated at last.

“For the day of the LORD of hosts shall be upon every one that is proud and lofty, and upon every one that is lifted up; and he shall be brought low” (Isa.2:12)

“For behold, the day cometh, that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble ...” (Mal.4:1)

“Behold, the day of the LORD cometh, and thy spoil shall be divided in the midst of thee. For I will gather all nations against Jerusalem to battle ...” (Zech.14:1. See also chs.12-14 for many references to this Day).

It will be the Day when He will judge the world in righteousness through Christ (Acts 17:31) - the wise will prepare now for this great time, as the Lord Jesus warns us in the next verse of ch.16. The sequence of battles will commence with Israel dwelling peacefully and unsuspectingly in their land. We cannot say how this situation will arise nor how long it will take. It is likely in order for this condition to prevail that the current tension between Jews and Palestinians will have to be resolved in some way.

There will be a “spoil” which will be seen to be worthwhile in the eyes of the invaders. Israel itself not likely to put up a fight. The prophet says:-

“And thou shalt say, I will go up to the land of unwalled villages; I will go to them that are at rest, that dwell safely, all of them dwelling without walls, and having neither bars nor gates To take a spoil, and to take a prey; to turn thine hand upon the desolate places that are now inhabited, and upon the people that are gathered out of the nations, which have gotten cattle and goods, that dwell in the midst of the land.” (Eze.38:11,12).

If this is to be the condition of Israel at that time it seems unlikely that she will still have her large stock of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction available at a moments notice as is the position now. Such a condition of rest has it is proposed, never been experienced by Israel throughout her history in the land. It must therefore refer to a future state. This very peace will induce the northern-led attack (v14).

As the potential invaders gather their forces in secret for the surprise attack so the Lord Jesus Christ will be making his preparations. Jesus will come as a thief to his chosen followers many of whom will have been in their graves for hundreds or thousands of years. to resurrect, judge and gather them to him - unknown to world at large.

Jesus says of that time:

“Two men shall be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left.”(Luke17:36).

He will prepare to intervene in the battle of Armageddon against Gog and his armies. The saints have important first work to do.

**Sequence of events**

The Book of Revelation
The first work the raised and prepared followers of Jesus will be involved in, guided by that great prophet from the past – Elijah - is the instruction of living Jews in the land who are not even suspecting an imminent attack from the North. The preaching work will aim at regenerating faith in God just as John the Baptist did to herald the coming of Jesus in the first century. It will be necessary for Israel to have that belief in God so that when the forces of Gog invade the land, they will be able to listen to the words of God. It will be a trial of Israel’s faith. Some will put their trust in the arm of flesh and will be swept before the invading army. Others will put their trust in the God of Abraham and will be saved by Jesus and his saints and ultimately allowed to inherit the land. At some stage the invasion takes place:-

“For I will gather all nations against Jerusalem to battle; and the city shall be taken, and the houses rifled, and the women ravished; and half of the city shall go forth into captivity, and the residue of the people shall not be cut off from the city. Then shall the LORD go forth, and fight against those nations, as when he fought in the day of battle.

4 And his feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem on the east, and the mount of Olives shall cleave in the midst thereof toward the east and toward the west, and there shall be a very great valley; and half of the mountain shall remove toward the north, and half of it toward the south.

5 And ye shall flee to the valley of the mountains; for the valley of the mountains shall reach unto Azal: yea, ye shall flee, like as ye fled from before the earthquake in the days of Uzziah king of Judah: and the LORD my God shall come, and all the saints with thee” (Zech.14:2-5).

It is proposed with the evident similarities between the two locations that the valley of Jehoshaphat in the Old Testament is to be the location of the battle of Armageddon referred to in the Revelation. We conclude that Armageddon of Rev.16 and the Valley of Jehoshaphat in Joel 3 refer to the same event. The idea of God “threshing” the nations in the last days is common to the Revelation reference and to the Old Testament thus helping to identify the battles as being the same.

The Fury of Yahweh (Ezek.38:18,19)

“For thus saith the LORD of hosts; After the glory hath he sent me unto the nations which spoiled you: for he that toucheth you toucheth the apple of his eye.” (Zech 2:8).

“For it is the day of the LORD’S vengeance, and the year of recompences for the controversy of Zion.” (Isa 34:8).

Ultimately the invaders will be crushed on the mountains of Israel. At this point of cleansing the land from the oppressor the voice makes the great proclamation - It is done. Significantly, this is quoting from Ezekiel of the same event and time. It is God’s victory against the invaders of Israel:-

“Behold, it is come, and it is done, saith the Lord GOD; this is the day whereof I have spoken”. (Ezek.39:8)

Israel Purged
The winnowing process in the land will result in the saving of the good grain of repentant Israel and the burning of the remainder.

“And it shall come to pass, that in all the land, saith the LORD, two parts therein shall be cut off and die; but the third shall be left therein.

“And I will bring the third part through the fire, and will refine them as silver is refined, and will try them as gold is tried: they shall call on my name, and I will hear them: I will say, It is my people: and they shall say, The LORD is my God” (Zech 13:8,9).
It is the first stage of the victory gained in the land. Daniel speaks in exactly similar terms of the crushing of the nations in Nebuchadnezzar’s dream. The great image he sees as crushed by the little stone cut out of the mountain. Significantly cut out “without hands” that is without human intervention.

“Forasmuch as thou sawest that the stone was cut out of the mountain without hands, and that it brake in pieces the iron, the brass, the clay, the silver, and the gold; the great God hath made known to the king what shall come to pass hereafter: and the dream is certain, and the interpretation thereof sure.” (Dan 2:45).

The similarities as between the Old Testament prophets and the Book of Revelation also show the linkages and in particular the outcomes in each case. If the direct outcome of each of the prophecies is the Kingdom of God, then the overall view of each must logically be similar in time. The writings must indeed be parallel accounts.

The Seventh Vial v17
Ezekiel 38:18 to ch.39:7 speaks of God’s victory against the enemy in Israel and of a mighty literal earthquake in the land of Israel, which is also mentioned in Zech.14:4. Now that the enemy has been cast out of Jerusalem, the Throne of David can be restored and its rightful King established - the Lord Jesus Christ and his glorified saints. The effects of the literal earthquake will continue to reverberate around the world (Isa.2:19), contributing to the time of trouble such as never was (Dan.12:1).

Is the earthquake also symbolic?
In this book of symbol, we know this great earthquake will achieve the complete destruction of the existing political, social and religious orders in the present world and replace them with the Kingdom of God.

First Stage of Victory
The seventh vial is thus a period of time which brings to an end and a focus, all the previous times. The air refers to the political world of mankind, the ‘heaven’ of man’s rulership and is used in Eph.2:2 in this way. The sun of the political heavens was darkened during the outpouring of the fifth vial (ch.16:10) but now the whole political firmament is to be overwhelmed in judgment.

Second Stage of Victory
“And another angel came out of the temple, crying with a loud voice to him that sat on the cloud, Thrust in thy sickle, and reap: for the time is come for thee to reap; for the harvest of the earth is ripe. And he that sat on the cloud thrust in his sickle on the earth; and the earth was reaped. And another angel came out of the temple which is in heaven, he also having a sharp sickle. And another angel came out from the altar, which had power over fire; and cried with a loud cry to him that had the sharp sickle, saying, Thrust in thy sharp sickle, and gather the clusters of the vine of the earth; for her grapes are fully ripe. And the angel thrust in his sickle into the earth, and gathered the vine of the earth, and cast it into the great winepress of the wrath of God.” (Rev.14:14-19).

Another angel from the altar indicates a definite break in the harvesting process in just the same way as there is a break in time between the corn harvest and the fruiting of the vines. The fact that the angel comes from the altar indicates that the Christ body has now entered into the ruling heavens as a result of the victory gained in Armageddon. The wine of wrong teaching indicates that this second
series of battles is centered at the heart of the apostasy and is thus located outside of the land in Europe against those who actively reject the overtures of Christ and the saints. The symbols chosen through inspiration are most uniquely apposite. The first battle in the land is against the northern countries led by Russia. How appropriate is the symbol of harvesting of wheat - bearing in mind that Russia and associated territories produce nearly twice as much wheat as America. And again how appropriate is the symbol of wine growing for the second stage of Jesus’ intervention in Europe, bearing in mind that Italy, France, Spain and Portugal together produce nearly twice as much wine as the rest of the world put together. (“The Testimony” Aug 2003 p301.)

**Fall of the Nations v18**

Symbolic and physical earthquakes will ultimately achieve complete destruction of the existing political, social and religious orders in the present world and replace them with the Kingdom of God.

As Daniel also confirms, instead of the great image of man’s dominion and its four Kingdoms which have been blown away like the threshings, will be erected the Kingdom of God:

> “And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever.” (Dan 2:44).

**The fate of Babylon v19**

The great city of Babylon (16:19), will be divided into three parts probably answering to the three sections of v13. Russia in occupation of Constantinople will assume the status of the Dragon and will be first overthrown on the mountains of Israel (Ezek 38), followed by the headquarters of the false prophet (Rome), and finally the Catholic powers of Europe (the Beast). This may well precipitate the fall of the cities of the nations. Symbolic islands (v20) are independent nations whereas mountains are empires (Jer.51:25) - all political powers are to be ruled by Christ, whose kingdom will grow to fill the earth (The Stone-Power of Daniel 2:34,35).

**New Rulership**

The sun, moon and stars - the civil and ecclesiastical systems of government and their statesmen - will all be replaced by a divine system of society. The new rulers will be the Lord Jesus Christ and his glorified saints, the seventh angel, although they may well not be recognised as such by the world at this stage. The redeemed saints are elevated into the political air, and so will be “ever with the Lord” (1 Thess.4:17).

It is they who speak with a great voice out of the temple (nave) of heaven, from the throne (v17). We have seen that the temple symbolises the saints, as the One Body of Christ in immortality (ch.15:5).
The voices, thunders and lightnings (v18), as we have seen elsewhere in Revelation (eg ch.4:5), are symbols representing decrees or ultimatums, warfare, and the manifestation of spirit power. Isaiah describes this time when decrees will come from the throne of the future age:

“... For out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem”

(Isa.2:2-4).

They are also mentioned in ch.11, which speaks of the time after the resurrection (v18):

“... and there were lightnings, and voices, and thunderings, and an earthquake, and great hail” (Rev.11:19).

What is the hail out of heaven? v21

The natural elements of storm and tempest are used as a symbol of God’s judgment:

“Behold, the Lord hath a might and strong one, which as a tempest of hail and a destroying storm, as a flood of mighty waters overflowing, shall cast down to the earth with the hand”

(Isa.28:2).

“Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD; I will even rend it with a stormy wind in my fury; and there shall be an overflowing shower in mine anger, and great hailstones in my fury to consume it”

(Eze.13:13).

It could be said that just as an army is a storm or plague of hail to its enemies, so each individual soldier is a hailstone of a certain weight - in this way the army of the Redeemed, who are established in the political heavens, is able to overcome the world of the ungodly and to destroy its influence. This is pictured for us in ch.19:

“And the armies which were in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean. And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron: and he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God”

(ch.19:14,15).

So verse 21 describes the fate of those who still blaspheme God and refuse to recognize the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Thus the nations will be asked to submit to the rule of Christ, as we saw in ch.14:6,7 and this is a merciful provision on the part of God:

“Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth”

(1 Tim.2:4).

Those who accept will be blessed to live as mortals in the new universal empire. Sadly, some will reject this offer:

“For the nation and kingdom that will not serve thee shall perish; yea, those nations shall be utterly wasted”

(Isa.60:12).

These judgments of the seventh vial are not given to us in as much detail as the earlier vials, for they are the thunders in ch.10, of which John was forbidden to write and which take place after the return
of Jesus. We do know, however, that they will be complete and awful and that afterwards nothing remains but the Lord Jesus and his saints reigning in righteousness over a world at peace.

See summary charts W50.1, W50.2
This chapter is all about a woman who rides upon a beast (v3).

John is now reminded of the great whore (or harlot) who appeared in ch.12:1. As we discussed in Section 38, the false system of Christianity which developed from the pure and chaste virgin of the early ecclesias is viewed by God as an adulteress. She has lost the Truth and has become involved in politics rather than trusting in God. In v1 she is seen to influence many people and nations - v15 is a key verse of explanation of this symbol of waters. The political powers of the Roman earth have benefited from association with her, and the peoples have been so intoxicated with her dogmas and mysteries that they cannot think straight. Isa.55:1 speaks of the pure wine and milk of the true gospel, but the mixed and polluted wine of the whore leads only to confused thinking (Jer.51:7 uses similar language of historic Babylon), as if her lies have cast a veil over all people ( Isa.25:7).

The idea of a woman riding a beast is familiar to John. In Greek mythology the goddess Europa had been captured and carried away on the back of a bull, which was really the god Zeus. This bull was known to the pagan Romans as their chief god Jupiter. It is also used in modern times! A postage stamp created to celebrate the opening of the 2nd European Parliament (opened by the Pope) depicts a woman riding a beast and rising out of the sea and a coin struck to celebrate 21 years of european membership depicts a woman riding a beast surrounded by 12 stars. The early designs of the Euro notes also picked up the imagery of the Greek goddess Europa riding the beast.

God did use the familiar mythology of Greece and Rome to clearly identify the powers He wished to bring to view. He likewise used the lion gods of Assyria & Babylon as emblems to identify these powers. Such Greek mythological images anchor our thoughts in Europe - Revelation is referring to the Roman system. The symbols link to the modern day Europe picked up by Time magazine 1997 which used a graphic of a woman seated on a bull, holding the European flag of 12 stars, and surrounded by the flags of many other nations. Daniel’s beast is now scarlet coloured! (v3) (Chart W51.1)
The seven heads and ten horns, together with the names of blasphemy, identify this beast with the Beast of the Sea of ch.13:1 in Europe – it is fashioned after the Imperial 6th Head of that Christian Sea Beast. The scarlet beast is ridden by the whore offering the cup of her mixed wine. She is decked (mg.gilded) with jewels; but her outward appearance of splendour hides her true state.

<table>
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<tr>
<th><strong>Daniel’s 4th Beast</strong></th>
<th><strong>The Great Red Dragon</strong></th>
<th><strong>The Beast of the Sea</strong></th>
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<td>having 7 heads and 10</td>
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<td>horns</td>
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<td>and 10 horns”</td>
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<td><strong>WAR WITH THE SAINTS</strong></td>
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<td>remnant of her seed”</td>
<td>saints”</td>
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<td><em>Daniel 7:25</em></td>
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<td>and the dividing of</td>
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References | Beast | Heads | Horns | Identification
---|---|---|---|---
Dan.7:7,23 | 4th Beast | 1 | 10 | Rome in all its phases, One head: probably the 8th.
Rev.12:3 | Great Red Dragon | 7 (crowned) | 10 | Pagan Empire up to Constantine’s time. (Horn powers have no authority as yet).
Rev.13:1-10 | Beast of the Sea | 7 | 10 (crowned) | Papacy in Rome, 10 Barbarian kingdoms within Roman Empire. Dragon power (Emperor) in Constantinople.
Rev.13:11-18 | Beast of the Earth | 1 | 2 | Charlemagne & Papacy in 800 AD. Commencement of Holy Roman Empire.
Rev.17:3,11-14 | Scarlet-coloured Beast | 7 | 10 | 8th Head. 10 Kingdoms of Europe support Rome in war with Christ and the saints.

Note: The Dragon power in Constantinople (Istanbul) whether Italian, Greek, Turkish or Russian: is always Imperial.

Whore and Daughters
By contrast with the true Bride, who has the name of the Father written in her forehead (ch.14:1), her name is Babylon the Great (v5), the mother of harlots whom we have already met in Section 38 - she is an apostate system of Christianity which has adopted every kind of pagan idolatry under the guise of Christianity. Mystery on the forehead reminds us its rites, ceremonies and doctrines modelled on mysteries of ancient paganism in Babylon - the head is where the thinking arises (see The Two Babylons, by Hislop). The Roman Church has daughters - the orthodox and protestant churches of Christendom, whose beliefs are mainly the same and who are now reversing the Reformation process and having dialogues with Rome. We learn that this system is abominable to God.

v6 is a horrible description - she is drunk with blood - Foxes Book of Martyrs gives much information of this (see also Section 37). Her persecutions and cruelties are notorious by which she has caused people to accept her creed; she has justified this policy and struck medals to commemorate them (Section 27). John did not admire this! He was astonished that Christianity could have become so depraved in God’s sight.

Paul Billington and Frank Able were in the Vatican filming for one of the Bible Magazine Videos “Christendom Astray” and while there they observed a mural on one of the buildings just off of the

The Book of Revelation
Vatican Square. It carried the caption “Mater Ecclesiae”. In English this is translated “Mother Church”. This as a fulfillment of Revelation 17.

Rome is the mother of the different false religious harlot daughters of Christendom. **Future seen by John**

The angel explains to him that the origins of the scarlet beast he had just seen **was** (v8) the beast of the sea of the earlier vision of ch.13. This is **not** in existence as the angel speaks to John, for he is in the time of the sixth Imperial head of the Roman beast. The scarlet beast is to arise from the peoples of Europe (*the bottomless pit* - the abyss - as had the earth beast) and its final end would be destruction - it is the last phase of the ‘Roman empire’. All peoples would be astonished, except true believers, when they behold this beast that **yet is - or shall be present** (Diaglott).

We remember the Roman coins which showed the goddess Roma seated upon the seven hills of the city of Rome (v9) so this chapter is a representation of what was going to happen to the city of Rome - the Eternal City. Vs10,11 confirm for us that it is indeed a Roman beast, and that this new and final **scarlet** phase is, in fact an **eighth** head (v11).

This is the first time such a head has been mentioned but we know from our history sections that after the brief reign of the Gothic kings in Rome as the seventh head, the Emperor in Constantinople reinstated the Imperial sixth head - it was revived in a new religious form. The Papacy ruled in Rome and gradually his influence grew until the two horned-lamb beast of the earth emerged (ch.13:11) - the joint rule of the Pope and Emperor over the Holy Roman Empire, which lasted until 1804 when it was ended by Napoleon. The Papacy survived, however, and has gained in strength and political involvement during the 20th century. The scarlet beast tells us the pattern is to be repeated - there is to be a revival of the Roman beast in a new form before its destruction - and this time the church woman would succeed in controlling it. The woman is to ride the Beast.

The significance of this is that the head is the most important part of a man; it directs, it rules the body. This reminds us of Nebuchadnezzars’ dream in Daniel 2 (see Section 4 p.21) where the King of Babylon was told he was the Head of Gold. Revelation is seen to be giving more information about this feature of the Image. Babylon the Great in its religious aspect has the Papacy as its head and it must therefore play an important part in the erection of the total Image, just before the Stone power smashes the erect Image on its feet.

Today the nations of Europe are once more joining together as the European Union into a political system, together with the development of a common army, and the influence of the Roman church is an element.

Europe’s past history in the Holy Roman Empire is frequently headline news. The “Charlemagne” Prize being one of the more obvious linkages. Mr Blair received the Charlemagne Prize in memory of the ancient Holy Roman Empire and marked the determination to revive its essential spirit of unity in Europe.

Bible students foresaw the development of such a single political unity in Europe:-

> “There has never yet existed a single dominion, contemporary with the toe-kingdoms, and of course comprehending them in its jurisdiction, which would claim to be represented by

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Nebuchadnezzar’s image. *In order then, to prepare for the catastrophe, the image which is now in antagonistic parts, must be confederated... There will be no more resuscitation of the old governments, but all things will be absorbed into one continental dominion upon the old Roman domain”*

John Thomas, Elpis Israel 1849 page 327.

We are seeing the feet of Daniel’s image (Dan.2:43) where the Roman iron mixes with the clay of human democracy in the nation states of Europe. Many have tried to unite Europe since the days of the Holy Roman empire - notably Napoleon, Bismarck and Hitler - but history shows that the iron and clay do not cleave together and always break apart. The significant point about ch.17:13 is that at last this is achieved but not by force - the independent sovereign states of Europe (the horns) choose to give their power to the Beast.

The sobering prophetic outcome according to Revelation is that this great unity of nations will at the last come into direct confrontation with “the Lamb” the returned Jesus Christ with his glorified bride the immortal saints of all ages. The Lamb will overcome and totally destroy the beast and his adherents.

Thus is to be fulfilled at last Daniel the prophet’s prediction that of the destiny of the little horn and the beast which would endure all down thro history to be finally, “but the judgement shall sit and they shall take away his dominion to consume and to destroy it unto the end.” Dan 7:26

**War with the Lamb vs12-14**

**The ten horns** (v12) or powers of this scarlet beast, which as we know had not yet arisen in John’s day, agree to a coalition within the Roman beast. The history of Europe over the centuries shows that on average the figure of ten epitomises the nations states of Europe. (If worked out on the day-for-a-year principle, the hour would be thirty years). The result is a holy war - they actually make war with the Lamb! There can of course, be no doubt as to the outcome and the victory is won by the Lord Jesus and the glorified saints who are with him. As part of the ‘true seed of Abraham’, like him they are called (Isa.51:2; Heb.11:8), chosen (Neh.9:7) and faithful (Rom.4:13) - they have responded to the need of selection, separation and dedication.

The war with the Lamb is the second stage as we considered in ch.14; the battle of Armageddon has already been fought at Jerusalem and Gog’s forces overcome.

We should therefore expect to see a federal Europe in which the nation states give their power to a supra-national authority. One reason which could cause them to unite in making war on the Lord Jesus, is the belief in the coming Antichrist. Most of Christendom now teach that antichrist will proclaim himself King of the Jews, will abolish Judaism, build a temple, and seek to overthrow the nations by war - it is easy to see how they will be deceived into thinking the Lord Jesus Christ is their expected Antichrist. •All the mainstream protestant, Baptist, evangelical and catholic writers are singing the same song when it comes to Antichrist. It is Rome’s song – because they are drunk with the wine of her fornication (Note - this ‘antichrist’ phenomenon was already active in the first century - see 1 John 2:18,19).

The theories on Antichrist were first broadcast by the Jesuits. They envisage an antichrist figure emerging and carrying out the very actions which the Bible predicts will be implemented by Christ.
himself. As we have seen, this will cause the nations to rise up against Jesus with the strong backing of the beast and the false prophet. Papal doctrine says:

- Revelation is about future events
- Antichrist is a future menace
- He will convert the Jewish people
- Together they will build a temple in Jerusalem
- Antichrist will do many miracles
- He will call upon the world to submit

Thus the antichrist will, it is claimed, perform the very actions which Revelation says will be carried out by Jesus himself. Here are the man–made seeds of the great rebellion against Christ when he calls for submission.

- What the Bible states:
  - Jesus will return to the earth (Acts 1:11)
  - Christ will convert the Jews (Jer.32:37-40; Zech.12:10; Rom.11:26)
  - Christ will build a temple in Jerusalem (2 Sam.7:13; Isa.2:2)
  - Christ will perform many miracles (Isa.35:5-7)
  - All nations will be required to submit (Dan.2:44; Rev.14:7).

Clearly, it does matter what we believe!
FALL OF BABYLON
Ch.18

The great city Babylon
The vision in ch.17 showed Babylon the Great as the whore at the height of its power, dominating the Beast. It is interesting to consider the following further evidences of the true identity of Babylon.

“The epithet of Babylon was applied to the city and to the empire of Rome” Gibbon
“Babylon the first Rome” ... “Rome plays the role of a second Babylon” Augustine, bishop of Hippo, born AD 354
“Babylon ... sent thee (the apostle John) also into banishment” Hippolytus, bishop of Portus.

Babylon the Great is Rome.

The new vision of ch.18 describes the fall of this great world power, Babylon the Great who by then has all nations under her spell. The language is taken from Old Testament prophecies and recalls the fall of ancient Babylon. The enlightening angel (Christ and the saints, see ch.10:1 Section 27) first summarises the judgment and this is followed by more detail. (We notice that the proclamation of v2 is also made by the ‘second’ angel in ch.14:8). A last opportunity is given in v4 for people to separate themselves from the system of iniquity and idolatry called Babylon before it is too late. The invitation will include natural Jews and call on them to return to their land now that their true King has come (Zech.2:6,7; Eze.20:33-40; Isa.66:19,20).

Who is to reward her? v6
This command is directed to the Redeemed, who endorse God’s actions:

“And I heard another out of the altar say, Even so, Lord God Almighty, true and righteous are thy judgments” (ch.16:7).

They do not have a malicious attitude - they have no doubt tried to spread the true Gospel to many, as they knew this day was coming. They rejoice nevertheless in the destruction of an apostate system because, like their Lord they love righteousness, hate wickedness (Psa.45:7) and realise that the Kingdom can never be effectively established whilst such opposition remains. The decree is not
unreasonable nor vindictive, but those who stubbornly refuse the way of righteousness must be rewarded.

It is appropriate that the saints who have suffered at the hands of Babylon should carry out the judgment. God’s principle is expressed in Psa.149:

“Let the saints be joyful in glory ... a two-edged sword in their hand; to execute vengeance upon the heathen, and punishments on the people ... To execute upon them the judgment written: this honour have all his saints” (Psa.149:5-9).

I sit a queen (v7)

Today Rome, the Eternal City, has revived in power and prestige among the nations, having recovered from her ‘widowhood’ of the 19th century. She sees herself reigning over the kings of the earth, as the Queen of the world (see picture of church in Canada W52.1). Ancient Babylon, which ruled the then known world, thought the same (Isa.47:8,9) but was proved sadly wrong.

In 1951 a new stained glass window was unveiled in the 15th century Cathedral of Notre Dame in Strasbourg. This depicts “The Virgin Mary with her crown of twelve stars and standing on a globe as Queen of the Universe - as described in the Apocalypse” (meaning ch.12:1). Prayers were made to “Our Lady, Queen of Europe” and the Latin inscription of this so-called “Window of Europe”, dedicates it to the city of Strasbourg and the Council of Europe (see illustrations W52.2).

It is significant to note that the European Parliament also meets in Strasbourg and its flag has twelve stars on a (heavenly?) blue background.

But the overthrow of Babylon the Great will come suddenly and without warning, like Babylon of old (Jer.51:64). It will be violent and complete - v9 suggests that a volcanic eruption may be involved and we know that the area of Rome is susceptible to these. The kings of the earth (the ten horns) see this as a great tragedy and bewail her. This shows that although the great city has been cast into the sea (v21), the Roman system survives and is a rallying point still for the nations..

Who are the merchants? (v11-19)

These also lament for they are the spiritual merchants who trade in the bodies and souls of men (mg.v13). The vast riches of the Roman church, and of all the churches of Christendom, have been gained by deceiving and controlling men’s minds for centuries, especially through such devices as the Confessional and their supposed control over the destiny of the fictitious immortal souls of men. Worshippers have not only paid tithes to the church but have paid money for her spiritual wares; which include masses for the dead, absolution of the living, indulgences for sin, consecrations of cemeteries, decoration of churches, the use of incense, music and art, ordaining Priests, consecrating Bishops, christening babies, canonization of saints, lying wonders of relics and idols etc etc.

The consternation will be worldwide (v17), for the spiritual merchants of Rome have spread its influence and doctrines to all countries. They are the great men of the earth (v23). It is also literally true that the greatest concentration of the wealth of the church is in Rome itself. Sudden loss of such treasures of art and precious articles will be a major world catastrophe.

As v18 asks “What city is like unto this great city?”

The Book of Revelation
God’s final verdict

The ecclesia *rejoices* (v20) at the overthrow of the enemy and we are reminded in v23,24 of why God has been so determined to eradicate all traces:

“... for by thy sorceries were all nations deceived. And in her was found the blood of prophets, and of saints, and of all that were slain upon the earth”.

The deception meant that men were unable to perceive the Truth and respond to God’s offer of salvation. Rome has brutally slain the brethren of Christ and all who opposed her, has blasphemed God and has done all this in the very name of Christ. The warning of Jesus comes to mind:

“Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity” (Matt.7:22,23).

Zion Rises

Isa 54:8 “In a little wrath I hid my face from thee for a moment; but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee, saith the LORD thy Redeemer.”

As a result of disobedience Israel has been humbled and scattered – but only for a period. With Rome’s final demise glorified Israel will emerge, having acknowledged their saviour and King. While Abraham’s seed of faith and baptism will emerge as the immortal Kings and Priests reigning with the Lord Jesus Christ.
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SECTION 53

CLUE - RIDING THE BEAST

We will now look at current events and see if we can see any fulfillment of the description in ch.17:3 where John:

"... saw a woman sit upon a scarlet coloured beast, full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns"

From the Revelation it is expected that at some time the woman standing for apostasised Christianity will so gain influence and control over the beast, which, stands for the nations of Europe, that she will be able to guide their direction as does a rider upon a horse. This is plainly a future development not as such in operation today.

We must look back through history to see how such power might be generated in the future. History shows the power of the popes was exercised not only through the church hierarchy but also through temporal power over the Church States. From the 4th century the popes had acquired land around Rome. In 756 as a result of various treaties the popes became rulers of the significant territory in central Italy around Ravenna and the Rome region. This temporal power continued sometimes over a reduced area until 1870 when the whole of the territory was taken by various forces led by Garibaldi and Rome became the capital city of Italy. The popes refused to recognize the loss of their temporal power and remained “prisoners in the Vatican”. This position remained for a number of years. This period is referred to as when the pope went into darkness Whore in distress

Wisdom needed to seek the meaning

Ch 17:15-18 are explanations to John of this situation. The ten horns clearly waver in their attitude to the whore, for at some stage they were to hate and nearly destroy her. The fulfilment of this was during the period of the first five vials when the European powers threw off the shackles of the Roman church, made the Pope a prisoner of the Vatican and finally deprived him of his temporal or political power in 1870, when a united Italy was established. The whore was made desolate and naked (v16) and was in a state of political ‘widowhood’.

(Note - v16 also says the horns shall eat her flesh and burn her with fire - these phrases do not necessarily mean final destruction. In Old Testament times Jerusalem too was ‘utterly burned with
fire’, and Jeremiah says this would never be quenched, but after seventy years captivity in Babylon the city revived in a weaker form and continued for centuries (Jer.7:20; 17:27).

It is difficult to see how this hatred developed between the beast and the whore after the events of this chapter, since they are all in agreement against the Lamb and are destroyed together by him (v14). It is suggested that the above explanation is a far better fit of what actually happened.

In v.18 the whore is the city called **Babylon the great** - the city of Rome - and this links to ch.18. So the titles **whore** (*harlot*) and **Babylon the great** are symbols of the same system and express different aspects of it.

v.16 referred to the whore in great distress - the horns had *made her desolate and naked, had eaten her flesh and burned her with fire* - an apt description of the successful attacks of Napoleon and her final situation. As Daniel had predicted “*they shall take away his dominion, to consume and destroy it unto the end*” (Dan.7:26) - however, this is a long process and the full end only comes when the Lord returns (Dan.7:9-11). As mentioned above, the Pope was a virtual prisoner in the Vatican, deprived of all political power. He issued further decrees and edicts to maintain his influence among Catholics, such as that of Papal Infallibility in 1870 but never gave up hope, as outside observers noted:

“There is a fixed purpose among the secret inspirer of Roman policy to pursue, by the road of force, upon the arrival of any favourable opportunity, the favourite project of re-erecting the terrestrial throne of popedom ...” *(Vatican Decrees*, p50, British Prime Minister, William Ewart Gladstone, 1809-1898).

**Increasing impact of political influence of Vatican in 20th century**

**Pope Pius XI - Concordat with Mussolini - the Lateran Pacts 1929**

This resulted in the temporal power of the Papacy being restored, and papal temporal sovereignty revived. She also gained millions of lire from Fascist Italy. Although the former papal states became part of the unified Kingdom of Italy in 1870, since 1929 the Pope has ruled over Vatican City, an independent sovereign state, which contains vast wealth and treasures.

**In 1933 she signed a concordat with Nazi Germany at the Vatican.**

Hitler’s Third Reich resulted in the 1939-45 war. (Paul Billington, *United Europe* p36,37).

These were not distant negotiations held by zealous priests unknown to the Vatican; the Vatican’s signatory was cardinal Pacelli – the future Pope Pius XII. Von Papen (the Privy Chamberlain to the Pope, and leader of the German Catholic Party) signed for the Nazis.

He said “*the third Reich is the first power in the world not only to recognize but also to put into practice the high principles of the papacy*”. From ‘The Secret History of the Jesuits’ Edmond, Paris.

**An about-turn on Communism**

In 1949 Pius XII issued a decree prescribing the penalty of excommunication for those who voluntarily adopted Communism. But policy changed, the Pope met with Russian leaders and by 1989 Gorbachev was calling for a “**Common European Home**”.

**In 1963 Pope John XXIII took a more conciliatory line towards Communism in Encyclical *Pacem in Terris*.** The Pope met with Russian leaders and by 1989 Gorbachev was calling for a “**Common European Home**”.

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The Book of Revelation
Pressure from the first and second world wars obliged the church to clarify its teachings and work out a strategy for survival. **In 1950 Pope Pius XII** proclaimed the bodily assumption of the Virgin Mary. Since that time the church has proceeded in a new direction embracing the very philosophies which brought her original downfall in the French Revolution.

As the prestige of the Papacy grew during the 20th century, increasing numbers of states sent ambassadors to the Vatican. During the 1990s she has even recognised the State of Israel which was set up in 1948 and she intends to be involved in talks on the status of Jerusalem. Her claim to political rights of involvement anywhere is clearly expressed:

“The Roman Pontiff has the right, independently of any civil power, to send legates to any part of the world, with or without ecclesiastical jurisdiction” (*The Handbook of Catholic Practices*, p.130). Note - a legate is a cardinal appointed by the Pope to represent him.

For the past 25 years and more the Vatican has been actively involved in European politics. **For example:**-

The Russian “*Foreign Minister Ivanof held telephone conversations with his British, Spanish, Italian and Vatican counterparts on 21 April to discuss efforts to find a political solution in Kosovo, ITAR-TASS reported*” (News line 22.4.99). Realising that Europe would never regain its former organisation, the Papacy decided to harness the new philosophies unleashed in the French Revolution and now sweeping the world. This was an amazing change of direction, for she would now espouse the very ideals which had brought her to her knees - she herself would become a mouth for the frog spirit and champion ‘human rights’ and Third World aid. The Vatican started moving towards a form of ‘Christian-socialism’. There are three main ‘areas of influence’.

**THE SOCIAL GOSPEL**

The number of Catholic schools and convents etc. in Britain has multiplied tremendously in the 20th century and this has increased her influence in many fields.

**As a result of the Second Vatican Council 1965, Encyclical Letters Mater et Magistra 1961 & Pacem in Terris (1963) -** the ideological basis for a new world order, now known as Catholic Social doctrine. This involved a merger of Faith in God (Catholicism) with Faith in Man (Humanism). Thus was brought together existing Church teaching blended with Marxism.

“...in the social sphere the Christian doctrine has many common aspects with the social divisions of Marxism and other progressive movements, which ought to allow the formation between them of solid and organic links in many domains” (*Marxism and the Church of Rome*, Report by The Institute for the Study of Conflict, 1979).

“The priest’s duty is to contribute to the construction of the socialist world.”

“Communism contains a part of the Kingdom of God ...” (*Esprit*, quoted in above report).

This new Christian (ie. Catholic) socialist ideology was able to satisfy humanists and even communists and the church’s aims are furthered by Christian Democrats, who are very active in European politics. The new mix of ideology was called CHRISTIAN SOCIALISM or more pointedly “CATHOLIC HUMANISM”. The Bible would describe it as Catholic Iron mixed with Humanistic Miry Clay. Their goal was to assert this doctrine or “faith” and replace all others with it.
Soon the Lay Apostulate was set up - a vast army of lay members who are dedicated to extending the interests of the Church, who sincerely believe they are working for the spiritual benefit of society - in education, politics, the media, law and the judiciary, police etc. and are given ‘Pastoral Instructions’. In this way, the Vatican has great influence world-wide.

**Encyclical Mater et Magistra 1961**

“... this Catholic social doctrine ... must be spread by every modern means at our disposal: daily newspapers, periodicals, popular and scientific publications, radio and television.”

“If there is to be any improvement in human institutions, the work must be done slowly and deliberately from within” (Pope John XXIII 1963).

**The Mass Media - Encyclical Inter Mirifica 1963** (The Decree on The Means of Mass Communication) in a 1971 Pastoral Instruction:

“The process of promoting what is sometimes called a ‘propaganda campaign’, with a view to influencing public opinion, is justified only when it serves the truth” (ie Roman Catholic teaching). “Parents, educators, priests and Christian (ie Catholic) organisations should encourage young people with the right qualities to take up a career in social communication. They must make this contribution with the social teachings of the Church in mind. Broadcasters have access to the minds and hearts of everyone.”

Research shows that very many Catholics are now involved in the media, with prominent positions in television and radio, as well as being editors of leading national and many local newspapers. It was noted that the number of Catholic services broadcast on the media has been increasing and gradually, the British people have accepted that ‘all Christians are basically the same’, and are happy to participate in joint services and projects at their local level. Even the Queen, supposedly Defender of the Protestant faith (against the Catholics), has met Cardinals in Westminster Abbey and an audience with the Pope.

**DOCTRINAL AND MORAL**
The Jesuits particularly worked hard at proselytising non-Catholics throughout the 19th century. In Hungary 1828, Protestant converts were made to confess that:

“the Pope cannot err; that he has full power to forgive or retain sins and to cast men into hell; that all that he has established, whether out of the Bible or not, is true; that he ought to be honoured with similar reverence to that paid to Christ himself; that those who oppose his authority ought to be burned at the stake and to perish body and soul in hell; that the reading of the scriptures is the origin of all faction and blasphemy; that each priest is greater than the Virgin Mary, because she was the parent of Christ but once, but the priest creates him anew again and again.”

Even while its outward influence seemed in decline, the Church steadily grew:

“The spiritual power of the papacy at the beginning of the new (ie 20th) century is greater than it has ever been since the Middle Ages” (Phillips, *Modern Europe*, p.485).
Learned scholars developed the school of Higher Critics to undermine the Bible, and this approach was aided by the theory of Evolution. The Jesuit priest, Pierre Teilhard de Chardin promoted the concept of “theistic evolution” (ie. an evolutionary process controlled by God). The theory of Evolution has recently been officially accepted by the Roman Catholic church.

Re-union ...

The policy of Rome is to embrace and absorb all other religious systems, and this is what happened to paganism in the Roman Empire.

“If in the course of the centuries there has arisen not infrequent dissension and hostility between Christian and Muslim, this sacred Council now urges everyone to forget the past, to make sincere efforts at mutual understanding and to work together in promoting for the benefit of all men, social justice, good morals as well as peace and freedom” (The Relation of the Church to Non-Christian Religions, Papal Encyclical, 1965).

... on whose terms?

1994 - Priest Fr Neil Horan was forbidden to teach that “Armageddon and the Second Coming” would soon occur - told his Apocalyptic views were “incompatible with Catholic teaching” (Daily Telegraph, 18th Oct.1994). This is an example of the strong voice the Church maintains on doctrine and on practices such as birth control; she continues to reaffirm and insist on her own basic beliefs.

Re-union with the Orthodox Catholic church

The estrangement between the East and West branches of the church lasted from 1054 until Pope Paul VI met with the Orthodox Patriarch Athanagoras II in Jerusalem in 1964 and the meetings have continued. In 1965 the 900-year old Bull of Anathema was lifted by Rome. Communist Russia responded by passing a law in 1970 guaranteeing freedom of worship and abolishing the KGBs commission for the repression of religion.

1995 The Pope :

“... the Catholic Church requires nothing less than full communion between East and West ... No Christian community can exempt itself from this call. The Church must breathe with her two lungs ... (Pope John Paul II, 25 May 1995).

The latest move in Ecumenism calls for religious unity in the whole of Europe - including Russia.

1995 Encyclical Ut Unum Sint - the Pope set out his ambition to bring about a re-union of the Greek Orthodox Church with the Roman Catholic Church before the year AD 2000 when he hopes to celebrate the new millennium by a great gathering of ‘the three great monotheistic faiths’ - Christians, Muslims and Jews - on Mount Sinai. A ‘Pan-Christian Council’ is proposed to bring together Roman Catholics, Orthodox and Protestants into what in effect would become a Third Vatican Council for the purpose of achieving unification of ‘Christian’ churches.

He wishes to present this unified church to the Virgin Mary to commemorate the 2000th ‘birthday’ of her son, Jesus Christ. The present Pope John Paul II is very strong in his desire to elevate the
worship of the Virgin Mary and his practice of ‘kissing the ground’ on arrival in a foreign land, marks his dedication of that country to her.

**The Pope and President Putin of Russia**
The Pope has frequent direct contact with President Vladimir Putin who is the emergent strong man of Russia. They met on Nov 5th 2003. During the discussions Putin expressed the hope that

> “relations between the Russian Orthodox Church and the Vatican will develop positively.”

Before departing for Italy Putin told journalists that he believes, “the unification of the Christian world” should be promoted. Further he stated that he views greater convergence of the “Christian world” as another aspect of Russia’s integration into Europe and the international community.

**Re-union with the British Protestant churches**
The woman rider is called the mother of harlots (ch.17:5) - Many Anglicans are concerned at changes such as women priests and falling attendance.

> “The Church has to return to the mainstream or it will perish. The only possible future for the Church of England is a Catholic one, with the Pope as the first bishop” (The Rev. John Broadhurst, *The Times*, 21 Sep.1996).

Rome is even having dialogues with the Methodists. In September 2003 the Methodists signed an Intention with the Church of England to embark upon a path of unity.

Billy Graham is one of the most influential Baptist Evangelists of our day. He has been criticized by some fellow Baptists for following the same course:

> “Graham more than any other single person is responsible for leading the evangelical community into a more cosy relationship with the church of Rome … He has failed to warn of the terrible and unbiblical doctrines of Rome. Since Billy Graham sees no problem in having spiritual fellowship with the Roman Catholic Church, and since his influence is very great among evangelicals, is it any wonder that others have followed his lead?”

*David Cloud, Christian News*

**The Pope and the Muslim world**
There have been frequent meetings between the Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat and the Pope. In 1994 the Vatican established diplomatic relations with Libya.

**The 21st Century**
In 1994 Pope John Paul II published his book, *Crossing the Threshold of Hope*. He believes that humanity is on the verge of a “new world, a new Europe and a new civilization” (W53.1). Summing up the Pope’s views, Andre Malraux said:

> “The 21st century will be the century of religion or it will not be at all” (*Daily Telegraph*, 20 Oct. 1994).

**POLITICAL - THE EUROPEAN UNION**
Gladstone’s awareness of the political involvement of Rome was not unfounded. The extent of this has now become known and authors such as Avro Manhattan, Edmond Paris etc. have documented much evidence. The two world wars were no exception, as she sought to further her aims to revive the Holy Roman Empire and with it, her influence.

The first attempt to revive the Holy Roman Empire (or Roman Empire of the German nation - First Reich) was made by Bismarck and it was this German Empire, the Second Reich, that made a bid to dominate Europe, and precipitated the war of 1914-18. Rome was still involved - in 1933 she signed a concordat with Nazi Germany at the Vatican. Hitler’s Third Reich resulted in the 1939-45 war. (Paul Billington, United Europe p36,37).

**Rome involved in the European Union from the beginning ...**

“The Common Market itself started under the inspiration of Catholic politicians - such as Adenauer of Germany, Paul-Henri Spaak, Jean Monnet and Robert Schumann. They were all Christian Democrats. They were all deeply influenced by Catholic social teaching ... If European federalism triumphs, the E.C. will indeed be an empire. It will lack an emperor; but it will have the Pope ...” (Peregrine Worsthorne, The Sunday Telegraph 25 Aug.1991).

“Karol Wojtyla (Pope John Paul II) is calmly preparing to assume the mantle which he solemnly believes to be his Divine Right - that of the new Holy Roman Emperor, reigning from the Urals to the Atlantic” (The Sunday Telegraph, 21 July 1991).

David Willey, the BBC’s Rome correspondent entitled his book - “God’s Politician - John Paul at the Vatican.” He describes the Pope as one of the most ‘political’ popes in modern history. The Spectator, 10 Sep.1994 described him as “Older, Frailer but still a mighty force”.

‘**Miracles**’

We now know that the Pope ‘plotted with CIA to destroy Soviet bloc’ and was instrumental in the Fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989.

**On the occasion of the signing of the Treaty of Rome 1957**

“The Pope ... urged the nations of Europe to create a real federation ... The 78 members of the Assembly (were) ... received in audience by the Holy Father before beginning their session.”

“He said the six nations of ‘little Europe’ ... were embarking on a salutary road ‘from which can emerge ... an enrichment not only economic and cultural but also spiritual and religious’” (Catholic Times, 8 Nov.1957).

Soon afterwards the EEC was formed; one British newspaper commented :

“Western Europe is on the brink of federation. The plain truth is that the States are to pool their armies: France, Western Germany, Italy and the Low Countries, and will by that very act decide to scrap more than a thousand years of separate history and become one state again, as they were under Charlemagne” (see Apocalypse and the Gospels).

**False Promise of Liberty - from War?**

**1975 - Referendum in Britain to join Europe** - Britain persuaded under threats of war, insecurity and isolation. The FACTS leaflet distributed to every house said :
...Europeans of all nations decided to put an end to our gory past. A United Europe will make a repeat of such blood-stained history unthinkable ... They resolved to work for a political, economic and cultural union of Europe ... The aim was to make wars between democratic European states impossible and, by joining together, better to safeguard ourselves from attack from without ... For Britain to cling to some mythical national sovereignty and independence would spell certain disaster ...”.

1975 - Some saw the danger - Mrs Shirley Williams said Britain would be joined:
“to a Europe in which the Catholic religion will be the dominant faith and in which the application of Catholic social doctrine will be a major factor in everyday political and economic life” (The Reformer, May/June 1975).

As the Roman Church has a long record of intolerance to opposing views, believers in the Bible were not encouraged by the view of Jesuit T Corbishlay:
“In my view, the major argument for Britain’s entry into the European Community is that it would signalize the end of the Reformation quarrel”.
In other words, the Protestants daughters would be welcomed back to the Mother church - but not Bible believers. These are now branded as cults, especially if they do not accept the Trinity.

Recent arguments in Britain have centred on economic advantages of joining the EU - political and military aspects were denied. But this has never been in doubt:

1996 - Edward Heath:
“The raison d’etre of the European Community has always been political, not economic. It exists for no lesser reason than to prevent a recurrence of war in Europe ...” (Sunday Times, Books Section, 7 July 1996).

1996 - Chancellor Helmut Kohl of Germany
“The policy of European integration is in reality a question of war and peace in the 21st century” (Daily Telegraph, 22 March 1996).

Although Scripture predicts a time when the nations will announce peace we also know that it is a false promise, for the scarlet coloured beast of Europe with the harlot rider is destined to make war on the Lamb:
“... the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night. For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them ... and they shall not escape” (1 Thess.5:2,3)

Rome’s Involvement in British Politics
Oct. 1996 The Common Good document setting forth the Church’s social teaching, issued by the Catholic Bishops’ Conference of England and Wales, and backed by the Church of England. The document was “a deliberate attempt to influence the outcome of the general election” (The Vancouver, 21 Oct.1996). Commenting on the document, the Catholic Herald, 25 Oct.1996 said:
“Politicians have to be controlled and the Church must do it”
Many books are being written about the dangers of current developments - *The Principality and Power of Europe* - Britain and the emerging Holy European Empire - by Adrian Hilton, 1997. In a foreword by Lord Tony Pandy:

“The consequences of our belonging to a Federal Union, in which we would no longer have control over our own economy, are starkly presented. Deceit in high places has brought us to our present plight, and it is vital that a united endeavour to get out of the iron grip of European politicians should now be made ...”

We shall recognise the words underlined as echoes of Bible words used for Rome. An article about the EU in *Time* magazine dated 6 July 1998, was headed ‘A Commissioner with Iron in His Veins’

**Latest intentions**
During the past 50 years there have been deliberate steps taking place towards a UNITED EUROPE.

**1948 Council of Europe** first met at The Hague - basic purpose was “to safeguard the heritage of Europe and its social progress”.

**1951 Treaty of Paris** - 6 nations created the European Coal and Steel Community promoted by leading French Catholics Robert Schumann and the economist Jean Monet.

**1957 Treaty of Rome** - EEC formed - no mention of Defence, the aim was stated to be political union.

**1967 EU Community** - a merger of the EEC, EURATA & the European Coal and Steel Community.

**1979 Euro Monetary System**

**1985 The Single European Act** was adopted and endorsed in the Parliaments of the twelve constituent countries. It developed internal markets and arrangements for the Parliament.

**1991 Treaty of Maastricht** - a significant development.

“The Maastricht Treaty pledged the Union and its member states to put into effect a common foreign security policy” (Guide to the European Union).

**May 1999 Single European Currency.** Britain is concerned that if she gives up control of her economy it will mean loss of her sovereignty to the central bank.

“Thus the Euro puts the people of the economic colonies entirely at the mercy of the Franco-German political and beaurocratic elites, who really run Europe. Once in Euroland, financial collapse looms for the so-called peripheral countries - everybody except the components of the original empire of Charlemagne; unless the elites agree to force the European Central Bank to bale them out. The EMU is intended to destroy the nation and to create an empire.”

(*Sunday Times*, 3 Jan.1999, Bernard Connelly - Head of Exchange Rate Mechanism & Monetary Policy Division of the European Commission in Brussels for eight years).

“Joining the euro is a surrogate for signing up to far-reaching European political integration ... Germany’s Chancellor, Helmut Kohl ... made it clear that monetary union is a process which will make European unification irreversible. He sees EMU as the single most significant step on a road to a federal Europe ...” (*The European*, 27 April 1998)
“The idea is then to construct a pan-European security architecture with Russia ... the institutionalization of the hard core through monetary union, are the necessary prerequisite for the larger vision of one single politico-military system for the whole European continent” (The Tainted Source, John Laughland, 1997).

May 1999 - The Charlemagne Prize for contribution to the Unity of Europe awarded to Tony Blair, British Prime Minister, in Aachen. He said:

“For Europe, the central challenge is no longer simply securing internal peace inside the European Union - it is the challenge posed by the outside world - about how we make Europe strong and influential - how we make full use of the potential Europe has to be a global power for good”.

Is it impossible to imagine the developing common European army could be used, not just for Defence within its own borders but to aggressively stop Christ setting up his throne in Jerusalem?

Towards a Foreign, Defence and Security Policy
1948 Treaty of Brussels – Western European Union (UK, France, West Germany, Netherlands, Luxembourg)
1949 NATO
1952 European Defence Community(aborted)
1954 W. Germany, Italy join NATO
1969 Hague EC summit begins foreign policy cooperation
1974 European Council established
1985 Single European Act – to a common foreign policy
1991 Maastricht Treat on European Union – common foreign and security policy – eventually a common defence policy which may lead to a common defence.

To the time of writing (Dec 2003) great moves are still taking place between the members with regard to enlargement of the Union and towards agreement on its Constitution. This has not been finalized but the setting up of some separate Defence function seems broadly agreed. The Vatican has been busy attempting to insert sections regarding its role as preserver of the spiritual aspects of the organisation. On the first write of the constitution this was not included. But no further involvement of this aspect nor the all-important function of voting strengths as between the various members, has been agreed.
The Holy Roman Empire had a dual leadership – the emperor to control bodies and the pope to control the welfare of the minds. It is towards this that the pope is working in the new EU constitution.

Europe today is living largely by her heritage of the Holy Roman Empire — though the great majority don’t know it.” Dr Otto van Habsburg, Member of the European Parliament and of the Austrian Monarchy.

Conclusions - Is the harlot riding the beast ?
The basis for this symbol was well understood in John’s day for it concerned the mythology of Jupiter, chief god of the Greek and Roman pantheon. The illustration shows Europa being stolen by Zeus, in the form of a bull. Europa was the daughter of the King of Tyre and the prophet Ezekiel prophesies the downfall of the international trading nation of Tyre, in ch.27 - and there are many links with the language of Rev.18!

This is the reason why the ECU shows the same symbol. It is also significant that the President of the EU has an illustration in ceramic tiles of Europa riding the beast in his office (see The Bible Magazine, Feb.1999 Vol.12, Issue 2).

Today we see the nations of Europe joining together as the European Union into a federal Empire, and many more from the east are waiting to join. A common army is developing, and the influence of the Roman church is an element. We are seeing the feet of Daniel’s image (Dan.2:43) where the Roman iron mixes with the clay of human democracy in the nation states of Europe. Many have tried to unite Europe since the days of the Holy Roman empire – notably, Bismarck, Napoleon and Hitler - but history shows that the iron and clay do not cleave together and always break apart. The significant point about Rev.17:13 is that at last this is achieved, but not by force - the independent sovereign states of Europe (the horns) choose to give their power to the Beast. Incidentally, the following quotation from a letter of Napoleon to his brother-in-law shows his far-sightedness:

“I want the whole of Europe to have one currency – it will make trading much easier.”

We are seeing the Roman Empire form again - but this time, instead of one emperor absorbing and controlling all the peoples, it is made of nation states willing to share their sovereignty. The word give in v13 means to do his mind and to act in one mind, to form one judgment and to do one judgment. So a common policy will be voluntarily agreed by the nation states in regard to their relationship with Rome.

We watch the new European state form before our eyes as the Beast - and we note that its religious allegiances are almost entirely toward Rome. The harlot is very much involved although she appears very different from the days of the Holy Roman Empire, before the French Revolution. As the champion of human rights she is ably served by the present Pope, John Paul II. He is a charismatic leader who is able to attract people with his piety and humility and is welcomed by all, as he continues to travel the world and speak to vast gatherings of people. The Church has recently apologised for the excesses of some of its members during the Inquisition and to the Jews. Has she therefore changed into a different institution? Or is it deceit?

We remember the warnings of Gladstone:

“I warn my countrymen against the velvet paw, and smooth and soft exterior of a system which is dangerous to the foundations of civil order” (W.E.Gladstone, Vaticanism, p.117).

If Rome is the harlot and she is riding the European beast, then both are to be destroyed by the Lord Jesus Christ when he returns, for they will make war on the Lamb (ch.17:14).

The challenge is for us to choose our allegiance now.
We are very privileged to be able to see such developments as have taken place during the 20th century and to have such reason to believe we are very close to the return of Christ. On the basis of Scripture, others too could see these things:

**George Joye (died 1553)**

“The Roman Empire, the fourth division, dispersed and decayed into Germany, England, Spain, France et cetera shall be mixt together but yet they shall not cleave. They shall be confederate to make a new and all-one monarchy, but all in vain. The little horn was and is the Antichrist’s kingdom of the popes of Rome with all their unclean clergy. The ten horned beast ascending out of the sea is the spiritual Antichrist of Rome with all his laws, rites, traditions, decrees, and doctrine” (*Exposition of Daniel*).

**Title page of Anatolia by John Thomas 1854** - see illustration W53.2

(Note - For much information and helpful comment on current developments, see *The Bible Magazine*, obtainable from 1 Woodrow Lane, Catshill, Bromsgrove, Worcs.B61 0PS. Also *Milestones*).
JOY & VICTORY - Ch.19

Ch.19:1-10 Joy and an Invitation
The chapter opens with the words “After these things” and as we know, this indicates a new vision (see chart at the end of Section 42). John is now to be shown what is to happen after the fall of Rome (for he hath judged the great harlot). The first four verses set out the goal to be attained and as we have seen before, the rest of the vision fills in the details.

The Lord Jesus and his saints are seen to be rejoicing in their ruling place (heaven v1) of Jerusalem. Alleluia (Halleluyah) means ‘Praise ye Yah’ and is found only four times in the Revelation, but very often in the Psalms. They rejoice because the first stage of the judgment of Babylon has taken place.

Before they are depicted as saying Halleluyah the second time, the second stage must take place. These are the further events of this chapter from v11. These events encompass the resistance of the Pope and Catholic Europe after the fall of Rome itself. This resistance will be completely put down and at that point, Babylon will have been completely destroyed - her smoke rose up for ever and ever (v3) meaning total as was the overthrow of Sodom (ch.14:11 Section 38). The twenty four elders and four living ones, which represent the glorified saints (ch.4), can then exclaim Amen, for it will mean the end of the war of the great day of the Almighty.

A note of explanation here may help our understanding of v7. The terms ‘marriage’ and ‘marriage supper’ occur in Revelation as descriptions of distinct activities which take place after the return of Christ. The marriage is understood to refer to that marvellous occasion when the approved saints having been judged, probably in the Sinai area, are elevated to immortal life. They are given new bodies and are made ‘equal unto the angels to die no more’. As Peter says: “Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust” (2 Peter 1:4).

Hence they are made ‘one’ with the Lord.

Their first involvement is to free the land of Israel from the host of Gog which by then has entered and taken captive the land of Israel (Eze.38). This will lead to the freeing of the Jews and their
chance to accept their Messiah and for the setting up of the original throne of David in Jerusalem with the enthronement of Jesus as King.

The marriage supper is a separate event from the marriage itself, and will be celebrated in Jerusalem with all the invited guests:

“And in this mountain shall the LORD of hosts make unto all people a feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees ...” (Isa.25:6).

These will possibly be representatives from the nations which are prepared to accept Jesus as King, bringing presents (Psa.72:10).

Why are there two Halleluyahs?
The voice from the throne of v5 relates to the first Halleluyah because it includes thunderings meaning judgments. These will be finished by the time of the second Halleluyah.

The voice rejoices at the coming marriage supper of the Lamb. (Note: the last part of v7 should be in the past tense, “because the marriage of the Lamb came and his wife prepared herself” Diaglott). The actual marriage had already taken place as we saw above - it is the union between Christ and the saints when they have been raised from the dead and clothed upon with immortality - they then became ‘one spirit.’

The Bride is preparing herself now during this life of probation and developing those characteristics which will fit her to be the King’s wife. We have seen that the garment of righteousness was given to her at baptism, as a covering for sin. She is now bringing forth fruits worthy of repentance (right actions) as she keeps the garment unspotted from the world, held firm by the golden girdle of tried faith.

To whom is the invitation issued?
The angel issues a gracious invitation (v9) to attend the marriage supper of the Lamb - a feast which traditionally lasted for many days. The invitation is the same as that of ch.14:6,7. It cannot be issued to the saints for they are already married to the Lamb. It can only be to those of the mortal population who respond - they will indeed be blessed and will make up the waters of v6 who rejoice at this great Halleluyah festival. The destruction of the harlot who had corrupted with her lies and brought so much darkness, has prepared them to appreciate the light of Truth:

“... the Gentiles shall come unto thee from the ends of the earth, and shall say, Surely our fathers have inherited lies, vanity, and things wherein there is no profit” (Jer.16:19).

John is so overcome at seeing this wonderful event that he worships the angel (v10), but is warned to keep all praise and adoration for Almighty God. The angel declares that God is true and that He will surely fulfil all His promises without doubt. This shows how important it is for us to keep the glorious end vision fixed in our minds, for it will sustain us in times of trial and depression.

Summary of Sequence of Events
After the marriage of Christ and the glorified saints, their first involvement will be to free the land of Israel from the host of Gog, which by then has entered and taken captive their land (Ezekiel 38). This
will lead to the freeing of the Jews and their opportunity to accept their Messiah and for the setting up of the original throne of David in Jerusalem with the enthronement of Jesus as King.

This will no doubt provoke the sympathisers of Rome - Catholic Europe, the Pope and his hierarchy to gather an army against Jesus. (Rev.19:19). This resistance is ended by the Beast and the False Prophet being cast into a lake of fire.

The marriage supper follows subsequently and is a separate event from the marriage itself. It will be celebrated in Jerusalem with all the invited guests:

“\textit{And in this mountain shall the LORD of hosts make unto all people a feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees ...}” (Isa.25:6).

Who will be invited? The Saints are issuing the invitations. The guests will possibly be representatives from those nations who are prepared to accept and welcome Jesus as the King and bringing gifts. eg Queen of Sheba. The whole earth is now subdued and the millennial reign of Christ commences.

Ch.19:11-21 Victory of the Lamb

This whole section expands ch.17:12-14 when the ten horns receive power as kings one hour with the beast, and make war with the Lamb.

The Lord Jesus is the Commander-in-Chief of his army and rides a \textit{white horse} (v11) The horse is the symbol of war as we remember from the seal period, and white horses show that the Lord will make war in righteousness (Acts 17:31). He is described as \textit{Faithful and True} and this is the second occasion when the state of the ecclesia at Laodicea is brought to mind (ch.3:14) - their lack of constancy and true state will be all too obvious in the reality of the Lord’s return and is a warning to us. \textit{His eyes as a flame of fire} (v12 & ch.1:14) express his divine anger against the ungodly who still resist him, even though many nations have acknowledged him (Psa.72:10) - on his head were many crowns (Gk.diadem). These are royal crowns gained by conquest.

Why had his vesture been dipped in blood?

(The Diaglott uses the past tense - \textit{having been dipped}. The word \textit{dipped} is \textit{bapto} so the whole garment had been dyed). This is a wonderful reminder that the Lord had once been clothed with human nature, but now this has been changed for divine nature. This shows that the Lord’s sacrifice was for himself as well as for others. Through it he obtained redemption from his own human nature. This is explained by the apostle Paul in Heb.13:20 where he says that God brought Jesus back to life through the blood of the everlasting covenant - or his own blood. We are thus reminded of the greatest victory of this mighty victor - he has first overcome his own flesh. The Father has “... \textit{given him authority to execute judgment also, because he is the Son of man}” (John 5:27) - he did have human nature but is now redeemed. He is therefore the chief among those who are appointed to execute the judgment written (Psa.149:9).

He is accompanied by his faithful saints in white linen (the same clothing identifies them as the Bride v8), also on white horses (v14). It appears from Zech.10:3 and other Scriptures, that part of his army will also consist of mortal Jews, who have accepted him.
The symbol of the sword coming out of his mouth (v15) is taken from Isa.49:2 and 11:4:

“... and he shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked”.

The winepress (v15) confirms that this war is the conflict of ch.14:18-20.

Who is the angel standing in the sun? v17
This reminds us of ch.12:1 where the apostate church is depicted as being in this position of authority because she wrongly grasped at political power. When the true saints have been made immortal, however, Christ will invite them to Come up hither (ch.4:1) and will elevate them to the ruling places in the new heavens (ch.5:10). They will then be enabled to:

“shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father” (Matt.13:42).

Who are the fowls?
Scripture refers to nations as the fowls of heaven (Dan.4:12; Matt.13:32). Cyrus (Isa.46:11) and also Israel (Jer.12:9 mg) are described as birds of prey. Note: In Eze.39:17 a similar invitation is issued to symbolic feathered fowl to come and feast off the carcases of the slain at the conclusion of Armageddon. This means that Gentile nations will be invited to endorse the action of Christ in destroying the armies of Gog by acknowledging that the judgment was both right and just - they will then submit to the reign of Christ the King. They are the nations who respond to his command to fear God in ch.14:6,7.

Now, having already seen the destruction of Rome as well as that of Gog’s hosts, there is another opportunity for people to acknowledge as just, the judgments that Christ will pour out upon the nations who still resist him. So they are invited to symbolically eat the flesh of kings (v17). They will see that Christ’s rule of a new world order is desirable. Such peoples can then be included into his kingdom as mortal nations:

“Yea, many people and strong nations shall come to seek the LORD of hosts in Jerusalem, and to pray before the LORD” (Zech.8:22).

A further dimension of the meaning of these birds of prey of v17, is that it is a fulfilment of ancient prophecies about the Jews themselves. Those living in Europe and responding to the call to Come out of Babylon will be organised by the saints and used in their army, as we have already discussed.

quote Numbers 23:24; 24:7,8. Also Jer.51:20

The principle of God that those who have suffered are, under His direction and at His chosen time, to effect the vengeance is as equally true for Jews as for the saints. They have endured immense antisemitic persecution over the centuries at the hands of the Roman church and in the whole of Europe.

War against the white horse rider (v19)
The opportunity for repentance passes and the beast and ten kings (Catholic Europe) gather their armies to make war against the Lamb and his army - the idea seems preposterous! But we remember that Scripture has warned us that the Catholic nations have been made drunk with the intoxicating wine of the harlot and are mad.
The dragon is not mentioned and this is because the military power of Russia will have suffered a major blow, with the overthrow of Gog at Armageddon.

The Pope is likely to encourage this organised resistance to the new Government set up in Jerusalem. He is the Vicar of Jesus Christ but knows nothing about this ‘imposter’. The laws of the new Government will horrify the modern world; Christ will abolish freedom of religion:

- Only the worship of one God, (that of Yahweh, God of Israel) will be permitted (Zeph.2:11)
- There will be compulsory worship at Jerusalem (Zech.14:17-19)
- All nations have to obey Israel’s king (Psa.72:11; 2 Thess.1:7-9)

As we have mentioned, the Pope will brand this new Jewish upstart as the expected Antichrist and declare it a Just War:

“The State which declares war must be morally certain that its rights are being actually violated or are in certain and imminent danger” (O’Brien, The Faith of Millions).

What is the lake of fire burning with brimstone? v20

The description could be both symbolic and literal. Many passages of Scripture speak of every man’s sword being against his brother and the Balkans are an example of this at the present time. News Correspondents say the hatred now amongst former neighbours in Bosnia and in Kosovo has to be seen to be believed - this instability is what can lead to a lake of fire. Europe could thus be engulfed in inter-necine warfare, perhaps together with unprecedented earthquake and volcanic action.

The outcome of the war is inevitable and both the beast and the false prophet are totally vanquished in a Europe where war and divine judgments have made it a lake of fire. Daniel had predicted this end for the little horn with eyes and a mouth speaking great things:

“I beheld then because of the voice of the great words which the horn spake: I beheld even till the beast was slain, and his body destroyed, and given to the burning flame” (Dan. 7:11).

This is the last period of judgment upon the worshippers of the beast and his image. The symbolism shows that eventually the political organisation of western Europe, together with every influence of Catholicism will be completely eradicated from the earth.

Many passages of Scripture speak of every man’s sword being against his brother. Revelation does not say that Jesus makes the lake of fire - but that he casts the beast and false prophet into it. It is evident that God only pours out the final judgments on those who retain implacable hostility to Christ, such that there is no other way to achieve God’s purpose of a peaceful world reflecting His glory, but by eliminating them.

This is consistent with God’s character for He is:

“... not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance” (2 Pet.3:9).

Christ will complete his conquests of all other resistance (v21) by education and teaching, for the sword of his mouth is the word of God (Eph.6:17; Heb.4:12). This will be a rewarding work for the
saints for people will be far more receptive. Thus the remaining nations will be won over to his control:

“And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the LORD’S house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it. And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.

And he shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people: and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more” (Isa.2:2-4).
Although the beast and the false prophet have been destroyed, we notice that the subject peoples of the kingdom are still mortal - they still have human nature. The purpose of the thousand year reign of Christ is to develop many more who will appreciate his sacrifice and to whom he will grant immortal life at the end of the reign:

“For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death” (1 Cor.15:25,26).

The righteous rule of Christ and the saints and the education in divine things which people will receive, will help them immeasurably. Crime will not pay; there will be no need for law courts and juries for the immortal rulers will know what all are thinking, as even the apostles were enabled to do (Acts 5:4-9; Isa.30:21). In order to give such a system the best chance of all of reforming mankind, Christ will ensure that there are no political movements capable of mounting a rebellion. This is symbolised by v1-3 where the dragon is bound as cast into the abyss.

We saw the final manifestation of the dragon power in ruins on the mountains of Israel, in the defeat of Gog and his armies. We first saw it in the book of Revelation in ch.12 where it was the pagan Roman authority - it was the organised political outworking of human thought in rebellion against God. Previously, Daniel had seen it embodied in the glittering image of human prowess in the succession of empires - it is, in essence, the human spirit opposed to God - and this was originally seen in Eden, where the serpent deceived Eve and she chose to rebel against God’s commands.

The description in v2 encompasses all these aspects by linking the dragon with that old serpent. Other names in Scripture are used to personify this - the devil (meaning false accuser) and satan (adversary). Note - there are no capitals for these names in the original Greek.
We know that it is by acting on the human promptings of our own natures, instead of worshipping God that we bring death upon ourselves, “For the wages of sin is death ...” (Rom.6:23).

Political opposition to Christ’s reign will be effectively restrained during the thousand years therefore, so that his rule is respected (Micah 7:16). The false religious influences have been removed so true worship will be established at Jerusalem and enforced (Zech.14:16-19) The moral standards of humanity will be elevated (Isa.32:1-6), whilst peace and prosperity will be developed on the basis of true love towards God and man (Isa.9:6,7; 2 John 6). So human nature is not changed, but
men behave differently when subject to strong discipline and godly teaching. Although mankind would be incapable of setting up such a beneficent and wise rule, Christ’s righteousness, and that of the saints who share his throne (v4), will ensure it (Isa.11:1-9). It will indeed be Paradise Restored.

**Why are the thousand years taken literally? v4**
This is the only literal time period in Revelation for the following reasons:

- Genesis shows a pattern of a 7 day week, the last day being a sabbath or day of rest. As man’s history began approximately 6000 years ago and Christ’s return appears imminent, a literal 1000 years for the kingdom as the *sabbath of rest* (Heb.4:9) would fit this pattern.

- If the 7 day week is a type or symbol therefore, it has already been expanded when it is expressed in Revelation as a 1000 years - it can be taken literally as it is not a symbol.

- The ‘day for a year’ principle would result in such a long time period that it would be out of harmony with the way in which God has dealt with mankind.

- It has been claimed that in Scripture time periods where the word ‘year’ is used in the prophecy, it is always to be interpreted literally (eg.Jer.25:11). (See note in Section 1,p.11).

**What is the first resurrection? v5**
Not necessarily what we might think it is! We speak of *first* in terms of time but also in *status*. The saints who are given immortality at Christ’s return are *firstfruits*:

> “And I looked, and, lo, a Lamb stood on the mount Zion, and with him an hundred forty and four thousand, having his Father’s name written in their foreheads ... These were redeemed from among men, being the firstfruits unto God and to the Lamb” (Rev.14:1,4). See also James 1:18.

We know these saints who are to live and reign with Christ as kings and priests, have been given the gift of immortality, and so they are unable to die a second time - death has no more power over them (v6).

**The rest of the dead** (v5) therefore, are those human beings who die during the thousand years and later verses speak of these people, they are the mortal population of the kingdom age.

**Note**: Other Scriptures confirm this conclusion. Dan.12:2 and John 5:29 show that two classes of people are raised to judgment when Jesus returns - they are then given life or they die (2 Thess.1:9). So the *rest of the dead* cannot refer to any of these. Many of those who die before Christ’s coming will never rise from the grave (Psa.49:19,20; 88:5; Isa.26:14; Eph.2:12) for they are ignorant of the gospel (John 12:48).

**Another battle! vs.7-10**
It seems incredible that the peace and harmony of this glorious kingdom should be shattered after a Millennium of righteous rule - why should Christ let this happen? The answer lies in a correct understanding of human nature.

At the end of the thousand years the restraint of evil by the saints will be eased - they may all congregate to the camp of the saints around Jerusalem. The men and women then living will have experienced peace and great prosperity and need to be tested to see whether they will willingly obey God. But they still have the same human nature - as they discover that they can please themselves without censure, sin will increase and human nature will reassert itself. It gives the ultimate lie to the belief that if humans are placed in a good environment, they will become good: Scripture has always taught otherwise:

“Let favour be shewed to the wicked, yet will he not learn righteousness: in the land of uprightness will he deal unjustly ...” (Isa.26:10). (See also Matt.19:17; Rom.7:18).

The mention here of “Gog and Magog” (v8) is not to be confused with that in Ezekiel (ch 38) which took place before the revelation of Christ and his followers on earth. In Revelation the names refer symbolically to the spirit which did motivate that original Gog and Magog and characterises this end of Kingdom uprising. (Psa 2 portrays the situation in both instances).

As the rebellion gathers momentum, proud leaders will arise and deceive many others in all parts of the earth (v8) in a desire for a change of government. They are allowed to encompass the headquarters of the saints in Jerusalem before the fire of judgment overwhelms them. Incidentally, this proves the saints rule on earth, and can be seen bodily in a literal place - such that they can be surrounded.

The deceivers are symbolically cast into a lake of fire - their spirit of revolt leads them to the same fatal end as the beast and false prophet before them. Jude 7 speaks of the same end for Sodom and v14 confirms that their end is death.

Millions of loyal people will have refused to join these presumptuous rebels and will therefore have demonstrated their faith in actions. There now takes place the final judgment (v11). In addition to the living mortals, those who have died during the kingdom age will be resurrected (v12) and all will be judged by the same principle of faith resulting in works, that God has always used.

At the beginning of the kingdom, the glorified saints were only the firstfruits - there now follows the full harvest of immortal beings. The wicked will be punished with eternal death - until the marvellous situation is reached where there are no more mortal people - death and the grave will have claimed their last victims for ever (v14). Thus the purpose of God in the creation of the earth will be accomplished - sin and death will be eradicated and harmony once more established:

“For the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea” (Hab.2:14).

Christ, having reigned until he has vanquished death as his last enemy, now becomes subject to the Father that God may be all in all (1 Cor.15:26,28).
CONTINUOUS HISTORIC INTERPRETATION

This is the approach we have adopted through the course. In this is seen a forecast of events advancing into the future as progress is made through the book. The first three chapters containing the Letters to the Churches are seen as linking into this structure as the letters are delivered to the seven ecclesias in a sequence. They indicate that the later churches are broadly in a poorer spiritual condition. This is claimed to be the message as seen through continuous historic approach - namely, that over the future centuries the Gospel left by Jesus and upheld in the churches of Paul’s day would go through a period of departure from truth and turn to error.

Why no mention of Israel?
It is noteworthy to see that the emphasis and interest of the work of Jesus from heaven as seen by the continuous historic view is centred in tending and guarding the various ecclesias set up in his name in the Roman Empire with little or no direct reference to God’s chosen people, the nation of Israel. Why might this be? It is surely because Israel has turned its back on their God and are undergoing punishment in captivity as a result. For the time being the Lord has turned his face (Isa.54:8) from them until the latter days when the Old Testament prophecies are to be fulfilled - as we in our days are witnessing. Israel is being regathered, ready to welcome her saviour and be ‘graft in’ again (Rom.11).

The continuous historic interpretation indicates that down through future centuries the ecclesias left by the Apostle Paul are to be infected by error progressively to such an extent that by the conclusion of the book the leaders actually fight against Jesus Christ, the basis of their own Church, when he appears the second time.

The main writing was by J Thomas and published principally in Eureka - other books have subsequently been written by various authors. Writers previous to J Thomas had published works on Revelation and there is evidence of those in earlier centuries who viewed events in their own days on the basis of a continuous historic view of Revelation (see Section 41). Because of his understanding of the gospel as the Hope of Israel, and God’s purpose to manifest Himself in His Son and in the saints in a future kingdom on earth, John Thomas was able to extend this continuous historic view to
encompass events since the French Revolution and into the future. The meaning of the Visions of Glory (Section 22) is also dependent upon and vitally affected by a knowledge of God’s purpose.

It was to be expected that the Roman Catholic church would disagree with the continuous historic view as the Protestants began to publish it in the 15th and 16th centuries, since it reflected on them so badly. They began to propagate alternatives by two Spanish Jesuits: Alcazar wrote a Preterist type of interpretation with the symbols applying to the Jewish nation in the first century and in 1580, Ribera a Futurist theory. Eventual success came with the Futurist writings of the Jesuit Lacunza, who wrote under the false name of Rabbi Ben Ezra. By the early 19th century Protestants, including the Church of England and Non-conformists had substantially turned away from their previous continuous historic understanding. Their expectation of a future Anti-Christ in Israel blends with this interpretation and as we noted in Section 47, will be a significant factor in persuading the nations to fight against the Lord Jesus Christ.

THE PRETERIST INTERPRETATION as in Revelation by H A Whittaker (1973).

This interpretation is based on the view that practically all scriptural prophecy has a short term and also a long term fulfillment. Applied to the Revelation this means that from chapter 6 onwards the prophecy describes either:-

1. the grim events associated with the fall of Jerusalem in AD 70, or else
2. the great events prior to and contemporary with the return of the Lord, or
3. to both

The date of writing of Revelation is therefore crucial - it had to be written before AD 70 in order to prophesy events surrounding it. It is maintained by H Whittaker that the Revelation was given during Nero’s persecution and hence is dated AD64 - 68. It must be said that other authorities put the date later - in Domitian’s persecution of approximately AD 96.

On the basis of the earlier dating, the Preterist view is that the Seals and Trumpets apply to Israel in AD 70.
• The first Seal is interpreted as Christianity conquering Judaism around AD 70.
• The second Seal refers to violence AD 65-70.
• The third Seal is seen as Famine especially in Jerusalem.
• The fourth Seal refers to grim events in Jerusalem AD 67-70.
• Fifth Seal indicates Jewish hostility to Christians from Stephen onwards.
• The great earthquake of the sixth Seal is the end of the Jewish Constitution.

The Trumpets which follow the Seals in Revelation in this interpretation cover the same time span as the Seals.
• Hence first Trumpet results in destruction of national Jewry.
In the second Trumpet the great mountain burning with fire is Zion. How Zion being cast into the sea can produce death to a third of the creatures in the sea, is explained by a passage from Gibbon of an encounter on the sea of Galilee between a Jewish fleet and ships commandeered by the Romans.

The third Trumpet - the great star which falls on rivers and fountains of waters is Halley’s comet which was said to stand over Jerusalem for a whole year.

The above examples are given to provide a sample of the results from applying this particular approach. We could ask about the basis which gives rise to such conclusions. One of the underpinning approaches is the author’s treatment of the matter of interpretation itself, namely:

“Revelation has many allusions to the Old Testament. If there are similar phrases in Revelation to any in the Old Testament the two should be linked and Revelation is to be interpreted in the context of the Old Testament phrase.”

Example Rev.6:8:

“And I looked, and behold a pale horse: and his name that sat on him was Death, and Hell followed with him. And power was given unto them over the fourth part of the earth, to kill with sword, and with hunger, and with death, and with the beasts of the earth.”

The author points out that:

“this is a verbatim quotation from the Septuagint of Ezekiel 14:21 which describes ‘God’s four sore judgments on Jerusalem.’ This by itself is decisive. The Seals must be given an application to war-torn Jerusalem either in the First Century, or the Twentieth, or both.”

Views on the Continuous Historic Interpretation by H W:

“John Thomas and others have suggested an impressive correspondence between the Seals...and certain epochs of Roman and Church history...”

And again

“Whilst there may be places where the equation of prophecy and history staggers somewhat, there can be no question that in general the way in which the one answers to the other is impressive.”

Criticism of continuous historic interpretation is based on the claim that it is un-Biblical rather than on its being inaccurate. Un-Biblical means that there is no Biblical warrant for linking the prophecy given, to certain epochs in the world’s history. This it is claimed, contrasts with Nebuchadnezzar’s image; for example where the context identifies the situation “thou art this head of gold.” and leads into a Biblical based interpretation (Dan.2).

Having made this criticism, HW is careful to say that lack of Biblical confirmation does not constitute disproof. He believes that the continuous historic view should not:

“be dismissed with an airy wave of the hand.”

On the interpretation of ‘the Beast’, the author is clear that it has no relationship to the Papacy:
“All present indications are that the political power of the Church of Rome is as good as finished. Fantasies about a political union between Rome and Communism ... lack even a vestige of Biblical support, and certainly do not belong to the world of reality.” (1973).

Instead HW sees identification of the Beast of the Abyss associated with others who “dwell in the land”. This leads to the ‘ten kings’ being the ten Arab states in close alliance with Russia who at the time of the end will overthrow the State of Israel. In this case the ‘deadly wound’ would refer to the run-down of Russia during the second world war and its fantastic recovery within a few short years.

An alternative scenario would see the Beast identified with the religion of Islam and the resurgence of Palestinians to positions of dominance over vanquished Israel. The Author understands ‘the Harlot’ to be Israel, centred on Jerusalem.

FUTURIST INTERPRETATION as in Apocalypse for Everyman Alfred Norris (1982)

The interpretation is sequential, with chaps 6 to 20 all still in the future. Chaps 4 & 5 are to be considered together - Chap 4 is a first vision of heaven itself with the Almighty on the throne, whilst Chap 5 describes the arrival of Jesus in heaven.

The Seals

• The first 4 Seals in chap 6 are a general description of the past 18 centuries setting out the ills and terrors in the earth until the return of the Lord.

• The 5th Seal is held to be taking places in times very close to the return of Jesus under which the living Saints must suffer yet another persecution.

During the last phase, the 6th Seal, events will reach a climax in which the pending intervention provokes the world to a terrified anticipation of what is to come to pass. The author says that the language used in the sixth seal is too grand to describe the time of Constantine, which forms a crucial event in the continuous historic view, and that men hiding themselves from the wrath of the Lamb on the throne must be only when Christ comes:

“It is impossible to understand the language here being used of any small-time activity of some human monarch playing God before his friends and enemies. This in context, in language and in setting, is a message about the activities of God himself, directed towards bringing to an end the existing order of things ...”.

The 7th Seal is seen as a pause before further judgments are poured out. A. D. Norris does not accept any ‘telescopic’ structure of Revelation as the book itself does not inform us so.

The Trumpets and Vials are seen as God’s own specific intervention in the world - miraculous events which are reminiscent of the plagues on Egypt. The author says:-

“At least it seems quite plain from the record that the events in the Trumpet category will be so plainly the work of God to every perceptive eye that when coupled with the witness of
preaching with which it will be associated, the world ought to perceive God’s hand and repent, and will be held guilty when it fails to do so.”

Chap 10 - ‘the rainbowed angel’, is a messenger from Christ commissioning true believers to preach the gospel after the terrifying events under the Trumpets.

Chap 11 - The ‘Two Witnesses’ are seen to be identified with faithful followers of God:
“called on to proclaim the gospel in adversity, who in some sense will carry out their task, not by human power alone, but supported by God’s spirit ... that fire proceeds out of their mouths, means no doubt, that at their word the fire comes from heaven to destroy their enemies as it did at the word of Elijah.”

Chap 12 - this chapter is said to be out of sequence.
The ‘woman’ is identified as Israel, giving birth to Jesus. Of the man-child “who is to rule all nations with a rod of iron; and her child was caught up to God and to His throne” - we are told that
“the rod of iron well nigh identifies positively this man-child with the Lord Jesus Christ in the light of Psalm 2 ... for the man-child is caught up to God’s throne, and it is from heaven that the conqueror will emerge. The attempts of the dragon to devour the man-child (ch.12:4) began as soon as his birth was known, for Herod was prepared to massacre the innocents of Bethlehem.”
The ‘woman in the wilderness’ is the nations of Israel scattered among the nations.

Chap 13 - The ‘Beast of the Sea’ is a dreadful anti-christian power yet to arise, supported by a new religion described as the ‘god of the earth’ and later as the ‘false prophet’. True believers witness against it.

Chap 14 - The ‘Lamb on Mount Zion’ with the 144,000 is a picture of the preaching of the gospel, the same as the work of the two witnesses, but Christ has not actually returned.

Chap 15 & 16 - The vials are poured out in another series of terrific judgments carried out by angels.

Chap 17 - The ‘harlot riding the beast’ is Israel emerging from the wilderness. Alternatively, it might be apostate Christianity or may represent a union between apostate Israel and apostate Christianity.

‘The Beast which was and is not’, is seen to be a composite of all the beasts of Daniel 7 and therefore a fitting symbol for a power, whose destruction will bring the total downfall of the kingdom of men. The Beast is international and imperial. The conclusion on the identity of the Beast appears to be as follows :
“It is thus a political system derived from Rome, but not in any way to be identified with apostate Christianity or Judaism.”
The author, having stated the derivation from Rome of this political system, then proceeds to question whether in fact it is Rome at all, and postulates that the seven may indicate fullness or completeness rather than be an indication of the physical location of Rome itself. Jerusalem is suggested on account of its mountains as a possible location.

Chap 18 - The identity of Babylon may be Rome or Jerusalem; it may represent wealth and power of the nation of Israel or the Catholic system.

By chapter 19 the rejoicing is by the angels because Christ has now come and the believers probably now being taken to the judgment seat.

Chap 20 & 21 - The time for the believers to be judged when thrones and judgment are set up, is described in chap 20, and the saints are made immortal after the judgment seat and reign with Christ are portrayed in chap 21 as New Jerusalem, the Bride adorned for her husband.
Every effort has been made to give a succinct but true and balanced account without comment of the findings of H A Whittaker and A D Norris. The authors apologise in advance if it is felt that the sum of the quotations and comments made do not truly reflect the main thrust of the works.

As we have shown, the alternative interpretations diverge early on, either because of a different principle of interpretation or because of a different assumption about a particular passage. It is these differences which lead to wholly different directions as the book is interpreted.

We refer to the blessings the Lord Jesus has promised to those who prayerfully seek a correct understanding so that we can avoid being destroyed with the Beast and the False Prophet.

(For a fuller treatment of this subject, see The Revelation - Which Interpretation? by Graham Pearce, obtainable from the Scripture Study Service).
The New Heaven & Earth vs1-8
These chapters bring us a marvellous vision of the glorious consummation of God’s plan. It is worth noticing that only those who ‘overcome’ will be there and they will be given the victor’s crown. This symbology arises from the Olympic games. The crown was made of leaves which would gradually perish - in the Pythian games, of laurel; in the Nemean games, of parsley; and in the Isthmian games, of the pine. This contrasts with the crown of righteousness which does not fade away. The book of Revelation is not intended to be simply a history lesson in advance. It is to teach what happens to those who overcome - they will receive the crown of victory. The book is to strengthen their faith. Unique in Scripture, it is a view of life beyond the thousand years of the kingdom. The heaven and earth of the kingdom have passed away (ch..20:11; Isa.24:23) when there ceased to be any mortal people to be ruled. The turbulent sea of nations became clear as crystal (ch.4:6) during the kingdom but now ceases to exist. All people are now the faithful seed of Abraham, the Israel of God (Gal.6:16). We are given no details of their new spheres of activity beyond the kingdom into Eternity.

The holy city, new Jerusalem John saw in the vision (v2) is in contrast to the city of Babylon the Great. By metonomy the city stands for its inhabitants and he saw the Bride in all her perfection of nature and character. Every member of the Bride will have been born from above (John 3:3), either before or during the Millennium. Now that sin, death and the grave have been abolished from the earth and God is all in all, He is pleased to dwell with men (v3) as the Israel’s Tabernacle in the wilderness foreshadowed (Heb.9:9,11). He will dwell in the redeemed, as each one will manifest His glory (Rom.5:2; Rev.3:12).

The list in v8 warns us of the characteristics which will exclude from this glorious company of the redeemed. We need to be aware of how God views these failings and only His Word can do this for us. The fearful or cowards (1 John 4:18), the unbelieving (Heb.11:6), the abominable (Luke 16:15), murderers (1 John 3:15), whoremongers (James 4:4; Rev.17:5); sorcerers (Isa.8:19,20); idolaters
(Col.3:5; Eph.5:5); liars (1 John 2:4,22; 5:10). These people love the world more than God and will share its fate.

The Bride, the Lamb’s wife vs9-21
It is important to realise that the holy city community is perfect during the kingdom age but will be added to by the great harvest at the end, when many more will be made immortal. The Bride will then be complete.

Having shown John the end picture, the angel now takes him back to the beginning of the kingdom age to give more details of the Bride, the new Jerusalem whose final glory and completeness he has already been shown. During the kingdom, the mortal nations will come and worship at the new Temple - the House of Prayer for all nations which they will help to build on the newly elevated mountain of Jerusalem (Zech. 6:15; 14:4,10). Details of this building are set out in Ezekiel’s prophecy chs.40-47. It is fascinating to see that the description of the spiritual Jerusalem, the holy city, mirrors the details of this building yet are symbolic representations. The symbols used stand for aspects of the relationships and interactions in love between Christ, the saints and the mortal population of the kingdom.

The holy city shines with the light of glory from Christ (v11), as the brightness of the jasper stone, clear as crystal (Rev.4:3 see Section 12), which is why the city had no need of the sun (v23). The great and high wall (v12) encloses the redeemed with the power and spirit of Yahweh, the Almighty God.

The wall is the building itself - when the Lamb and his Bride are perfected in One Body, they are themselves the temple (including the nave or Most Holy), as Jesus promised to the saints in Philadelphia (ch.3:12). This is why v22 says there is no temple (nave) in the holy city, even though a literal temple - the House of Prayer for all nations - will be there during the kingdom age. It will be needed for the mortal population.

Their salvation had been based on the ‘Hope of Israel’ and so the twelve gates reflect the names of the tribes of Israel (Acts 26:6; Eph.2:12; Gal.3:29) and like the encampment in the wilderness, have three on each side.

What are the precious stones?
The twelve foundations (v14) of the new city are the apostles (Eph.2:20) shining forth as polished gems and these are adorned with many beautiful multi-coloured and varied precious stones (v19), dazzling in the sun’s light. The apostle Paul gives us a clue in 1 Thess.2:19 when he is writing to new brethren and sisters he has helped to become saints:

“For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming?”

They would be his joy if they proved not to be wood, hay and stubble but gold, silver and precious stones (1 Cor.3:12,13). If they had survived the fire of judgment they would be part of the beautiful wall of the holy city. We too can embrace the hope the apostles have left on record for us, and God gives us encouragement in this wonderful promise:

The Book of Revelation
“Then they that feared the LORD spake often one to another: and the LORD hearkened, and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the LORD, and that thought upon his name. And they shall be mine, saith the LORD of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels ... “ (Mal.3:16,17).

The various colours of the precious stones owe their beauty to the light and will appear as the sevenfold colours of the rainbow, the token of the covenant (ch.4:3; Gen.9:15). They stand for the fruit of the spirit demonstrated as people work together in true love and harmony. They reflect the various aspects of divine glory and when combined they produce the white light of the sun.

**Entry and Citizenship**

When measured by the angel (v15,16), the city is shown to be *foursquare* - it is in fact a cube, as was the Holy of Holies in the Tabernacle and the Temple in Israel (1 Kings 6:20). The ground area or surface of this cube is divisible into 144 equal parts and this reminds us of the symbolic number of its citizens (ch.7:4; 14:1).

The *twelve gates* (v21) were all pearls signifying that the one way into the holy city was through the gospel, the *pearl of great price* (Matt.13:46). These gates were to remain always open (v25), for there will be constant access to salvation for the subject peoples of the kingdom. This had been the case in Solomon’s Temple (Psa.134), as we realised when discussing the twenty four elders (Section 12). Jesus, as the *Light of the world*, will shine throughout the twenty four hours.

**No need of sun and moon? v23**

We have learned that these are symbols of political systems and religious powers - these positions will be filled by the Redeemed - God’s glory will be truly manifested in these *kings and priests* in that age as they rule the world from Zion (Isa.30:26; 60:19,20) with unflagging zeal. As these kings teach the remaining nations of the world how to worship God and walk in this light (v24), they will bring the communities over which they rule (Luke 19:17-19) to submit to the Lord Jesus Christ and this will be *their glory* As far as the literal Jerusalem of that age is concerned, the nations will respond by bringing their wealth when they come to worship at the new Temple (Isa.60:11).

The holy city community is thus described as the new world government, when:

> “... The kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ ...”

(ch.11:15).

**Why are some refused entry into the holy city? v27**

As we know, not all the mortal people who are privileged to live during the kingdom age will be allowed to join that glorious community, to become part of Christ’s multitudinous bride, when the end of the thousand years is reached. They will be rejected if they have defiled God’s holiness and worked abomination - and this will be judged by God’s standards and not their own (Luke 16:15). False teaching is considered to be lying (Eze.13:6,22), so it is essential to acknowledge the truth and not trust in wrong beliefs.

**Chapter 22:1-6**
The last vision given to John is of a beautiful river flowing out of the throne of the holy city. The symbolism is again based on the literal Temple which will be built in Jerusalem. The prophet Ezekiel prophesied of a stream of living water proceeding from the Altar, flowing through the desert to the Dead Sea and bringing life to everything (Eze.47:9,10); even to the extent that fishermen will be seen on the banks of the Dead Sea!

The spiritual significance for the symbolic holy city called the New Jerusalem is very meaningful. Christ is the Altar (Heb.13:10) and he supplies the water of life (John 4:14; 7:38) to heal the dead sea of nations. The tree of life (v2) reminds us of Genesis 3 where the Cherubim barred access to it - now there is a forest of trees for they are on both sides of the river. The Greek for a living tree is dendron but here it is xulon meaning a stake or piece of wood. Jesus was crucified on a tree or stake (stauros) of xulon. So the forest represents the saints who have followed their saviour in crucifying the flesh (Gal.5:24) and are now given immortal life as he was (Psa.1:3). Their symbolic leaves and fruits (Gal.5:22) purify the social and moral atmosphere of the kingdom and bring many benefits to mankind.

Summary
All of these symbolic verses can be thought of therefore on three levels:
1. having a linkage to nature now
2. also indicating the literal provisions at Jerusalem during the kingdom
3. concerned with the spiritual aspects of the bride of Christ.

‘Food for thought’ we might say, for there is much to uplift us in meditating on these amazing Scriptures which God has preserved for us. It is a challenge to credulity - could man have written the Bible? Would it be so consistent in all its parts? It is for us to decide - and act accordingly while we have opportunity.

No more curse? v3
Members of the Bride, the New Jerusalem, have had a change of nature and are no longer stricken with sorrow, toil, disease and death. In serving God there will be joyous activity for them as they minister to the peoples of the world as priests and teachers. The full glory of God will be revealed to them and in them (v4) (Matt.5:8; 1 Tim.6:16) now that they share His nature (Psa.17:15; 1 John 3:2). At last they experience the full joy and benefit of having been sealed in the forehead with the Father’s name (ch.7:3 Section 21). It is not surprising the apostle exclaimed:

“Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit...” (1 Cor.2:9,10)

The last appeal of Jesus vs.7-21
Jesus warned that he would return as a thief (ch.16:15) and he now repeats this three times - in vs.7,12 and 20. (As we might expect in this book of ‘sevens’, the same warning occurs in all, seven times!) Strong says the word quickly (v7) means “shortly, i.e. without delay, soon or (by surprise) suddenly.” As Jesus gave this prophecy two thousand years ago, it must be suddenly which is meant
here. (Gk. tachu - swiftly, speedily, unexpectedly). This is indeed a warning to us in these days especially, as we see so much of the prophecy has been already unfolded in history and realise we are now living in the very time of the sixth vial when he will return.

**Blessing and Reward**

The blessing is for those who keep (Gk. tereo) the sayings of the prophecy of this book. They “watch over, preserve, guard from loss or injury by keeping the eye upon” and gain true happiness and comfort in trouble because they accept them as from God. This is the attitude which can lead to eternal life and a full share in the blessings prophesied. The Revelation is **meant to be understood** (v10) and not sealed (Dan.12:4,9 and cp Rev.10:4).

When Christ suddenly returns, it will be too late for anyone to change into a different person (v11) - the unjust in God’s eyes are those who refuse him and remain unjustified; and the filthy are believers who have failed to keep their garments clean. But the righteous will be enabled to continue their righteous actions into the kingdom and they will remain separated (holy) to God (Heb.12:14).

Jesus says he brings his **reward** with him (v12) so this confirms believers do not go to heaven to receive it, and it is for faith in action not just an academic understanding (James 1:22). In v16 he claims personally to have given this wonderful prophecy - we honour him when we earnestly and prayerfully study it. Faithful saints who make up the Bride-to-be share the divine invitation (v17) with anyone who desires to be saved, whatever their present state (1 Cor.6:9-11) - they must engage their will and determination.

We then read a most solemn warning from the Lord Jesus Christ himself not to **add or take away** from the words of the prophecy of Revelation (v18,19). We can add other beliefs which nullify its teachings, or take away the power of those teachings by a wrong interpretation of it, or by discouraging others from studying it. The Lord Jesus means us to understand the whole book, to be moved by its awe-inspiring truths and fearful judgments and encouraged by its glorious promises as the revelation from God that it claims to be. As we have seen, it not only reveals things to come but shows us the world as it really is - and this stimulates us to **escape from the wrath to come by seeking the Lord while he may be found** and becoming more like him. May we take heed to the warning and accept this gracious invitation, so that when the **Sun of righteousness shall arise with healing in his wings**, we may appear with him in glory.

The Lord repeats that he will **come quickly** (v20) and the beloved apostle John utters a fervent prayer which we can echo:

*Amen. Come Lord Jesus.*