

Revelation

by Zak Saenz

Revelation

Compiled from sermons
and teachings

To God be the glory!

By Zak Saenz

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Revelation 1:1-8

The Book of Revelation is probably one of the most difficult books in all of scripture to not only understand but as well to preach or teach. It is a vision given to John of things many of which he not only didn't understand but had difficulty describing as well. Because of this we must put these facts into its proper place in order to insure we do not make assumptions that become falsehoods but to just deal with what is clear to the best of our ability.

The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show to his servants the things that must soon take place. He made it known by sending his angel to his servant John, 2 who bore witness to the word of God and to the testimony of Jesus Christ, even to all that he saw. 3 Blessed is the one who reads aloud the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those who hear, and who keep what is written in it, for the time is near.

John starts of this book by making it clear that Jesus gave him these revelations for the purpose of sharing them. Will we understand it all, no but we often will have information given to us that does not become clear until sometime in the future. Still, it is important that every generation have this information so that when the day comes we are more prepared for that day.

It is important though not to rush to any conclusions that we are at this time that John reveals. I have seen far to many churches today that teach and preach that we are in that time and it seems there are always those in every generation that come to this conclusion falsely.

If we are over anxious and hyper focused on that we are in Revelation times, what I find is then the things that Jesus teaches us in scripture are not being taught for today. Then what we should be doing in our everyday lives everyday is in many cases put aside and not carried out. That is a dangerous place for Christians to be in and adds to what is already a failing Christian atmosphere at least in this country.

John goes on to say in the second part of verse one and verse two that an angel was to sent to John from Jesus to deliver these messages of revelation. John, is one who gave a first hand account of the life of Jesus both in what he heard and saw. This is always an important point in acquiring facts and making conclusions. Is it hear say or a first hand account and John is making it clear his testimony is first hand account.

In verse three John states the blessing that is received both to those who speak these words and hear these words. John obviously understood the importance of what he has been given even though he didn't fully understand much of it. So now it is the same for us.

4 John to the seven churches that are in Asia:

Grace to you and peace from him who is and who was and who is to come, and from the seven spirits who are before his throne, 5 and from Jesus Christ the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead, and the ruler of kings on earth.

Who is “him who is and who was and who is to come” we could easily come to a conclusion that here it is referring to Jesus but the issue that arises with that thought is that in verse five it mentions Jesus specifically but not here. Could John be speaking of God? If we take verses four and five together we can see the Trinity which fits well within the whole. God (him who is and who was and who is to come), The Holy Spirit (the seven spirits who are before his throne) and Jesus (Jesus Christ the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead, and the ruler of kings on earth). The only issue is the Holy Spirit being referenced as the seven spirits, but again we need to understand John is doing his best to describe what he is seeing.

To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood 6 and made us a kingdom, priests to his God and Father, to him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.

The last part of verse five through verse six is a clear description of Jesus and His plan for His people. Jesus loves us, freed us from sin through the cross and created a kingdom for us with Him after death.

Being priests to Jesus' God and Father is a reference to the call of every single Christian to share the gospel message with the world. I want to emphasize that this is the call for every single Christian. It seems today many do not think it is their calling but the fact is it is a command no matter if you think it is your calling or not.

7 Behold, he is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him, even those who pierced him, and all tribes of the earth will wail on account of him. Even so. Amen.

John gives us the future prophecy that will then set the stage for everything to come, the return of Christ. It is interesting that it says “even those who pierced Him.” Is this a reference to the dead of the past who are responsible for his death on the cross, or is it a reference to the unrepentant sinner? I like the latter, that all unbelievers past to that present time of His return will witness Christ's return and what a day that will be.

8 “I am the Alpha and the Omega,” says the Lord God, “who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty.”

What a proper ending to this group of verses, Jesus is the Alpha and the Omega, who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty! This should be an all inclusive statement of Jesus being God and a part within the Trinity. Scripture gives no one else within it this high a title besides the Father himself.

Revelation 1:9-16

9 I, John, your brother and partner in the tribulation and the kingdom and the patient endurance that are in Jesus, was on the island called Patmos on account of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus.

So here in verse nine the first question arises that we need to give attention to and that is what is the tribulation? In short we could say this as a definition of sorts, it is a specific future period of time when severe judgment and persecution on the earth will happen and is marked by Satan's release and the rise of the Antichrist before the return of Christ.

The key in that definition is in two words, severe judgment. So why are these two words important you may ask. The severe judgment that is spoken of is by the only one possible of this judgment and that is God. This means that God himself being sovereign in and over all things has either ordaining these things to happen or is knowingly allowing these things to happen for the purpose of placing His wrath on the sinful world.

Some may say, but what about John 3:16? God says he loves the world so why would He do this? This is where many Christians today fall very short of who God is and God's attributes.

Many think God is only capable of love and that He doesn't have any other attributes. Of course that understanding falls very short of any biblical truth and understanding about God. As a matter of fact this understanding creates a false God. God is as much love as He is wrath.

The story of Noah is that God chooses Noah and his family to survive His wrath by flood while choosing to allow all other men women and children to die because of their sin.

I would argue that God's love, mercy and grace are far more prevalent in Revelation than in the flood because God is still allowing people to live and come to faith through this time while not in the case of the flood.

10 I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and I heard behind me a loud voice like a trumpet 11 saying, "Write what you see in a book and send it to the seven churches, to Ephesus and to Smyrna and to Pergamum and to Thyatira and to Sardis and to Philadelphia and to Laodicea."

The Lord's day at this time was Sunday the day that Jesus rose from the dead and it has been this day pretty much ever since that day.

What does it mean to be in the Spirit as John said he was? I can tell you for sure that it doesn't mean what many churches would teach it as today.

John wasn't speaking in tongues or flopping around on the floor as if he was having some sort of convulsive attack. What it means in the few times we see the word used in Revelation is when a person is given direct revelation by the Spirit of God.

Now we know today we don't see any true form of this being "in the Spirit" because God has revealed everything He wanted us to know in scripture, thus we are to look for revelation there.

John goes on to say that he hears a voice like a trumpet behind him telling John to write down everything he sees in the book and send it to the seven churches. Notice it doesn't say what he sees written in the book though it could have been written words. There is a possibility of course that what John was seeing within the pages of this book in his vision was more of images of what's going to happen.

12 Then I turned to see the voice that was speaking to me, and on turning I saw seven golden lampstands,

The lampstands mentioned could have been similar to the ones mentioned in the Old Testament which use to be a representation of Israel, but that has obviously changed. There are seven lampstands now one to represent each of the seven churches mentioned.

13 and in the midst of the lampstands one like a son of man, clothed with a long robe and with a golden sash around his chest. 14 The hairs of his head were white, like white wool, like snow. His eyes were like a flame of fire, 15 his feet were like burnished bronze, refined in a furnace, and his voice was like the roar of many waters.

The reference that John turned and saw “one like the son of man” is interesting to me. The son of man is a reference we see in scripture about Jesus, so did John see someone like Jesus or was it Jesus? I think we can be assured it was Jesus but it wasn't exactly like the way John remembered Jesus, there were things different but John saw the resemblance of Jesus enough to have made the comment. John is seeing Jesus as human in a way but a glorified version of Jesus that is still different than after His resurrection.

Jesus' hair is now white in color and like wool it says. This would usually indicate maturity, wisdom and due respect such as someone older than you.

Jesus' eyes were like a flame of fire. Keep in mind Jesus being sent by God to oversee His wrath upon the earth and His eyes being like fire indicates the severity of this judgment to come.

Jesus' feet being like bronze could be an indication of someone such as a soldier who wore bronze as protection when going into war.

Last, Jesus' voice being like many roaring rivers may indicate that when Jesus speaks the volume and presence of His voice overcomes all other sounds and washes them away.

16 In his right hand he held seven stars, from his mouth came a sharp two-edged sword, and his face was like the sun shining in full strength.

The seven stars is a reference to the seven angels of these seven churches in which Jesus has full control over and are placed in His hand showing this.

John 10:28 ~ I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand.

The safety of the true church placed in Jesus' hand shows we are His. We are His sheep and He is our shepherd in which He leads us in all things, and He is responsible in all things over us.

A two edged sword fits perfectly as Jesus is the word and His word cuts even to divide which is what we will see throughout Revelation, the dividing of believer from non believer. Really even from true believer from those who think they are but are not believers.

Jesus' face being like the sun reminds me of when Moses attempted to look at the burning bush which is an indication of Him being God. The glory of God being either the Father or Jesus would be the same and so bright we cannot look upon their holiness.

Revelation 1:17-20

17 When I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead. But he laid his right hand on me, saying, "Fear not, I am the first and the last, 18 and the living one.

Can you imagine seeing Christ standing before you? The awe and humility that would overcome you being in His presence is indescribable. I am sure shame would also be a part of what one would feel being the imperfect was before the perfect.

I am led to a scene much similar to this, that being Saul on the road to Damascus when Saul came face to face with the Spirit of Jesus.

Acts 9:4-5 ~ And falling to the ground, he heard a voice saying to him, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?" 5 And he said, "Who are you, Lord?" And he said, "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting.

Every knee will bow some day scripture tells us and at that moment I can assure you Saul completely understood who stood before him instantly.

Every Christian at some point upon their regeneration into salvation should have felt this overwhelming understanding of their great sin and the great cost of it. If you haven't I would question if you have been truly regenerated.

If you are not reminded of your sin often you have no understanding of the true grace you have been given.

I unfortunately would say that there are many, many unregenerate people in our churches today and many more outside the church who profess Christ. Those who profess Christ but who have not had the indwelling of the Holy Spirit at least yet.

The disciples were in this same state while Jesus was still walking the earth. There was no regeneration until the upper room when the Holy Spirit came upon them. That is when their entire life changed.

18(b) I died, and behold I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of Death and Hades.

When we think about Jesus we need to understand the complexity of who He was. He was eternally God and momentarily man both at the same time. This has been a difficult understanding for many and rightly so, we are just mere human and us fully understanding this is not an easy thing to grasp, but yet it is true.

1 John 1:1-5 ~ In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 He was in the beginning with God. 3 All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made. 4 In him was life, and the life was the light of men. 5 The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

1 John 1:14 ~ And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.

This combining of God and man in Jesus is as clear as it can be in 1 John. The description of all things being made through Jesus is also a clear understanding of at least a portion of the role as God that Jesus has as well as of course His sacrificial and atoning role in salvation. It also confirms Jesus' eternalness.

Christians are the light of Jesus in a smaller way made to shine bright and overcome darkness. That role for us means we as Christians have a responsibility in our salvation, one in which we are seeing less and less of these days and that is our role in salvation through the sharing of the gospel.

As already stated, the unregenerate are not Christians in any way and do not have the light of Jesus in them in order to light up anything. That doesn't mean that they cannot be loving generous people because they can. It also doesn't mean that God won't use them for His purpose and glory because He often does.

Jesus is the son of God full of grace and truth which can be tricky in many churches today because of truth, that is the truth in scripture. It can be tricky even for many Christians as well. The truth of Christ and who He is and His purpose in every aspect isn't always accepted.

Things such as pride, power and self glorification often gets in the way of accepting the totality of Christ. Man's will and ability in many cases is thought to be more the norm than that of Christ's will and power.

19 Write therefore the things that you have seen, those that are and those that are to take place after this.

John is told again to write these things down. The expectation is that John not miss even one thing because of the importance of the things he will be shown. I can imagine being so taken by these things in Revelation to forget to write, in many cases frozen by the visions because of their huge impact on John. The wrath of God being witnessed even by vision is I am sure as real as being there.

20 As for the mystery of the seven stars that you saw in my right hand, and the seven golden lampstands, the seven stars are the angels of the seven churches, and the seven lampstands are the seven churches.

Jesus now clarifies one thing in this last verse, the mystery revealed. The stars are individual angels each one sent to one of the seven churches represented by the lampstands.

There are thoughts that being that the word angels can be translated messengers that this is talking about this possibly being the seven pastors one in each of these seven churches, but because of the wording I would heavily lean on actual angels and not pastors, but as we start chapter two we can discuss this more.

Revelation 2:1-7

So it begins, Jesus is confronting seven specific churches in these next sections, but have no doubt that this assessment by Jesus of these churches is an assessment of every church in some way even today and we should be holding up what Jesus says about each of these churches in honest assessment of our own church.

The church is called to hold itself up to scripture in order to grow and repent just as the individual is. A church that isn't constantly adjusting its theological stance to scripture even just slightly is a church that has stopped growing and that is always a negative thing not a positive for any church.

As I mentioned in the last section we would look at who these angels are. According to Dr. G.K. Beale, four different interpretations are common. The angels are seen as either 1) heavenly beings in general, 2) heavenly beings who are representatives of or guardians over these seven churches, 3) human leaders or representatives of the churches, such as the pastor of the congregation, or 4) personifications of the prevailing spirit or character of the churches.

Most commonly when we see the word “angels” it means heavenly beings not human ones.

1 “To the angel of the church in Ephesus write: ‘The words of him who holds the seven stars in his right hand, who walks among the seven golden lampstands.

This is Jesus and He is telling the angel of the church in Ephesus to write what He is saying. Each word I am sure that this angel was writing was meticulous, insuring not to miss any single word given. To do so could change the entire meaning of the letter.

2 “I know your works, your toil and your patient endurance, and how you cannot bear with those who are evil, but have tested those who call themselves apostles and are not, and found them to be false. 3 I know you are enduring patiently and bearing up for my name's sake, and you have not grown weary.

We often seem to forget that Jesus as well as God know everything that we are doing at all times, even what we are thinking and it is important to keep that fact close to us.

Someone asked me once why I hang a little wooden cross from my rear view mirror, was it to let everyone know I am a Christian. I responded no, I hang it from there so at times of frustration when I am driving I can be reminded of the cross and to be patient when life gets a little tense.

This church in Ephesus has worked hard at running their race which is what we are all called to do and they are doing it with great patience. When we lack patience we often make mistakes in our lives as Christians, remember there is no rush for those who have done well in their faith and obedience to Christ and eternity is waiting for us so we need to slow down and get it right.

This church also hates evil which means they are not tolerant of it. Many churches today think it is biblical to be tolerant of evil even to the point of accepting it to an extent.

It goes on to say that they have tested certain people who made themselves out to be someone they are not, they made themselves out to be more important or more holy than others, they made themselves out to be of higher Christian status as well. Most times these people have such low humility they are easy to spot but we should test those wanting to lead in positions of the church.

It is important though when testing a Christian to remember that we don't necessarily want to test their past but their present. We can't still hold people accountable for something many years past, especially even before they were a Christian, especially when their more recent years have only been to be faithful and fruitful Christians.

We are called to forgive as Christ has forgiven us but I don't see this often in many of today's churches. Oh, they will say they aren't holding someones past against them but their thoughts and actions usually come out in the open at some point. We have to remember that God has worked greatly in those who had the worst of pasts.

4 But I have this against you, that you have abandoned the love you had at first. 5 Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent, and do the works you did at first. If not, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place, unless you repent.

I think Jesus is speaking of what I had just mentioned. This churches love is gone and they don't remember their own sinful past and what Christ has done for them. This is such a grievous thing for Jesus to see in the church that He calls them to repentance for it, even to tell them He will remove them if they don't repent.

This of course doesn't mean that Christians can lose their salvation because we don't see that they do. If they are Christians the Holy Spirit will now intervene and bring great conviction and possibly great turmoil upon them to help them realize their unrepentant sin.

This is why I say churches need to continually grow and repent along the way just like individuals do. How often do you see this happening today?

6 Yet this you have: you hate the works of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate.

Who were the Nicolaitans? I'm not sure there is a lot of history on who they were but they seem to have been a group of early people professing to be Christians but they were considered heretics for what they believed and practiced.

Notice that Jesus says that He hates these sinners. Many today exclude that attribute from who Jesus and God are and as well other attributes. The concern is if you start eliminating God's attributes you are just creating a false god. Of course it is difficult for us to understand righteous hate being we are not righteous ourselves.

7 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To the one who conquers I will grant to eat of the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God.'

“Who has an ear” meaning not all do. Only true Christians understand the ways of God, and those who believe in Christ and persevere are these conquerors which will one day eat of the tree of life.

Revelation 2:8-11

To the Church in Smyrna

***8 “And to the angel of the church in Smyrna write:
‘The words of the first and the last, who died and
came to life.***

Here in verse eight we see again Jesus is establishing to the church in Smyrna that it is He “the first and the last” which is similar to “the alpha and the omega” that we say in Rev. 1:8.

The first and the last sets an understanding that He was here in the very beginning and will always be here because He is God. Though we know God always was and is so really there is no beginning or end for God or Jesus.

As the verse ends it states an important fact about Jesus that He died and rose again which is a key fact about Jesus or even the key fact. If Jesus did not die and rise again from the dead he would not have been the true Messiah. The fact that he did and over 500 saw Him alive again is the proof.

There is assurance in this verse for us that as He died and rose again so will we also as scripture says we will.

9 “*I know your tribulation and your poverty (but you are rich) and the slander of those who say that they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan.*”

The tribulation for this church in Smyrna was the fact that the Jews were harshly against the Christians there and because of that reason Jesus says that these Jews and their synagogue were of Satan.

Any person or group that comes against another who is a believer or that person and the work they are doing for Christ is of Satan. I can't tell you how many people, Christians and churches have done this to other Christians and the work they are doing for Christ and it happens all the time. These professing Christians and churches don't even realize the harm they are doing to the kingdom, all they can think about is themselves.

There has always been a lot of discussion from churches and or prominent Christians against para-churches. The word “para-church” describes a Christian ministry or organization that is not under church authority. Honestly if I had to be under church authority for every ministry I have done over the decades there would have been no ministry done at all, and that would have been a great loss.

I don't see anywhere in scripture where a church has to be in control of every Christian thing that goes on around it, and many do their best to make sure no other Christian things go on around them that they don't control.

10 Do not fear what you are about to suffer.

Many Christians fear everything else but God at times and really God is the only one we are supposed to fear. Yes even as Christians there is a healthy fear of a holy God (Romans 3:18 ~ There is no fear of God before their eyes). Fear is one of the ways God motivates us to be dedicated to the work He has called every Christian to. God being a righteous and Holy God will hold us to account in our daily lives and will bring things into our lives to move us in the right direction.

Any good father does this when raising a child, punishment is out of love for the purpose of correction and for the betterment of a child. Many Christians will argue this but God will even bring harsh things about if a believer didn't even do something wrong at all but just for the purpose of further refinement or to show a persons strong faith as in the story of Job.

Fear is an emotion believers should have like any other about God. We may feel at times love, grace, mercy, blessings, conviction and yes even fear.

Any emotion we feel towards God is for sure better than feeling no emotion about God at all and we see this far to often as well.

Behold, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and for ten days you will have tribulation.

In the Book of James it begins with some of the greatest words in scripture there are in my opinion. I feel this because I truly believe being strong Christians is an extremely important attribute for us.

James 1:2-4 ~ Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, 3 for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. 4 And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.

Unfortunately weakness has been taught for so long in the church as being a good Christian attribute that weakness constantly gets in the way of the work Christian's are called to do. I can assure you no one around the time of the early church thought that the Apostle Paul was a weak and helpless person. Paul was fearless of the things of the world and understood well "to live is Christ and to die is gain" and understood it very well.

Be faithful unto death, and I will give you the crown of life. 11 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. The one who conquers will not be hurt by the second death.'

Faithfulness, one of the greatest attributes of the Christian and most likely the greatest attribute of all for us. But this faithfulness must be in all things scripture tells us not just in some. It is our complete faithfulness in all things that gives us the fullness of our biblical understandings about who God is and who Christ is and who we are in this relationship. Understanding the relationship is the key to it all.

So be conquerors in all things Christ, seek out everything in scripture and conquer them all in the name of Christ himself. This is the way to salvation.

Revelation 2:12-17

12 “And to the angel of the church in Pergamum write: ‘The words of him who has the sharp two-edged sword.

Jesus this time sends a letter to the church in Pergamum which was a Greek city in what is now within the country of Turkey.

Jesus here is referred to as “him who has the sharp two-edged sword”. There are other places which refer to Jesus in this way as well. There is great significance to a sword and Jesus in scripture so we want to give it the attention it deserves.

First in Hebrews 4:12, For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart.

The word of God is not only a statement about scripture but we can also attribute it to Jesus being the word.

In this verse in Hebrews 4:12 the double edged sword (Jesus) is used on us as believers, that is that the word of God (Jesus) is used to transform us as if by cutting away the old and separating it from the new, the old self or nature from the new self and nature.

In Revelation 19:15 From his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations, and he will rule them with a rod of iron.

In Revelation 19:15, it is Jesus who comes riding out of heaven on a white horse with a sword coming out of His mouth to strike down the nations. Striking down the nations does as well include striking down all who attempt to get in His way within those nations. He will become ruler of all and every knee will bow to Him.

Jesus came as lamb ready to be slaughtered but He will come again as a lion regaining the earth as His kingdom and securing it for all believers.

13 “I know where you dwell, where Satan's throne is. Yet you hold fast my name, and you did not deny my faith even in the days of Antipas my faithful witness, who was killed among you, where Satan dwells.

Pergamum was known as a very sinful place with many temples and many false prophet's and false god's being worshiped.

Even though this church was within such a sinful city they stood firm not buckling to those there that persecuted them as they did the faithful servant Antipas.

This description of this church should give us an indication that they didn't keep their faith within the walls of this church, but rather they must have brought their faith into the city sharing the gospel even at the cost of death.

So far so good but Jesus is about to bring them the bad news. Even though they are Christians they are still fallible people as we are today.

14 But I have a few things against you: you have some there who hold the teaching of Balaam, who taught Balak to put a stumbling block before the sons of Israel, so that they might eat food sacrificed to idols and practice sexual immorality.

Balaam was a false prophet in the Old Testament who at least at some point deceived some Jews and caused great harm. We could easily replace Balaam today with many different people who have done great harm and deceived so many in the church. Look at many of the TV evangelists and as well many pastors of these famous megachurches who have done much the same of harming Christ by deceiving people. Christ will give them no lenience when the day comes because they are a stumbling block to the truth of Christ.

Eating food sacrificed to false gods was something brought up by Paul but in a different circumstance.

Here these people go to this church but as well they worship a false prophet and false gods and idols and they eat of this food in worship of these false things. Again we could replace these things with many different things today which take people away from Christ at least in part.

But Christ doesn't want just part of us, He demands all of us not just our scraps. It is all or nothing with Christ and all the things self professing Christians give more to before Christ, they should not be surprised if Christ says I never knew you.

15 So also you have some who hold the teaching of the Nicolaitans. 16 Therefore repent. If not, I will come to you soon and war against them with the sword of my mouth.

The Nicolaitans mentioned here are these same people talked about in verse fourteen. Notice that Jesus isn't just telling these Nicolaitans to repent, Jesus is telling the entire church to repent. You may ask why but it should be obvious, this church let the church be corrupted by these people. That's why we should be cautious in the church to keep watch of these wolves in sheep's clothing.

Jesus says if you don't deal with them He will. Sound preaching and doctrine will usually keep things in check but it seems obvious this church was straying itself which allowed this group to take a foothold.

17 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To the one who conquers I will give some of the hidden manna, and I will give him a white stone, with a new name written on the stone that no one knows except the one who receives it.'

The importance of studying Revelation in part is to give us a heads-up to get our own churches corrected and inline with scripture. The refusal to teach all of scripture in churches will cause holes in which these wolves can enter. Strong biblical teaching and preaching is one of our greatest defenses against this.

A white stone in those days with an inscription on it was used as an admission ticket to an event. Here this special white stone would be an admission into salvation. Not that we would be actually getting a white stone but who knows.

Revelation 2:18-29

To the Church in Thyatira

18 “And to the angel of the church in Thyatira write: ‘The words of the Son of God, who has eyes like a flame of fire, and whose feet are like burnished bronze.

The Son of God as described here with His eyes like fire and whose feet are like bronze is a great description for this point in time because of what we will see Jesus do during this time.

His eyes being like fire and as well His feet like bronze is showing Jesus in His readiness for war against evil.

Fire represents refinement in places of scripture or making something pure, Jesus is for sure coming for this reason in part. He will refine the world to rid it of its impurities. His war against Satan, the Beast and the Antichrist and all their minions is a part of this refinement process in which Christ defeats them.

Jesus' feet being like bronze is another aspect of war in which bronze was used for armor and protection. Feet are by nature a foundation in which a person is steady and grounded. Adding the bronze adds to the steadiness and foundation.

This would be looked at as a sign of strength and power for not all armies could afford such things as armor, only the most elite of soldiers had it.

19 “I know your works, your love and faith and service and patient endurance, and that your latter works exceed the first.

Christ as does God the Father, know all things at all times and Jesus is omnipresent just as the Father is.

Jesus is fully aware of all things including all things in the believers life. Jesus knows our works as He knows this churches works and His awareness of our works or lack of works is a constant examination of our belief and faith in Him. The greater the faith the greater the works. The greatness of works is not assessed as we would assess them in most cases but rather that we are always producing good works or fruit in our life.

Matthew 7:17-19 ~ So, every healthy tree bears good fruit, but the diseased tree bears bad fruit. 18 A healthy tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a diseased tree bear good fruit. 19 Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.

The tree representing people falls into two categories, the healthy tree and the diseased tree. True believers are the healthy tree that produce good fruit while diseased trees are the non-believers who produce no fruit.

These who unfortunately think they are believers but are self deceived. These diseased trees can do nothing but produce fruit which is not good meaning bad fruit, thus the only thing it is good for is the fire to refine it out of the orchard of the good fruit producing trees.

But here in verse nineteen Jesus is giving them praise for their good works which are love, faith, service and patient endurance which are all great Christian attributes and works of faith.

But there is a problem, a big problem because Jesus finishes this verse by saying what works He will be bringing up next exceed those good works He just mentioned.

20 But I have this against you, that you tolerate that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess and is teaching and seducing my servants to practice sexual immorality and to eat food sacrificed to idols. 21 I gave her time to repent, but she refuses to repent of her sexual immorality. 22 Behold, I will throw her onto a sickbed, and those who commit adultery with her I will throw into great tribulation, unless they repent of her works, 23 and I will strike her children dead. And all the churches will know that I am he who searches mind and heart, and I will give to each of you according to your works.

A Jezebel is someone promoting false teachings thus is an enemy of God. The Jezebel here was a false prophetess who is promoting sexual immorality and the eating of food sacrificed to idols. This food as already stated previously would be eaten in part because of their worship of that idol.

A sickbed just means that these unrepentant sinners are sidelined so to speak, that Jesus considers them out of the whole of the body of Christ and are in a state of observation in which Jesus is bringing upon them tribulations in order to force them back into compliance and repentance.

This is much like many churches today that condone and are outwardly gay and promote this lifestyle as being OK. It is not OK and Jesus for sure has them in a sickbed until they reject their sin and come back in repentance under the fold of the true church. There will be no hope for them unless they do. They will be cast into the fire with the rest.

24 But to the rest of you in Thyatira, who do not hold this teaching, who have not learned what some call the deep things of Satan, to you I say, I do not lay on you any other burden. 25 Only hold fast what you have until I come.

The sword is dividing even within the church. It is dividing the unrepentant sinner who lives in their sin putting it before Christ from those who have a true heart for Christ and putting the effort into being more Christ like and putting Christ first.

We as Christians though do understand all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. The Christian is not perfect and sinless but hates their sin and fights against it which is different than those who accept and promote their sin. That is the dividing line, that is what Christ will divide, those who are the bad trees and those who are the good trees.

26 The one who conquers and who keeps my works until the end, to him I will give authority over the nations, 27 and he will rule them with a rod of iron, as when earthen pots are broken in pieces, even as I myself have received authority from my Father. 28 And I will give him the morning star. 29 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.'

Understanding scripture is how we understand the works Jesus is speaking about keeping until the end. Truth wheeled with a rod of iron that we will one day be in that army of Christ breaking into pieces those who are not of Christ, those earthen pots. This will be not only a spiritual war but a physical war. Many don't believe it will be physical but it will be which is why we need to stay strong both spiritually and physically.

There is controversy about who in scripture is the morning star, is it Jesus or is it Satan? But no matter if you are using the ESV as I am here or the KJV it says the same thing, Jesus will give to the father the Morning star (Satan). It is much like when the army would be victorious over an apposing army and the apposing armies leaders head was removed and brought back to the king to show the full defeat of that army.

We are a part of the army of Christ and it is important that we are ready for this great spiritual and physical battle in case it is within our lifetime.

Revelation 3:1-6

To the Church in Sardis

“And to the angel of the church in Sardis write: ‘The words of him who has the seven spirits of God and the seven stars.

As mentioned previously the seven spirits many think is the Holy Spirit but being seven tends to complicate this idea. The seven stars are the seven angels of the seven churches.

“‘I know your works. You have the reputation of being alive, but you are dead. 2 Wake up, and strengthen what remains and is about to die, for I have not found your works complete in the sight of my God.

All knowing Christ sees even the heart of the believer and He knows who are truly His and who are not. The reputation of this church of being alive but are not and are dead is an indication that this church isn't who it says it is and has many of the local people deceived that they are true believers. Alive would mean alive in Christ or lead by the Spirit but most likely they are alive in themselves meaning they are doing things for the wrong reasons, probably selfish reasons.

Churches and individual Christians can appear to be thriving in Christ but this just goes to show that secondary motivations can easily overwhelm a church or individual. We need to take caution in this because it is easy to fall into this trap of thinking you are doing things for the right reasons when you are not. Is this the entire church? Most likely not but surely it is the majority.

This church is like many churches today that needs a spiritual awakening. The question then comes to mind, how does a church become spiritually awake? Things such as a reteaching of the gospel, the deep teaching of scripture, a fervent church prayer life and an intense understanding of who we were as a lost sinner and what the cost was of our salvation. These are a few great ways to start to turn the ship and correct its course.

But Jesus here still feels there can be hope in that He says to “wake up and strengthen what remains.” Many churches and Christians alike today are in this place of just being out of what it is to be a Christian. Pastors are not exempt either being most likely they are the ones who have led the church in this poor direction to begin with.

I can say that I see church after church dragging Christianity down farther and farther even in the small town Bible belt church I moved to as a missionary.

Poor teaching and poor understanding of scripture is where I would say the problem lies. Also, I see little desire from the congregation that they have a heart for learning either for the most part. There are always a few who do though and we start with them.

3 Remember, then, what you received and heard. Keep it, and repent. If you will not wake up, I will come like a thief, and you will not know at what hour I will come against you.

We see in many places in scripture this understanding of remembering what you received so the question is what does this mean. I would conclude it is multifaceted and at the top of it would be Christ, but really all the biblical teachings in scripture as well.

One of the greatest short falls in the modern church today is the reduction and really the intentional withholding of much of scripture. This would be hard for many to believe but it is very true. If the church is a denominational church it has to conform to what the denominations beliefs are which means many things in scripture cannot be taught. If the independent church has a strict set of doctrinal positions again they are confined to those things and need to maneuver carefully around opposing teachings.

It is my opinion that the best way to teach through scripture is verses by verse carefully explaining everything that God has laid out for us and not picking and choosing what you want to teach on and what you don't. Of course this does take a greater understanding from the teacher insuring that every piece of scripture is taught in correctly and in context.

Doing this though provides a deeper understanding of what God has written and then allows us to know who God is and what we need to repent from. If a church doesn't teach certain things chances are the congregation will think it is either not important or will just never know that it is important.

The last part of this verse is interested in that Christ says if the Church or individual Christian does not wake up from their laziness and lack of Christian ambition that Christ will come against them. What that means is things will begin to come into your life that creates great distress in order to refine you and motivate you back into His grace. But if you don't scripture would say that you were never a believer to begin with.

4 Yet you have still a few names in Sardis, people who have not soiled their garments, and they will walk with me in white, for they are worthy.

Rarely is a church completely filled with Christians who are in a slumber but usually there are thriving Christians who are motivated and driven for Christ there even if just a few. Unfortunately most times these Christians are usually hindered within their church because of their zeal.

5 The one who conquers will be clothed thus in white garments, and I will never blot his name out of the book of life. I will confess his name before my Father and before his angels. 6 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.'

Can a name of someone who is saved be blotted out of the book of life? Does any scripture name a person and what they have done who scripture says was in the book of life and then blotted out? I can't seem to find one but if you can let me know. It does say it but I am not sure that I can apply support for it with other scripture being there are other places that talk about our security.

Revelation 3:7-13

To the Church in Philadelphia

“And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write: ‘The words of the holy one, the true one, who has the key of David, who opens and no one will shut, who shuts and no one opens.’

As we go into these next sections of verses about the church in Philadelphia or the church of Brotherly Love, we see Jesus being called by something interesting **“the true one, who has the key of David”** which we see something very similar in the book of Isaiah.

Isaiah 22:22 ~ And I will place on his shoulder the key of the house of David. He shall open, and none shall shut; and he shall shut, and none shall open.

The reference being the key holder is one in which God has given over authority to do what must be done. In Isaiah it was Eliakim but here in Revelation it is Jesus.

We do not want to be mistaken though to think that Eliakim is in any way equal to Jesus because of this authority granted to him because he isn't. He is just someone God gave a far more limited amount of authority to for a specific purpose.

Jesus' authority here is on a much bigger scale than Eliakim in every way imaginable.

The authority given to both by God has the power of God behind it in that the will of God is being done through both and is such that no man can reverse it or hinder it in any way.

8 *“I know your works. Behold, I have set before you an open door, which no one is able to shut. I know that you have but little power, and yet you have kept my word and have not denied my name.*

Jesus mentions here that He has set before them an open door, so what is that open door? Most would say an opportunity to serve Christ in the building of the kingdom. This to me fits well when we think about the other two churches in chapter three who one is in slumber or not awake and the other is lukewarm or not hot for Christ in what they do. Neither of these two churches are doing anything to build the kingdom of Christ. But right in between these two churches is Philadelphia.

As we look at chapter three self reflection as a church is needed, which are we as a local church? What can we do to correct where we are at and do better?

The indication I feel in both the churches in Sardis and Laodicea is one of a question of if these churches are truly saved or not.

I think that at minimal it is a fair question. Maybe some are saved but most are not which would not be uncommon in many churches today.

I say this because when a church gets overrun with people who think they are believers but are not. Those who are not saved will continually try to put out the flames of those who are truly saved and are working hard to build the kingdom of Christ. And its not only the people of the congregation but in many cases it can be the pastor himself. I have been to more than one church over the years in which the pastor had no interest in going out and creating disciples and building the Kingdom and they would squash attempts of people in the congregation to do it on their own.

This is where para churches come in, it is when individuals seeking to build the kingdom of Christ have no choice but to go out in spite of the churches attempt to squelch a ministry that the church should be backing in some way rather than hindering it.

The second part of verse eight shows that even a small church who wants to do great things for the kingdom will be seen by Christ and Christ will make a way for those great things to happen.

9 Behold, I will make those of the synagogue of Satan who say that they are Jews and are not, but lie—behold, I will make them come and bow down before your feet, and they will learn that I have loved you.

It seems even the Jews had this same issue with false converts overwhelming the synagogues as the churches have had. Assessment of those who believe they are Christians is always a must especially in the church. They will shout “stop judging me” but that can be the first indication they are not Christians at all. A young Christian in the faith wants to grow in Christ and craves it and if they don't well that's not an encouraging sign.

10 Because you have kept my word about patient endurance, I will keep you from the hour of trial that is coming on the whole world, to try those who dwell on the earth.

Patient endurance is a huge work in progress for me. I think that seeing God work so much in my life and in my service to Christ that my expectation is always why are you taking so long. It's a struggle for me for sure but I think the key is the endurance part, do not give up even if you are impatient.

Being kept from the hour of trial shouldn't necessarily lead us to believe in a certain point in the rapture but rather I feel it is more of being kept from the judgment that will come to unbelievers. True believers who are “awake” and not “lukewarm” will be kept from the judgment of hell.

11 I am coming soon. Hold fast what you have, so that no one may seize your crown. 12 The one who conquers, I will make him a pillar in the temple of my God. Never shall he go out of it, and I will write on him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, the new Jerusalem, which comes down from my God out of heaven, and my own new name. 13 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.'

Speaking about having patience “coming soon” has lead many to believe in part that we are in the end times. We know that Jesus said that no one knows the time, but I still see too many Christians and churches get so hung up on this that it has kept them from the work we are called to today. If people think the time has come the urgency to do the work tends to fall off.

We are secured a place in heaven for our endurance and we see this in many places in scripture. We must understand though that this endurance comes from the Holy Spirit and not from us which is why it is assured. We cannot fail if the Holy Spirit is guiding us, directing us and moving us constantly towards Christ.

We are not in any way more powerful than the Holy Spirit to win any battle towards his ability to continually move us forward.

If you believe that losing your salvation is biblical that would mean it is based on your power not the Holy Spirits power and if that is the case no one will endure.

Revelation 3:14-22

***“And to the angel of the church in Laodicea write:
‘The words of the Amen, the faithful and true
witness, the beginning of God's creation.***

The introduction in each of these letters from Jesus to these churches are a testament to who Jesus is so let's look at this one.

First, ***“The words of the Amen”*** and "Amen" is a Hebrew word that signifies agreement, affirmation, confirmation and truth so Jesus is these things and much more. In **John 14:6** we read this, ***Jesus answered, “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me”,*** so being the “Amen” fits well with who Jesus is.

Second, ***“the faithful and true witness”*** as we saw in **Revelation 1:5** John calls Jesus this, ***“and from Jesus Christ the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead, and the ruler of kings on earth. To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood”.*** Jesus is faithful to God and a witness to all things from God first and foremost before anything or anyone else.

Third, Jesus is the “the beginning of God's creation” and this is not a reference to Jesus being created because He was not, Jesus is God and as God the Father is God and has always been and always will be so is Jesus.

This reference fits well with **Colossians 1:16 ~ *For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him.*** Knowing this then “the beginning of God's creation” means that Jesus is the creator of all things since the beginning.

15 “I know your works: you are neither cold nor hot. Would that you were either cold or hot! 16 So, because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of my mouth.

The Christian is always on fire for Christ, they are not lackadaisical in any way but driven for Christ. I like to use the word compelled because it means a force is moving us to be on fire for Him and that force is the Holy Spirit indwelt in every single believer. The Holy Spirit does not allow the Christian to be “lukewarm” without the believer being at great odds with the Holy Spirit. If there is there will be a great battle for the Christian to get up and get motivated. If there is no battle going on within a self professing Christian that is a big problem as far as salvation goes.

Being spit out is like someone spitting out seeds after a bite of watermelon. You spit out the seeds while retaining the good of the melon. Jesus will only spit out the false believers in the church when the time comes not all.

17 For you say, I am rich, I have prospered, and I need nothing, not realizing that you are wretched, pitiable, poor, blind, and naked.

We cannot be believers in Christ and put everything before Him as if Christ is not needed or not needed much. Christ looks at this to be the opposite of a believer and rather they are **wretched, pitiable, poor, blind, and naked** because they are lacking Him who should be all things to them.

I know many who are doing well in life may not always see how Jesus takes a backseat to many things in their lives but those who are doing well need to understand that all this good has happened because of Christ, He is the source of our good. If Christ isn't our everything then the reality is He is our nothing.

18 I counsel you to buy from me gold refined by fire, so that you may be rich, and white garments so that you may clothe yourself and the shame of your nakedness may not be seen, and salve to anoint your eyes, so that you may see.

The cure for everything that takes us away from Christ is Christ in abundance. Everything pure comes from Christ and replacing everything with Him instead of the things of this world is a must.

To clothe yourself in white garments is to clothe yourself in Christ.

The more we are completely covered in Christ the more we have understood the importance of Christ in everything.

19 Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline, so be zealous and repent.

Discipline is a good thing, it helps keep us inline and on track for God. But with it repentance should follow and it is an indication of our great love for Him. Though we know we are not perfect and repentance can be lengthy at times it is a good sign of a strong faith.

20 Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him, and he with me.

Here is one of these verses that often gets misused. Have you ever heard that Christ is at the door and all you need to do is open it and let Him in and you will be saved? Yeah that isn't what this is saying at all, this is about the church not an unsaved person. Jesus wants the church to let Him back in and for Him to have His proper place inside. It says that if we put Him first where he should be then He can have proper fellowship with the church once again.

I believe this is where the vast majority of churches are today and that is why we are seeing such a sharp decline in Christianity.

A move away from strong biblical teaching and the inclusion of weak leadership is destroying the church.

The sad thing is, this is what self professing Christians say they want in a church, they want weak leaders and teaching. But we need to understand the sheep have no say in what the shepherd of the flock does for the good of them in their progression to know Christ better and be more like him. Proper church structure doesn't give the flock any right to these decisions.

21 The one who conquers, I will grant him to sit with me on my throne, as I also conquered and sat down with my Father on his throne. 22 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.'"

In these churches that are spoken of negatively by Christ there are some true believers who will win the race within them. I always say that the gate is just as narrow within the church as it is outside of it.

Th Christian life is not an easy one, it is difficult at times and extremely difficult at other times. But this life is short and eternity is long so have your priorities straight and don't allow the world to be your priority.

Revelation 4:1-2

The letters have been sent and the church has much to account for. True Christianity is so much more than going to church every Sunday and doing what you think are good deeds here and there and I think Jesus has made that clear in His letters. The gate is as narrow for the church as it is outside the church.

Let's see what Jesus has in store next.

After this I looked, and behold, a door standing open in heaven! And the first voice, which I had heard speaking to me like a trumpet, said, "Come up here, and I will show you what must take place after this."

John hears a voice and it is God speaking to him. How do we know this is God and not Jesus as some would say? Because we do not see Jesus coming until Revelation 5:5 as the lamb. You can imagine what is going through John's mind during this, John is being summoned, a door in the sky opens and God is calling him.

Let's take the opportunity at this point to think about something. Here is a question for us to think about and this question can be applied in almost all of scripture. Does John have freewill? Can John resist God's calling? Let's see.

2 At once I was in the Spirit, and behold, a throne stood in heaven, with one seated on the throne.

John isn't even asked by God if he wants to come. Matter of fact Lazarus wasn't asked if he wanted to come to life and out of the tomb when Jesus called him. What about Saul of Tarsus? Well he wasn't asked either. God nor Jesus ever asks they command.

I had been teaching at a local church recently and this church believed in freewill so I thought what better book to teach through than Jonah. Jonah resisted and resisted God every step of the way, that was Jonah's freewill at work.

Then we see God's will at work in which God never asks Jonah if he wants to do anything, God's will just makes it happen. When Jonah resisted and refused God at every step, God insured His will came to fruition not even giving Jonah a choice.

Choice is a word that most who believe in freewill use as proof that it exists but this is far from true. The determining factor of freewill is not if there is a choice before us but rather that we have the ability or will to make that choice and follow through with it without anything influencing us internally or externally.

Lets think about this biblically. We know that since sin fell onto Adam and eve that scripture says we are all now spiritually dead (Eph 2:1 ESV) and that we are

born with a sin nature (Rom 7:18 ESV). So what does our nature do would be our next question?

Everything that is alive has a nature and that nature is what tells that living thing how to act, respond or function and controls their complete being. Here is an example, a vulture is sitting on a mountain top looking down into the valley for a meal. On one side the vulture sees a head of cabbage and on the other side it sees a dead rabbit and this is where we see its nature control the response of the Vulture. See even though the Vulture has a choice it will 100% of the time fly to the rabbit. Why? It's nature is controlling its response to the choice, the Vulture is enslaved to it, motivated by it and compelled by it.

Again every human is born with a sin nature thus it is driven and compelled to sin. Humans have a choice not to sin but our nature drives us away from righteousness and to that sin (pre-salvation). So we have choice but we also have a will that isn't free but rather is bound to sin until or if we are saved.

Now as we look at the sin nature and the unsaved person, we may say that they are good people and do good things but are they, and do they? God doesn't think so, God knows everything the unbeliever does is contaminated by sin and the things they do are like dirty rags.

Another example is the Jew, God gave them thousands

of years to live righteous perfect lives to gain salvation but not one achieved it.

If they did achieve salvation it was not by anything they did. God's grace existed in the Old Testament as in every other time but He used it more sparingly.

The reason God sent Jesus is because God knew we could not live the righteous life required for salvation, but Jesus could live that life for us and everyone who believes in Jesus as their Lord and Savior will be saved because of the perfect life of Jesus and not by our life. Jesus' perfect life was imputed to us the believer so that God would see us as He sees Jesus, perfect and holy.

But were we asked to believe? Yes. Were we able to believe on our own? No, because our sinful nature would not allow it, but it was God's will that we be saved so we were by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Once saved we are freed from the bondage of sin because our life as a believer has been purchased by Jesus, we belong to another now. Scripture says we have been bought from the bondage of sin and have become slaves to righteousness (Rom 6:18 ESV). What this means is we were slaves to Satan and sin and are now slaves to Jesus and righteousness, His righteousness. You mean we are still not free? No we are not and never will be.

That doesn't mean we are now perfect, sin still lingers in us. We have a mind being transformed to Christ and a body of flesh that will always be sinful.

But our souls are what is important not the body.

We will grow and be continually transformed to be more Christ like as we mature but even in that it isn't us that is doing it, it is the Holy Spirit conforming us to it.

I often preach “God if I have a freewill take it from me and only allow me to do your will.” This is the same thing Jesus prayed in (Luke 22:42 ESV). Jesus only wanted to do what the Father wanted and if that is what Jesus wanted we should want that same thing.

But we will just be robots they say! We will be conformed by His will and the power of the Holy Spirit and the work of His Son on the cross. I want nothing else.

Revelation 4:3-8

Coming out of verses One and Two some may be wondering why I chose to focus on the term “freewill” and I just wanted to say a few words about that before we get started. Faith in God and who He is, is important for us to understand. God does all things first for His glory, good and purpose not for ours. Though everything He does or allows is best for us no matter if we understand it or not.

If we are going to have faith and confidence in God we need to know He is in complete control not us. Though scripture says we are responsible for everything we do and we are. Jesus said He wanted God's will to take place not His own and that's the place we need to be.

We are now going to get into a description of Jesus of sorts in which John is trying to explain what he is seeing in his vision. John doesn't always understand what he is seeing and is describing it to the best of his ability and that is important for us to understand. We will take this in bits.

3 And he who sat there had the appearance of jasper and carnelian, and around the throne was a rainbow that had the appearance of an emerald.

What is jasper without getting to technical? Jasper is a silica based stone with high quartz content and comes in many colors and many times greenish.

What is carnelian? This is usually a reddish brown stone with a variance from orange to dark reds in color.

Neither of these stones seem to have any biblical significance but again John is just trying to describe the colors he is seeing radiating from God.

A rainbow as we know is a multicolored arch in the sky but John describes this one as just being green like an emerald. The rainbow is a sign of the covenant God made with Noah and all other people at the end of the flood. This covenant is two sided with God upholding His end and our responsibility is to uphold our end as stated in (Genesis 9:1-17).

4 Around the throne were twenty-four thrones, and seated on the thrones were twenty-four elders, clothed in white garments, with golden crowns on their heads.

The mention of these twenty-four thrones cannot be biblically attributed to anything in particular and any thoughts on this would just be speculating based upon nothing but personal opinion so I will not comment on this.

An elder in the bible is not just an older person but it is one who has shown to be wise and godly. These elders would be male and that conclusion comes from the book of Timothy in the explanation of who an elder would be.

What we do not know are these elders made up from humans that made it to heaven or were these elders created for this position.

Being these elders are wearing white garments and crowns again shows their stature in heaven and that they in some way have made it to a certain level. Heaven does have a hierarchy of course, if God, Jesus and the Holy Spirit are there then there has to be.

5 From the throne came flashes of lightning, and rumblings and peals of thunder, and before the throne were burning seven torches of fire, which are the seven spirits of God, 6 and before the throne there was as it were a sea of glass, like crystal.

Lightning and thunder are a powerful representation of what John is seeing and hearing and I am sure it adds to the awe of the situation.

The seven torches which are the seven spirits of God was mentioned in Revelation one and most would say it represents the fullness of the Holy Spirit.

The sea of glass like crystal just adds to the majesty of this entire picture and Gods could have chosen anything and this is what He chose.

And around the throne, on each side of the throne, are four living creatures, full of eyes in front and behind: 7 the first living creature like a lion, the second living creature like an ox, the third living creature with the face of a man, and the fourth living creature like an eagle in flight.

All of these creatures have eyes all around them so they are able to keep complete watch at all times. If you were going to pick four animals for protection I doubt you could pick four better ones than these.

The lion, the king of the jungle, nothing prays on a mature healthy lion in the wild, it is one of the most majestic animals of God's entire creation. A blend of speed, power and fearlessness is what a lion is known for. Notice John states "like a lion" so did it completely look like a lion we don't know.

The next creature was like an ox, again like one but maybe not completely. The Ox is an animal of great strength and is known for carrying or pulling a large amount of weight.

The third living creature has a face like a man but we are not told what the body looks like. A man would fit in perfectly when trying to put together a well rounded group of four.

The eagle can fly high above everything to keep watch for any harm approaching and it can see for miles.

Eagles are the most majestic of all the birds and in the sky nothing challenges it.

8 And the four living creatures, each of them with six wings, are full of eyes all around and within, and day and night they never cease to say, "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God Almighty, who was and is and is to come!"

As we continue with the description of these four creatures we now find out that each also have six wings. These creatures serve God and Christ 24/7 non stop and each says over and over "holy, holy, holy the Lord God almighty" never ceasing.

We like these four creatures are called in ways to be much the same. We are called to serve God and Christ 24/7 sacrificing what would be a normal earthly life for a servants life of sharing of the gospel. And our constant giving of praise to God and the Son of God for everything always is a must.

Is this you? If not are you working on it?

Revelation 4:9-11

In the previous section of scripture it talked about the four living creatures around the throne. The description John gives us is one like a lion, an ox, one with a face like man, and an eagle. All four of these creatures had eyes all around their heads and all had six wings to fly around the throne.

So this is the set-up to these following verses that we are about to read and we will focus on one thing and that is are we giving God the glory and honor He deserves?

And whenever the living creatures give glory and honor and thanks to him who is seated on the throne, who lives forever and ever, 10 the twenty-four elders fall down before him who is seated on the throne and worship him who lives forever and ever. They cast their crowns before the throne, saying, 11 “Worthy are you, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they existed and were created.”

When God is given the glory and honor deserving Him in heaven by these creatures, it says these twenty-four elders fall down before God and worship Him as well and casting their crowns before Him is an indication of God's power, authority and majesty above them.

What we are seeing is the corporate worship that happens in heaven and what we should be doing here on earth. This corporate worship is not solely to happen at church on Sunday's but out in the world as well where other believers can join in and those who are not believers can see the great value we put on God and Christ.

I think these days we do not see enough public worship to God and Christ and that in many ways it has been confined to the walls of the church or within a Christian concert or the Christian conference.

If we think about baptism in scripture which is the outward expression of our faith in Christ, we see it as a public event and I think there is a reason for that. God moves within the unbeliever when a person puts their faith out for the entire world to see. I also think that it can help remove any fears a new believer may have if it's done in public.

The body of Christ is becoming a recluse in many ways these days by hiding their faith and keeping it out out of sight. I am sure many will disagree with me but it is what I am seeing.

I have over the decades strived to do as many things as possible in public in order that God may work in the unbeliever by seeing the Christian profess their faith in a public display.

I remember once putting on a concert with a Christian band right on the street on Mill Ave in Tempe Arizona in the heart of ASU, and another time in a parking lot on a busy road. You could see people being moved while God was working on those whom He was calling to himself.

More recently in the small town I moved to in Appalachia eleven years ago as a missionary, I have been putting on worship nights at the local park and you can see throughout the night people standing on the outskirts listening to the music and the preaching I was doing throughout the night.

I also in the summer once a month put out the word about doing a community baptism at our local river for those who are new believers or those who have been believers for years but never got baptized. I share the gospel with each group asking each a few questions and then baptize them right in front of others who are on the river.

Now you may be thinking these may have little effect on the unbeliever but God uses every situation such as this to bring the called to Himself and if we keep our faith locked up it's just us that loses the blessing.

People have said the church isn't the building but the believers and there is truth in both but that just goes to my point.

The church should be everywhere not just in the building and we become the body of Christ the more of us come together in corporate worship.

Another positive thing about having Christian events outdoors is we are more likely to bring together Christians from differing churches which helps us build bonds with others within the body locally.

So what is my point in taking these verses in this direction you may be asking and it is within the words of verse eleven.

11 “Worthy are you, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they existed and were created.”

I'm not sure there is any better way of showing God that we glorify and honor Him than by doing what He has commanded us to do by going out into the world and sharing the gospel and making His and Christ's name known everywhere. We need to as Christians do a much better job at showing God that we truly want to do our best at being Christians and not just think because we go to church every Sunday that we are covering our bases because we are not.

There are fewer and fewer Christian leaders these days and fewer and fewer helpers for the work being done.

If you don't believe me ask anyone who's life is ministry and more than likely they will say the same thing. It is tough lonely work most times but the work has to get done.

In my little town there are dozens and dozens of churches near shutting their doors, the pews are empty, the pastors and teachers are few. The only way we can turn this around is by getting out those doors and doing the work we are called to do. We just can't wait any longer, we just can't.

Revelation 5:1-5

In the last chapter we saw John being summoned to heaven by God and I am sure John's anxiety must have been going a mile a minute, I know mine would. The awe of being in the presence of God in heaven must be mind blowing and there would be no words to describe the feeling. So now it continues.

1 Then I saw in the right hand of him who was seated on the throne a scroll written within and on the back, sealed with seven seals.

God presenting Himself to John in what seems to be human form being that it says that the scroll was in His right hand. I am sure this was to reduce any unnecessary stress more than what John was already experiencing. Not that the stress was in anyway negative but he is in the presence of God.

In ancient times a persons seal was a way of first letting the person whom it was going to know where it came from and second that it was authentic.

The seal also doesn't allow anyone else to open it and read it because if someone opened it the seal would be broken and the person carrying it would most likely face great harm for doing that.

This scroll having seven seals not only insures no one can read it who isn't supposed to but these seals were unbreakable to everyone but the one it is intended for.

We are also told that the scroll was written on both front and back which indicates what is written on it is at minimal somewhat lengthy.

2 And I saw a mighty angel proclaiming with a loud voice, "Who is worthy to open the scroll and break its seals?" 3 And no one in heaven or on earth or under the earth was able to open the scroll or to look into it,

Who is this mighty angel that we read about? No one knows but it seems to be a high ranking angel being the angel is described as mighty. To us humans though I would assume any angel is mighty in many ways compared to us.

While in the presence of God would we even pay much attention to the angel at all, most likely not much, really just what attention was needed and all focus would be on God himself.

The angels loud voice proclaiming "Who is worthy to open the scroll and break the seals" is ended with a question mark indicating the angel didn't even know who could open it, this information was only known by few it seems.

The question the angel shouted out about who could open the scroll, was a call out to anyone that could open it it seems and that call out traveled throughout heaven, on earth and under the earth. Being verse three says no one in these three places was able to open it gives the impression some possibly tried, or at minimal replied that it wasn't them that could. This is what then leads to what we see in the next verse and how John responds to it.

4 and I began to weep loudly because no one was found worthy to open the scroll or to look into it.

For John to have been so upset tells us some things, first being he understood that whatever was in this scroll was extremely important. Second, that there must to have been a sufficient amount of time that lapsed in which there was an attempt to find someone that could open it but that failed. Lastly, that John understanding its importance and not finding anyone that could open it caused in him such disappointment that he began to cry.

But there is hope yet!

5 And one of the elders said to me, "Weep no more; behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has conquered, so that he can open the scroll and its seven seals."

This last verse has in it several important things we need to go through and we will take them one at a time but it starts off that one of the elders had the answer of who could open the scroll. We are not told if all of the elders knew this or just this one but for sure at least this one elder held the answer to this.

I'm not sure why this information wasn't given out sooner or why a process of attempting to find the person who could open it was allowed to follow its course but there must have been some importance to it.

The elder then tells John not to weep any more and then states it is the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the root of David.

Why is Jesus identified as the lion of the tribe of Judah? The lion is often known as the king of the animal world, it is majestic, powerful, respected, declared king, a conqueror and triumphant over its kingdom, so then this seems to fit at least for our understanding.

I often preach that if we are to be more like Jesus we should be preparing ourselves to be like the lion of Judah. Yes, Jesus came as a lamb willing to be sacrificed but as we move closer to the end times we should become more like the lion as Jesus is surely now.

That throws people off most times because most think we should be stuck in the lamb phase forever but I don't see it that way biblically. If we are to prepare for the end times we should be preparing to be like a lion as Christ is.

Jesus is in the lineage of King David which is why it says "the Root of David" as stated.

This was foretold in Isaiah 11:1 "There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse, and a branch from his roots shall bear fruit." Jesse is the father of King David.

The conqueror, is a reference of Jesus' conquering of sin and death by the payment of sin on the cross for all who would believe in Him as Lord and Savior. Did Jesus conquer more? For sure but this is I feel the primary thing He conquered as told in scripture.

This section of verses ends with saying that Jesus being all these things we just went through then gives only Him the right to open the seven seals and the scroll. Jesus is the only one that fits the description laid out perfectly from Old Testament through New so it can only be him and no other.

To God be the glory!

Revelation 5:6-14

6 And between the throne and the four living creatures and among the elders I saw a Lamb standing, as though it had been slain, with seven horns and with seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth.

Jesus, the Lamb of God who came to take away the sins of the world is now seen by John, and John states that this lamb appears to have been slain. The question is does John know this is Jesus? We are not given any indication of this yet.

We need to keep in mind that back in verse five the person capable of opening the scroll was said to be the Lion of the tribe of Judah so John now sees a lamb that appears to have been slain, scripture does not give us any indication at least at this point that John knew who either was that were talking about but of course we know.

This lamb besides looking as if it was slain had seven horns which in the Old Testament horns were a symbol of power and this lamb having seven horns showed great power beyond all else. The number seven is most often attributed to something of God or something holy.

The lamb also having seven eyes may not seem so out of place by itself being John has seen many creatures with many eyes by this point. The combination of these things together though is one thing that makes this lamb different than anything else there. At the end of this verse we also see that these seven eyes represent the seven spirits of God or the Holy Spirit that God had sent out into all the earth. The fact that we see for lack of better words the entwining of the Holy Spirit and Jesus is interesting and can be looked at possibly or at least in part as all in one but separate.

7 And he went and took the scroll from the right hand of him who was seated on the throne.

At this point it's possible that John may be thinking that the Lion spoken about and this lamb must be one in the same being the lamb was able take from God the scroll. It hasn't been opened yet but things are starting to come together.

You can see that there is a hierarchy in Heaven here as we see throughout all of scripture. God the Father is at the top of the hierarchy within the Trinity. This is important because there are some today who want to put Christ before God which isn't the case at all.

Even though we may be in New Testament times God is still on His throne and in complete control of everything.

The lamb here is taking the scroll from God in order to then open it and carry out what is to happen. Jesus always in His years on earth directed all things to God and for God's will to be done and not his own.

8 And when he had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each holding a harp, and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints.

The four creatures and the twenty-four elders being humbled and seeing this awesome event of the power and majesty of this scroll being taken from the hand of God could do nothing other fall down before them in a complete show of respect and awe for what just happened. They have all been waiting a very long time for this exact moment and God has finally moved the pieces into place.

The bowls of incense which are the prayers of the saints are the prayers of all who have believed in Jesus as Lord and Savior and in the promise. This shows the importance of prayers and how each prayer is harvested in heaven and is a sign of the faith God's people have in Him and how these prayers give constant worship and praise to Him.

9 And they sang a new song, saying, “Worthy are you to take the scroll and to open its seals, for you were slain, and by your blood you ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation, 10 and you have made them a kingdom and priests to our God, and they shall reign on the earth.”

These two verses are amazing. First it is Jesus and only Jesus who is worthy to take the scroll and open its seals. This has been set since the beginning of time in God's plan for the world. Could anyone else have filled this spot? No, scripture makes it very clear. Once God had designated Jesus as the one who would fulfill this mission nothing could have ever changed this, it was set in stone.

These two verses give more insight for our conclusion that these verses could have only been talking about Jesus though His name is still not outright mentioned. Jesus was slain, hung on a cross for the sins of all those who accept Him as their Lord and Savior. Jesus ransomed those who would believe from the slavery of sin and Satan. Jesus paid the ransom with His body and blood which was the only thing capable of paying such a high ransom. Jesus ransomed people from every corner of the earth no matter if Jew or gentile and of every language. This could only be Jesus.

This last description that all believers in Christ are made a kingdom, the body of Christ, the church and each are priests to God carrying out the command to go out into the world and share the gospel of Jesus.

And all of this, Jesus did for God and every part of this was for God. We were not saved for Jesus but Jesus was a critical part of the process. We were not saved in anyway for ourselves but we were the objects to be saved and gained a great reward for it. We were saved for God and God alone and for His purpose, for His glory and for His delight and no other reason. That is humbling.

11 Then I looked, and I heard around the throne and the living creatures and the elders the voice of many angels, numbering myriads of myriads and thousands of thousands, 12 saying with a loud voice, "Worthy is the Lamb who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing!" 13 And I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea, and all that is in them, saying, "To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be blessing and honor and glory and might forever and ever!" 14 And the four living creatures said, "Amen!" and the elders fell down and worshiped.

Can you imagine being a bystander to this scene of all these giving praise worship and honor to Jesus for whom He is and what His role was, is and will be in the work of God. The rejoicing and praise would be deafening to human ears. It would surely cause any of us to fall to our knees with our head to the ground in tears of joy and awe.

As we read scripture and see all of the things that are so amazing to us we should always understand that we are here for one purpose and that is to serve Jesus to the fullest of our ability for the glory of God.

Revelation 6:1-6

As we move forward in the book of Revelation there will be many points in which we may say that we can see some of these things happening right now but we need to be cautious not to have any thoughts of confirmation that we are in the midst of the end times.

Matthew 24:36 ~ “But concerning that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father only.

Every generation including the generation of Jesus' time saw and thought they were in the end times and all were wrong.

So why do I mention this you may be asking? I have seen far too many churches being hyper focused on the end times. The thought is that we are in it now and thus are avoiding Jesus' many teachings about what we should be focusing on today.

We should be always aware of signs that we may be seeing but unless every single thing mentioned in Revelation is happening we are not in the end times. And even if we think we are it can be easy to twist things to seem like we are. It's not our concern really, what our concern is and should always be is to share the gospel message with others. This is our primary concern and calling as Christians.

I Now I watched when the Lamb opened one of the seven seals, and I heard one of the four living creatures say with a voice like thunder, "Come!" 2 And I looked, and behold, a white horse! And its rider had a bow, and a crown was given to him, and he came out conquering, and to conquer.

The opening of the first seal by Jesus begins the just wrath of God that is about to take place on the world. Have no doubt God is justified in doing this and His patience has come to an end.

As one of the four creatures calls out the first of the four horsemen with a thunderous voice I find it interesting and fitting that the first horse is white. White sets the tone as being pure and holy thus indicates that these events are holy and righteous in nature.

Even more interesting to John being his description is a little more detailed is the rider on this white horse which is carrying a bow and was given a crown. White horses in the days of Jesus were ridden by the elite, kings, great warriors and other royalty. The crown on the horseman's head indicates the same. This is a great and powerful rider, a conqueror for God himself. The bow he is carrying though not mentioned is I am sure no ordinary bow. This bow is one that allows victory.

So why is the horseman not carrying the most sophisticated weapon of this future time?

He doesn't need to, his skill in being a conqueror given to him by God is all he needs to be victorious. God often uses throughout scripture things that seem to be inferior to conquer others, it's the way God works. Jets, tanks and missiles have no power to defeat this rider.

We have to be careful here not to think this is Jesus leading the way on this white horse, He is not. Remember Jesus is the one opening the seals. Some have gotten this confused with Revelation 19 where it is Jesus on the white horse but again Jesus is the one opening each of the seals here so it cannot be Him.

3 When he opened the second seal, I heard the second living creature say, "Come!" 4 And out came another horse, bright red. Its rider was permitted to take peace from the earth, so that people should slay one another, and he was given a great sword.

A second living creation calls out the next rider as Jesus opens up the second seal and this horse is bright red. Red being the color of blood which fits this horsemen well being he is described as being permitted to take peace from the earth.

The opposite of peace is war, this rider upon taking peace away created a situation in which people and most likely all people were at war with one another.

This war would be greater than any war ever seen on earth before and probably greater than all others combined.

The sword the rider was carrying is a perfect symbol for war and it came with great power as well.

5 When he opened the third seal, I heard the third living creature say, "Come!" And I looked, and behold, a black horse! And its rider had a pair of scales in his hand. 6 And I heard what seemed to be a voice in the midst of the four living creatures, saying, "A quart of wheat for a denarius, and three quarts of barley for a denarius, and do not harm the oil and wine!"

The third living creature calls out the third rider and this rider was on a black horse. This rider is holding a pair of scales, scales are used to measure things such as food.

Here it is that a certain amount of food for a certain amount of money. One quart of wheat for one denarius and this would feed one person for a day. A denarius in scripture at times is given for a days wages. The other option given here is a denarius for three quarts of barley. Wheat would be considered the healthier of these two options.

Imagine having to work all day for enough food for one person. What happens if you have a family?

A wife and two children would need four days of work to feed all four. In this situation even if the wife was working a full day there would only be enough food for a half day for the four unless the two children were working as well but they would normally get paid less.

Hunger and famine would then be an issue in many cases for many people and though God is just in doing this accepting that God's wrath on mankind is just, is hard for many to understand.

All have sinned and fallen short (Romans 3:23) is the position of all of mankind. We deserve God's instant wrath and death yet even here with little food and hunger it is more mercy and grace than deserved.

Understanding how sinful we are and the damage it has done in our relationship between us and God is extremely important. The deeper we understand our great sin the deeper we understand God's great mercy, grace and love for us.

Understanding daily our great sin even as a believer then also helps us to understand our great need for a great Savior every single day.

Revelation 6:7-11

As we look at the next group of verses and the opening of the fourth seal, we start with the last of the four horseman. Though these four horses have all been given differing colors it is the riders of these horses that are bringing God's wrath not the horses, at least in part.

7 When he opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth living creature say, "Come!" 8 And I looked, and behold, a pale horse! And its rider's name was Death, and Hades followed him. And they were given authority over a fourth of the earth, to kill with sword and with famine and with pestilence and by wild beasts of the earth.

The pale horse with the rider whom John calls Death. How John determined that this horseman was to be named Death we do not know, maybe it was the pale color which reminded him of the skin color of someone deceased.

Is this horseman responsible for the deaths of those whom God is getting ready to inflict His wrath upon? Maybe this horseman is in some way responsible for the unbelievers souls? For sure it is one or the other or both but I'm not sure we have an answer to it in full.

The interesting thing about this horseman is he has another with him, Hades.

Hades is the Greek god of the underworld and this would be appropriate for him to be trailing Death in order to acquire the souls of all these unbelievers who will be dying.

God's sovereignty is shown in full display in what we are seeing, every little thing God has thought about, planned out perfectly and willed to happen.

Many will say God is love and only love but as we know from scripture that isn't really true. God hates at times in scripture such as in Romans 9:13 where scripture says ~ Just as it is written: "Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated." That is God saying this, he hated Esau a person. There are other verses about God hating evil doers as well in the Old Testament. It is important for us to understand that God does hate, He hates those who will not come to faith in Christ and do not repent of their sin against Him. God doesn't send those He loves to Hell, that wouldn't make any sense at all.

It is important for us to understand that God's hate is a righteous hate which is something we as humans are incapable of. Our hate is always tainted in some way just like everything else about us. Any righteousness that we have did not come from within us but rather was credited to us at the point that we became believers. It is Jesus' righteousness that is credited to us which is how God sees us the believer now.

Verse eight goes on to say that God gave these two authority over a fourth of the earth in order it says “to kill with sword and with famine and with pestilence and by wild beasts of the earth.”

What a well oiled machine God has created here, death and the collection of the souls of the lost at the same time.

Besides those dying by the sword, famine, and pestilence God has even ordained certain animals to kill some of these unbelievers. It would be hard not to conclude that God must be doing all this even if you would say you don't believe in God. This is most assuredly why God has chose these options, to make it clear that it is Him, nothing else would make sense.

9 When he opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain for the word of God and for the witness they had borne. 10 They cried out with a loud voice, “O Sovereign Lord, holy and true, how long before you will judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?” 11 Then they were each given a white robe and told to rest a little longer, until the number of their fellow servants and their brothers should be complete, who were to be killed as they themselves had been.

In many countries today death is the end result if that countries government catches you following Christ.

Also if some of the people catch you believing in Christ and sharing Him with others they will also kill you.

Here in America there is little fear of this which is maybe why Christianity has become so weak here as a whole. Christians are never tested here and I am fairly sure a large percentage of self professing Christians would crumble if put to the test of life or death.

Upon the opening of the fifth seal the souls of the martyrs who are under the alter in heaven cried it says. They cried for God to take vengeance against those who have killed them for their faith. Scripture says God is the avenger of His people (Romans 12:19). God's wrath against those who have come against His people is more severe than we can ever do.

When we are doing our best to serve Christ we should feel in some way those who come against us and the work we are doing for Him. This doesn't always mean that we need to be martyred, just that those who come against us in any way for being His servants that God will be our revenge on them at some point and in some way.

Over the past twenty five years in ministry, as I look at those who have come against me in the work that I do for Christ, that you would think I am talking about those who are unbelievers but that hasn't been normally the case. Self professing Christians at times

will come against other believers who are eagerly working for Christ. There is a good possibility that these self professing Christians may not be Christians at all even though they may think they are. They show little to know fruit which is a sign that they have deceived themselves into thinking they are a believer (Matthew 7:15-20).

In verse eleven we see those who have been martyred given white robes to signify in some way who they are. Patience is what they were told to have until the final numbers of the martyrs has come to fruition. God's vengeance for the martyrs cannot happen until the last martyr has been killed. Patience then must be had and faith that God will do exactly as He has stated.

God's timing is always perfect and ours is most times imperfect and it isn't always easy for us as imperfect humans to have such great patience.

Revelation 6:12-17

As we approach this last section of chapter six things are building up and we are going to really see things begin to turn for the worse.

12 When he opened the sixth seal, I looked, and behold, there was a great earthquake, and the sun became black as sackcloth, the full moon became like blood, 13 and the stars of the sky fell to the earth as the fig tree sheds its winter fruit when shaken by a gale.

As Jesus opens the sixth seal we see multiple things happening and each of them is in itself a horrific event, so imagine them happening all at once.

First, an earthquake and not some run of the mill earthquake but one of great magnitude and most likely one like has never happened before as we will see in the next verses.

Next, the sun becomes black, black gives us an indication of a severe lack of sunlight. Sackcloth used to describe this event is a loosely woven fabric made with a coarse yarn of thicker hair. If you were to put this type of sack over your head you could still see some light because of how loosely it is woven, but even so this event would have caused the people of this time great distress.

Along with the lack of sun the moon turned blood red adding to the distress these people were experiencing. I have no doubt they are beginning to understand that God was doing this or maybe they thought one of there false god's was doing this because of how many things were happening at the same time. Of course we know false gods can do nothing but those who follow false gods at least for a time think it is their god.

Lastly, a meteor shower is raining down on the earth instilling even more horror onto all witnessing this.

Though it is not explained these event's are happening around the whole world not just in one place. These events obviously would be a little different because of time zones but all would be experiencing these things.

We know that much of Revelation is symbolic meaning John is trying to explain the things he is seeing without ever seeing anything like it before. That what he is trying to explain he is explaining in a way that's not perfect to us. That there is a different or deeper meaning to what he is saying in many cases. But that isn't all of Revelation, many things are straight forward and I think these things are straight forward and actually happening.

The sky vanished like a scroll that is being rolled up, and every mountain and island was removed from its place.

15 Then the kings of the earth and the great ones and the generals and the rich and the powerful, and everyone, slave and free, hid themselves in the caves and among the rocks of the mountains, 16 calling to the mountains and rocks, "Fall on us and hide us from the face of him who is seated on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb, 17 for the great day of their wrath has come, and who can stand?"

The sky vanished meaning that the stars vanished when they fell to the earth and the sky was void of the stars leaving it empty. It doesn't matter what century you are in this would be a sight that would leave any person to think that the end is near.

Along with this because of the great earthquake(s) happening, every mountain and every island was removed from its place meaning the mountains collapsed and the islands sunk into the ocean. That gives us an indication of how massive these earthquakes were.

It goes on to say that everyone hid themselves in order to protect themselves from the devastation happening. The interesting thing is that it didn't matter who you were, no matter if you were rich or poor, royalty or a commoner, famous or not everyone within the same areas were just trying to survive. Everyone at this time is equal under God's wrath.

It had gotten so bad that people had wished to just die rather than continue in the horrors that were around them and they knew this wrath was from God carried out by Jesus the Lamb and they were the subject of this great wrath. There was no escaping it, no way around it, rather they faced the penalty of what was being inflicted upon them.

What I find interesting is that at this point there is no mention of faith and repentance. At least not right now, that time has gone.

This reminds me of the story of Noah. God gave everyone ample opportunity to repent and believe in Him as their God but they had no desire. Then when the flood came scripture says it was God himself who closed the door of the ark and shut anyone who wanted to enter it at that point to be closed out. The time came, the opportunity was gone, and God's wrath was in process.

The ark is a salvation story, a representation of sorts of Jesus. God calls everyone to faith and repentance, Jesus is represented by the ark in which life and salvation is either had or taken away. God closing the door of the ark is showing that salvation is only by Jesus and the failure to believe in Him as Lord and Savior shuts them out of salvation.

This brings about multiple questions for the unbeliever, the first being of course do you understand how your sin and lack of faith has caused a separation between you and God? Will you believe in Christ who saves before it is too late? Do you understand how Jesus is like the ark and the only way to being saved? Do you see that God is providing an opportunity?

But like the door of the ark being closed and now in Revelation the earthquake, the stars come crashing to earth, mountains crumbling and islands sinking, there is a point when it is too late. This is why the believer shouldn't wait any longer because tomorrow is not promised.

God's wrath once in progress gives no opportunity to change ones mind because it would most likely not be genuine faith but done just out of fear of death and that isn't a saving faith just as God's love alone is no reason for genuine faith. Salvation is a little more complex than this.

Revelation 7:1-8

After this I saw four angels standing at the four corners of the earth, holding back the four winds of the earth, that no wind might blow on earth or sea or against any tree. 2 Then I saw another angel ascending from the rising of the sun, with the seal of the living God, and he called with a loud voice to the four angels who had been given power to harm earth and sea, 3 saying, “Do not harm the earth or the sea or the trees, until we have sealed the servants of our God on their foreheads.”

All of God's creation which is everything has only the ability in which God has given. God being sovereign over all things either wills something to happen or allows something to happen.

Most Christians today do not believe in the sovereignty of God rather they believe in a limited God that is only available when needed. Oh, many will say they believe in the sovereignty of God but when asked a few questions we find that they don't. All you need to do is ask someone about “freewill” and you will find out some interesting things about their faith very quickly. The response I hear most is God has given over His will to mankind so that they can have freewill, or something like this. After all we are not robots are we?

God at no time gives up His sovereignty over His creation or else He ceases to be God and at that point people become their own god.

So it's no different with angel's, God's will is worked through angel's as God's will works through the believer. It may not be exactly the same because we have an indwelt Holy Spirit and I do not see this in angel's.

We do see Satan and fallen angel's which gives us some indication that there is at times a will possibly other than God's but I wouldn't say it is free. So was this all a part of God's plan? I would say so.

Freewill would mean that there is no influence of any kind that causes you to make a decision one way or another. I would say as we look at Adam and Eve pre-fall that they may have had true freewill but we are not told that. We know that after their fall that ever person from that point on inherited the sin of Adam and we are told that our nature had become corrupted and sinful because of it (Romans 5:12). That corrupted nature then influences us in a way that causes us to make certain decisions. Scripture says we are a slave to it because it controls us in every way.

Post salvation scripture tells us that upon salvation we are given a new nature in which righteousness is at least at some level desired.

That desire within the new nature is also helped and influenced by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit which motivates and guides a believer greatly.

So you see that we are both before believers and after believers heavily influenced and I would say compelled to make decisions one way or the other. We may have had the chains broken to sin but our flesh and our mind in a process of being renewed are still working against the believer because they are still influenced by sin.

So why would God do this you may ask? For His own reasons that benefit him alone. He is God and He knows what works out best for Him which is the primary reason He does what he does.

So back to the angel's. These four angel's are being instructed by this fifth angel in verse two who comes into the scene and has authority from God to tell them to hold back the winds. Obviously these winds would be very destructive and at least for a time they need to be held back so that God's will may happen in the order He needs it to happen.

We are told in verse three that the fifth angel comes with a seal from the living God in order to seal the heads of the servants of God, a specific group of servants, the 144,000.

*4 And I heard the number of the sealed, 144,000, sealed from every tribe of the sons of Israel:
 5 12,000 from the tribe of Judah were sealed, 12,000 from the tribe of Reuben, 12,000 from the tribe of Gad, 6 12,000 from the tribe of Asher, 12,000 from the tribe of Naphtali, 12,000 from the tribe of Manasseh, 7 12,000 from the tribe of Simeon, 12,000 from the tribe of Levi, 12,000 from the tribe of Issachar, 8 12,000 from the tribe of Zebulun, 12,000 from the tribe of Joseph, 12,000 from the tribe of Benjamin were sealed.*

You will hear two different arguments about if God is still working within the Jewish people as a group separately and set apart from the church. The Jews who are called Israel at times are thought by some to still be God's chosen people. The other side says that God is done with them and now is focusing on the church. But the question is why can't it be both?

Scripture does ask and answer a question in Romans 9:6-8 about who is true Israel. It is those who have faith as did Abraham it says. Abraham is pre-Judaism so the question of if the Jews as a whole will be saved isn't the real question at all. The question is do you have faith in God and what God is doing as Abraham did? That then leads to Christ and salvation.

Scripture tells us the only way to heaven is by faith in Jesus. We know scripture also says all who are Jew and Greek fall under this same method of salvation.

Is God saving both Jew and gentile through faith in Christ? Of course!

I would say that these 144,000 are either in the process of being saved from the time of Jesus ascending to heaven to this time in Revelation which amounts to 144,000. Or, that these 144,000 are in addition to those who are already being saved. My point is that God is not only working in the lives of specific Jews today to come to Christ but at some point He may also work specifically in 144,000 Jews that will come to faith in Christ. In either case they need to come to faith in Christ and then they will be sealed into the covenant of Christ like everyone else.

The reality is those who are being saved and are saved both have been called by God to be saved and will be saved by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Some false religious faiths believe they are the 144,000 but the problem is there are more of them than this amount already. There is no specific group that will be the only ones saved only those who believe in a true biblical God and the true biblical Jesus and the teachings that come with them.

Revelation 7:9-17

9 After this I looked, and behold, a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands, 10 and crying out with a loud voice, "Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!"

In Revelation 7:4 we read about the sealing by God of 144,000 from in part each of the twelve tribes of Israel.

Now as John is envisioning the throne of God John sees this multitude of people he says, a number so great that they can't be counted. These are not the 144,000, they are still on earth sealed for the time of their calling and death. These people are all the deceased believers in heaven that have all come together before the throne of God. They are from everywhere around the world and they have all put their faith in Jesus as lord and savior and upon their death are all now in heaven awaiting this time in which John is seeing.

John says here that these who are dressed in white gowns and carrying palm branches are crying out that salvation belongs to our God and the Lamb. Why does it not mention the saved and their part in salvation? Did not the saved have to accept salvation and if so they had a part in it correct?

No, the saved have never had a part in their own salvation or else salvation would be works based and not by grace. Ephesians chapter two is one of the best collections of verses describing salvation and nowhere in it are we mentioned as having a part in it at all.

1 And you were dead in the trespasses and sins 2 in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience— 3 among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the flesh and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind. 4 But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, 5 even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved— 6 and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, 7 so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. 8 For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, 9 not a result of works, so that no one may boast. 10 For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.

Notice this section of verses starts off by God telling the believer that we were dead, dead is our starting point. Not dead physically but dead spiritually meaning that we are incapable of doing anything spiritual such as being righteous or acquiring our salvation by something we did, WE ARE DEAD and dead people can do nothing.

So dead is the starting point, then it says “But God”, this is the good part, God being rich in mercy because of His love for us, who is the us, those being saved and are saved. Even though we didn't deserve his mercy and love it says, He made us alive together with Christ. That is salvation, God made us alive, alive is being saved, we did nothing and He did everything.

But what about choice? I have spoken about this before, the choice for the spiritually dead unbeliever is always a rejection of God (Romans 3:10-17).

Verse eight of Ephesians tells us that we are saved by grace through faith, and that faith is a gift of God as well. God supplied everything needed because we could not offer anything.

11 And all the angels were standing around the throne and around the elders and the four living creatures, and they fell on their faces before the throne and worshiped God,

12 saying, “Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and might be to our God forever and ever! Amen.”

What a powerful sight this must have been, this multitude of believers in heaven all giving praise, honor and glory to God and Jesus the Lamb for their salvation. It gives me chills thinking about it. It is so powerful that the angels, elders and the four living creatures all fell on their faces with this immense fact. We cannot fathom this completely until we are there and in front of God and our Savior ourselves because only then will we comprehend how great a sinner we were.

Would all of these fallen to their face if it was up to them the human to do something about their own faith thus having a part in it, really being the hinge pin to it all? Not a chance, because in part it was their accomplishment again thus a work.

13 Then one of the elders addressed me, saying, “Who are these, clothed in white robes, and from where have they come?” 14 I said to him, “Sir, you know.” And he said to me, “These are the ones coming out of the great tribulation.

These two verses are interesting, why did the elder ask John this question? Was it to make sure he knew what he was seeing? Most likely.

I have done the same in my ministries over the years because I want to make sure that those who are serving didn't miss out on the great thing God had just done. These were the dead believers from the tribulation which gives us even more context to verse 9.

They have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. 15 "Therefore they are before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple; and he who sits on the throne will shelter them with his presence. 16 They shall hunger no more, either thirst anymore; the sun shall not strike them, nor any scorching heat. 17 For the Lamb in the midst of the throne will be their shepherd, and he will guide them to springs of living water, and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes."

Jesus' work on the cross is given to all who believe, it is credited to them. They did not have to pay the price themselves which they could never have done because the debt was too large. This is the robes being washed in the blood of Christ, it covers the believer, it covers them for Jesus' payment of their sin.

These believers are in servitude to God day and night 24/7. Will all believers be in this state of servitude in heaven? I'm not sure I have the answer to that question but my thought would be yes.

In heaven it says there will be no hunger or thirst and they will be protected from the sun and that we will need nothing.

Lastly it says ~ “For the Lamb in the midst of the throne will be their shepherd, and he will guide them to springs of living water, and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.”

What a comforting thought of what we will experience once there. Could anything be better, of course not, not a single thing. As Jesus is our Shepherd here on earth He will also be our Shepherd in heaven as well.

Revelation 8

1 When the Lamb opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven for about half an hour. 2 Then I saw the seven angels who stand before God, and seven trumpets were given to them. 3 And another angel came and stood at the altar with a golden censer, and he was given much incense to offer with the prayers of all the saints on the golden altar before the throne, 4 and the smoke of the incense, with the prayers of the saints, rose before God from the hand of the angel.

(Silence) Pauses are a curious thing aren't they? In things like movies pauses are added many times as a buildup to something extremely important or dramatic that is about to happen. Can you imagine what anticipation was happening in heaven after Jesus had opened this seventh seal and everything came to complete silence? Can you imagine John envisioning this and the anxiety he must have felt with this long bout of silence? The only thing I can think of is as this tension was building-up that everyone must have been thinking this can't be good.

In verse 2 it says that John saw 7 angels who were standing before God, and each was given a trumpet.

Then another angel who stood at the altar was given a golden censor and that censor was to hold the incense that were also given to him.

This censor with the incense were an offering we are told to God along with the prayers of all the saints who were there.

In verse 5 things are about to take a turn and we are about to see what this build up was all about.

5 Then the angel took the censer and filled it with fire from the altar and threw it on the earth, and there were peals of thunder, rumblings, flashes of lightning, and an earthquake.

For those who will be on earth seeing this, this fireball could possibly look like a huge asteroid coming out of the sky on fire and crashing to earth. What will probably seem stranger is the thunder and lightning and earthquake that follows it.

The Seven Trumpets

6 Now the seven angels who had the seven trumpets prepared to blow them. 7 The first angel blew his trumpet, and there followed hail and fire, mixed with blood, and these were thrown upon the earth. And a third of the earth was burned up, and a third of the trees were burned up, and all green grass was burned up.

I had mentioned before even within God's wrath we still see His mercy and grace. God could have just ended everything in one single blow but he doesn't.

There is thought and intention in which God's will is unfolding here.

Think of what Jesus had to go through as he was beaten, tortured and nailed on the cross. That was God's will unfolding as well. As I thought about this my personal thought is that God is in a way subjecting the earth to a slow drawn out punishment just as Jesus had to endure. He wasn't going to make it easy, God was saying I am in control and you will feel my wrath.

Joel 2:30 ~ And I will show wonders in the heavens and on the earth, blood and fire and columns of smoke.

8 The second angel blew his trumpet, and something like a great mountain, burning with fire, was thrown into the sea, and a third of the sea became blood. 9 A third of the living creatures in the sea died, and a third of the ships were destroyed.

Notice hear that John uses the term “something like” when he describes this mountain like object that was thrown into the sea. Again he is doing his best to describe what it is he is envisioning. But when he says “a third of the sea became blood” he doesn't use that term. He says it was blood, not like blood. So a third of the sea became blood.

An interesting thing is usually when we see blood used in scripture it is a good thing, it is a sacrificial thing or a payment thing. With Jesus it was a sacrifice and a payment but here we have seen blood twice and now it has become a wrath thing. And a third of the living creatures in the sea die and a third of the ships are destroyed.

10 The third angel blew his trumpet, and a great star fell from heaven, blazing like a torch, and it fell on a third of the rivers and on the springs of water. 11 The name of the star is Wormwood. A third of the waters became wormwood, and many people died from the water, because it had been made bitter.

God is attacking the water supply again and again. We have something that comes from heaven like a blazing torch. Wormwood is a plant that has some medicinal purposes but from what I have studied, it also learned it can be poisonous which is what we see happening here.

12 The fourth angel blew his trumpet, and a third of the sun was struck, and a third of the moon, and a third of the stars, so that a third of their light might be darkened, and a third of the day might be kept from shining, and likewise a third of the night.

Darkness is never a good thing in scripture and here God takes away some of the light and allows the world to be darker. This adds to God's wrath.

13 Then I looked, and I heard an eagle crying with a loud voice as it flew directly overhead, “Woe, woe, woe to those who dwell on the earth, at the blasts of the other trumpets that the three angels are about to blow!”

This is no ordinary eagle, it speaks. Some speculate it could be an angel, but I like to think it is an eagle as stated crying out a warning to be ready for the next three angels.

Revelation 9 1-6

Revelation 9:1 ~ And the fifth angel blew his trumpet, and I saw a star fallen from heaven to earth, and he was given the key to the shaft of the bottomless pit.

What does the word “star” commonly reference? An angel. How we know in this verse that it is indeed an angel and not a star is because it says “and he was given the key.” He, obviously is a term for being a male, we do need to clarify words like this these days unfortunately but obviously a star is neither he or she but an object.

What is “the bottomless pit”? Hell, being bottomless means that it can hold absolutely everyone if needed and then some.

2 He opened the shaft of the bottomless pit, and from the shaft rose smoke like the smoke of a great furnace, and the sun and the air were darkened with the smoke from the shaft.

Then the angel with the key opened the shaft, this is thought to be the same angel that is in chapter 20:1 who locks it back up again.

In the last chapter we saw how God dimmed the light from the sun, the moon and the stars. We now add to this darkness with the smoke from the bottomless pit.

The darker things get in life the more overwhelming it is for a person. This is a time where it will either make you or break you. The hope here is once again, that by God turning the screws on mankind that it will turn as many unsaved to Him as possible.

3 Then from the smoke came locusts on the earth, and they were given power like the power of scorpions of the earth. 4 They were told not to harm the grass of the earth or any green plant or any tree, but only those people who do not have the seal of God on their foreheads. 5 They were allowed to torment them for five months, but not to kill them, and their torment was like the torment of a scorpion when it stings someone. 6 And in those days people will seek death and will not find it. They will long to die, but death will flee from them.

What is “*the seal of God on their foreheads*”?

Revelation 7:1-4 ~ After this I saw four angels standing at the four corners of the earth, holding back the four winds of the earth, that no wind might blow on earth or sea or against any tree. 2 Then I saw another angel ascending from the rising of the sun, with the seal of the living God, and he called with a loud voice to the four angels who had been given power to harm earth and sea, 3 saying, “Do not harm the earth or the sea or the trees, until we have sealed the servants of our God on their foreheads.”

4 And I heard the number of the sealed, 144,000, sealed from every tribe of the sons of Israel:

So the ones with the seal were the unbelieving 144,000 Jews who are still alive on earth and who God is protecting until He calls them to repentance and faith in Christ.

You may be thinking, what about those who are not the 144k? All who are already believers are already sealed and protected.

Ephesian 1:11-14 ~ In him (Christ) we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will, 12 so that we who were the first to hope in Christ might be to the praise of his glory. 13 In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, 14 who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory.

Rev 9:5 They were allowed to torment them for five months, but not to kill them, and their torment was like the torment of a scorpion when it stings someone. 6 And in those days people will seek death and will not find it. They will long to die, but death will flee from them.

Imagine these little locust creatures crawling over you and stinging you like scorpions. That is the fate of these unbelievers. And as you are being stung time and time again, and the torment of this is sinking in clearly, it says they were seeking death (the unbeliever) but would not find it.

God is not allowing them to die even when they want it. God is justly keeping them in a state of wrath and punishment. His holiness warrants it.

Listen, the next time you see someone in your family who isn't saved or a friend or even a stranger who isn't saved, I want you to think about this. I want you to think about also your responsibility at that moment of your calling to share the gospel with them.

Revelation 9:7- 11

As we had gotten an overview of these creatures, these locust which have the power of scorpions which I would say means they sting like scorpions. John now is going to take a closer look at these creatures or demons and give us a better understanding of what they look like.

Revelation 9:7-11 ~ In appearance the locusts were like horses prepared for battle: on their heads were what looked like crowns of gold; their faces were like human faces, 8 their hair like women's hair, and their teeth like lions' teeth; 9 they had breastplates like breastplates of iron, and the noise of their wings was like the noise of many chariots with horses rushing into battle. 10 They have tails and stings like scorpions, and their power to hurt people for five months is in their tails. 11 They have as king over them the angel of the bottomless pit. His name in Hebrew is Abaddon, and in Greek he is called Apollyon.

1) John says these demons “looked like horses prepared for battle”.

Horses prepared for battle were well trained horses and trained for one specific thing, fighting. These horses were the smartest and strongest horses and bred specifically for this task. They were fearless and brave in the midst of the most severe situations.

2) “They wore something like crowns of gold”.

If you were a king and had horses they would often be adorned with gold and lavish dressings because they were a reflection of the king or the royal guard riding them. They were the best of the best and when they went into battle they were most always victorious.

3) John says “ their faces resembled human faces”.

If things were not getting horrific enough they had human faces. I can only imagine how gruesome these things must have been for John to see.

4) They had “hair like women's hair”

Some ancient warriors such as the Parthians wore their hair long and it was in some ways a status symbol and a symbol of their fierceness.

5) They had “teeth like lions teeth”.

Lions have a particular type of teeth. They have long canines that are used for piercing their prey. When these teeth sink in they are like hooks making it almost impossible for whatever it is clamped onto to get away. I would assume that these particular beasts could even pierce a soldiers breastplate. A typical lions force when clamping down is roughly 1,000 pounds per square inch. I'm sure these had much more.

6) Speaking of breast plates it says that they had “breastplates like breastplates of iron.

Iron being probably the strongest metal of John's time it was much stronger than say bronze which was also used. So these demons were well protected.

7) Next it says that the “sound of their wings was like the thundering of many horses”.

John doesn't say how many horses it sounded like, but I would think many would mean hundreds or thousands.

8) Last John says that they had “tails and stings like scorpions”.

We are told for five months unbelievers had to endure this and that many wanted to die but they couldn't. Five months of pain, suffering and misery.

But as I mentioned before, these unbelievers were being justly targeted by God for their resistance to coming to faith in Christ and their unwillingness to submit and repent of their sins.

11 They have as king over them the angel of the bottomless pit. His name in Hebrew is Abaddon, and in Greek he is called Apollyon.

This angel is their king and is one of the fallen angels. We know this because it says that he is as well in the bottomless pit or hell.

As in any army there are usually ranks and this army of demons has them as well. This angel is obviously of high rank and authority but I would say that it isn't Satan himself.

The names Abaddon in Hebrew and Apollyon in Greek means destroyer or destruction.

12 The first woe has passed; behold, two woes are still to come.

Revelation 9:13-21

13 Then the sixth angel blew his trumpet, and I heard a voice from the four horns of the golden altar before God, 14 saying to the sixth angel who had the trumpet, “Release the four angels who are bound at/under/in the great river Euphrates.”

We are seeing something a little different happening here than what happened to the previous angels who blew their trumpet. The sixth angel after blowing his trumpet gets instruction from the four horns of the golden altar. Keep in mind these horns are not the kind of horns like a trumpet, they are rather like ram horns. These horns represented strength and were placed one each at the four corners of the altar. These horns for some reason were speaking for God.

The sixth angel was commanded to release these four angels bound at, under and in the river Euphrates. These bound angels we know nothing about, they could be fallen angels or some other angels that did something in which God punished them for. The river Euphrates which runs through Syria and Iraq as well as some others at one time signified the end point of Israel's territory. And it was also at the end of the Garden of Eden, Genesis 2:10–14.

15 So the four angels, who had been prepared for the hour, the day, the month, and the year, were released to kill a third of mankind.

16 The number of mounted troops was twice ten thousand times ten thousand (; I heard their number.

Who prepared them? God, and they knew the exact time God was planning on unleashing them. Four angels brought with them 200 million troops.

17 And this is how I saw the horses in my vision and those who rode them: they wore breastplates the color of fire and of sapphire and of sulfur, and the heads of the horses were like lions' heads, and fire and smoke and sulfur came out of their mouths.

18 By these three plagues a third of mankind was killed, by the fire and smoke and sulfur coming out of their mouths. 19 For the power of the horses is in their mouths and in their tails, for their tails are like serpents with heads, and by means of them they wound.

Some would say what kind of God would do these things. A righteous, holy and just God that's who.

20 The rest of mankind, who were not killed by these plagues, did not repent of the works of their hands nor give up worshiping demons and idols of gold and silver and bronze and stone and wood, which cannot see or hear or walk, 21 nor did they repent of their murders or their sorceries or their sexual immorality or their thefts.

They wanted to die as we read previously but God wouldn't let them nor would they repent. It always amazes me how the unsaved can fight so hard not to believe what is clearly truth. Even here in Revelation with everything that is going on they continue to fight against repenting and believing.

Much doesn't change does it? Today is no different than our past or our future here in Revelation. The lost will always fight against God until God calls them to repentance and faith through the Holy Spirit. God softening their heart, revealing to them who He is and making them aware of their sin is the only thing that will turn them from their ways and run to God.

Romans 8:29-30 ~ *For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. 30 And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified.*

God's work in the unsaved in which He is calling to Himself is what changes that heart to desire God. God it says foreknew, predestined, called, justified, and finally will glorify them on their last day. It is all the work of God.

To Go be the glory!

Revelation 10:1-7

The Angel and the Little Scroll

The description ~ *1 Then I saw another mighty angel coming down from heaven, wrapped in a cloud, with a rainbow over his head, and his face was like the sun, and his legs like pillars of fire.*

John now sees an angel coming down from heaven, but it doesn't appear to be just an ordinary angel. This angel is different enough that there is a description about him. This angel was wrapped in a cloud. Some think this cloud could have been something divine, possible the presence of God himself or the Holy Spirit manifested as this cloud. It is an interesting thought but we are not told it is either so all we know is it is a cloud.

The next thing John mentions is that there appears to be a rainbow over this angels head. Now the first thing I thought of was God's covenant with Noah. Does this rainbow have something to do with the covenant? Possibly that the covenant has come to an end? We again are not told.

The angels face was like the sun, in other words it was bright. Was it hot as well? We do not know.

In Revelation 1:16 we had read ~ *In his right hand he held seven stars, from his mouth came a sharp two-*

edged sword, and his face was like the sun shining in full strength. This is Jesus here and there is good thought that this may be again Jesus with the presence of God or the Spirit surrounding Him.

It also says that the angel's legs were like pillars of fire. Pillars are a symbol of strength, great strength. As to the fire, ***Exodus 13:21 ~ And the LORD went before them by day in a pillar of cloud to lead them along the way, and by night in a pillar of fire to give them light, that they.***

There is good reason to conclude that this angel may be God and or Jesus coming to earth for some reason but it does say an angel. Was it just to hand John over this little scroll? If it was God and or Jesus, John it seems didn't understand that it was.

Some think the description better suits the angel Gabriel.

2 He had a little scroll open in his hand. And he set his right foot on the sea, and his left foot on the land, 3 and called out with a loud voice, like a lion roaring. When he called out, the seven thunders sounded. 4 And when the seven thunders had sounded, I was about to write, but I heard a voice from heaven saying, "Seal up what the seven thunders have said, and do not write it down."

This angel came with enormous size to be able to have one foot on the sea and one foot on land. Notice though it does say one foot on the sea and not in the sea. Again another reference to Jesus possibly as Jesus walked on water? It says the scroll was little, to something of this size it would need to be little because as we read it was given to John and he needed to be able to handle it.

It then says that the angel called out with a loud voice like a lion roaring and then the seven thunders sounded. This yet could be another indication of Jesus being He is called the Lion of Judah but again scripture says angel.

We are not told anything about these seven thunders but it says - then a voice from heaven says to “seal up what the seven thunders said” so it must have been some form of language spoken by the seven thunders.

5 And the angel whom I saw standing on the sea and on the land raised his right hand to heaven 6 and swore by him who lives forever and ever, who created heaven and what is in it, the earth and what is in it, and the sea and what is in it, that there would be no more delay, 7 but that in the days of the trumpet call to be sounded by the seventh angel, the mystery of God would be fulfilled, just as he announced to his servants the prophets.

Who is “*him who lives forever and ever, who created heaven and what is in it, the earth and what is in it, and the sea and what is in it*”? It must be God correct? So this tells me it must be either an angel or Jesus who is raising their hand to heaven and swore to God but once again scripture says angel so I must comply with that thought.

Then it goes on to say that there will be no more delay and that “the mystery of God would be fulfilled, just as he announced to his servants the prophets”.

Revelation 10:8-11

8 Then the voice that I had heard from heaven spoke to me again, saying, “Go, take the scroll that is open in the hand of the angel who is standing on the sea and on the land.”

We now need to reflect back a little to remember who's voice John is hearing from heaven and in Revelation 5:5 it was one of the heavenly elders and it seems that this elder is speaking to John again in order to give him instruction on what he should do next. He said to John to “go take the scroll.”

This scroll does not in any way seem to be the same scroll that Jesus opened, at least we are not given that indication in scripture.

Here are some questions - who was the scroll small to the angel or John? Was the angel man sized or a giant in size? The angel is standing on the sea and land and if we are at the beach we can do that somewhat or is there a great spans between the angels legs as one is on the sea and the other on land? Also notice he is not standing in the sea but on the sea. Too many questions to think about here with not enough answers. If God wanted us to know He would have told us.

9 So I went to the angel and told him to give me the little scroll. And he said to me, "Take and eat it; it will make your stomach bitter, but in your mouth it will be sweet as honey."

John approaches the angel and says "give me the little scroll" seems pretty direct and to the point. I'm not sure I wouldn't have been a little more polite to this Angel, maybe saying please give me the scroll or the elder appointed me to come and get the little scroll.

So what is in this scroll? It is open but John is not directed to read it but rather to just ingest it. There is no doubt that in this scroll was knowledge in which may not have even been written. I feel safe in saying that what was in this scroll came from God himself.

10 And I took the little scroll from the hand of the angel and ate it. It was sweet as honey in my mouth, but when I had eaten it my stomach was made bitter.

As told John eats the scroll and as stated it was sweet to eat but then made his stomach bitter or in other words it made John feel sick.

As we think deeper into this scroll we have these two apposing things, one is sweet and the other is bitter. The words or knowledge having come from God himself was the taste of something sweet.

Sweet things are usually something craved for and not a part of a normal meal but rather is something special which is why we eat it last after the meal. But whatever was contained inside the scroll, that is the knowledge that was in it, was bitter. It wasn't something good in there but something that turned the stomach. Most I think would say that it was insight of the wrath to come and the carnage that came along with it.

11 And I was told, “You must again prophesy about many peoples and nations and languages and kings.”

The scroll contained information from God which was supposed to be given to us the creation. No doubt in a way it was a warning of what's to come.

In Ezekiel 3:1-3 we see another scroll that was meant to be eaten and was also sweet to the taste.

And he said to me, “Son of man, eat whatever you find here. Eat this scroll, and go, speak to the house of Israel.” 2 So I opened my mouth, and he gave me this scroll to eat. 3 And he said to me, “Son of man, feed your belly with this scroll that I give you and fill your stomach with it.” Then I ate it, and it was in my mouth as sweet as honey.

I wouldn't say this was a normal way of how God instilled knowledge in those who were called to do His work but God can relay a message anyway He likes.

Today we have the Bible which is the inspired word of God given to His people to read and to meditate on in order for us to have God's will, desires and instructions put to mind and then into action.

This knowledge also is meant to be shared with others so that they also will become enlightened to God's will which will hopefully lead to salvation.

Revelation 11:1-6

Revelation 11:1-2 ~ Then I was given a measuring rod like a staff, and I was told, "Rise and measure the temple of God and the altar and those who worship there, 2 but do not measure the court outside the temple; leave that out, for it is given over to the nations, and they will trample the holy city for forty-two months.

The first thing we see in chapter 11:1-2 is that John has changed locations now. He went from a place where the land and sea came together to now a holy city. We are not told where or what this city is.

We have to keep in mind that the holy city of Jerusalem where the temple was, was destroyed 70yrs after Jesus' death. Is it possible that the temple had been rebuilt at this point and time?

2 Corinthians 6:16 ~ What agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God; as God said, "I will make my dwelling among them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.

Ephesian 2:19-22 ~ So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, 20 built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone,

21 in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord. 22 In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit.

Who are the temple of God? Us, the believer. Could the measuring rod talked about in 11:1 be a way of counting the people of God? Possibly....

The two witnesses 3-6

3 And I will grant authority to my two witnesses, and they will prophesy for 1,260 days, clothed in sackcloth.” 4 These are the two olive trees and the two lampstands that stand before the Lord of the earth.

In Zechariah 4:14 may give us a little more info on what we are reading.

Zechariah 4 ~ And the angel who talked with me came again and woke me, like a man who is awakened out of his sleep. 2 And he said to me, “What do you see?” I said, “I see, and behold, a lampstand all of gold, with a bowl on the top of it, and seven lamps on it, with seven lips on each of the lamps that are on the top of it. 3 And there are two olive trees by it, one on the right of the bowl and the other on its left.” 4 And I said to the angel who talked with me, “What are these, my lord?” 5 Then the angel who talked with me answered and said to me,

“Do you not know what these are?” I said, “No, my lord.” 6 Then he said to me, “This is the word of the LORD to Zerubbabel: Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, says the LORD of hosts. 7 Who are you, O great mountain? Before Zerubbabel you shall become a plain. And he shall bring forward the top stone amid shouts of ‘Grace, grace to it!’”

8 Then the word of the LORD came to me, saying, 9 “The hands of Zerubbabel have laid the foundation of this house; his hands shall also complete it. Then you will know that the LORD of hosts has sent me to you. 10 For whoever has despised the day of small things shall rejoice, and shall see the plumb line in the hand of Zerubbabel.

“These seven are the eyes of the LORD, which range through the whole earth.” 11 Then I said to him, “What are these two olive trees on the right and the left of the lampstand?” 12 And a second time I answered and said to him, “What are these two branches of the olive trees, which are beside the two golden pipes from which the golden oil is poured out?” 13 He said to me, “Do you not know what these are?” I said, “No, my lord.” 14 Then he said, “These are the two anointed ones who stand by the Lord of the whole earth.”

Zerubbabel was the governor of Judah, so here it says about the lamp stands with the seven lamps on top that “These seven are the eyes of the LORD, which range through the whole earth.”

and the two olive trees are the two anointed people of the Lord of the earth that will be prophesying 1260 days or roughly 3.5yrs.

5 And if anyone would harm them, fire pours from their mouth and consumes their foes. If anyone would harm them, this is how he is doomed to be killed. 6 They have the power to shut the sky, that no rain may fall during the days of their prophesying,

and they have power over the waters to turn them into blood and to strike the earth with every kind of plague, as often as they desire.

I am assuming there wouldn't be anyone capable coming against these two who are anointed by God. These are capable strong prophets with great powers.

Revelation 11:7-14

To recap from the last section, we looked at verses 1-6 and the two witnesses who were brought to the world to prophesy and give testimony. These two great witnesses brought with them a task from God and God would not let anything happen to them until their task was completed. We call this the sovereignty of God which just means that God being who He is, is always in control of His will being fulfilled.

We will see here though with these two witnesses that when God's will is finished he allows them to be killed. God removes His protection from the two witnesses allowing their enemies to kill them. Why would God do this? The answer is He is God and who are we to question His ways.

God's will and our freewill work hand in hand at times. The more we know scripture and know His will, our freewill works then in conjunction with God's will and with guidance from the Holy Spirit we are able to accomplish the tasks He has for us. Nothing can overpower God's will at any time, His will is mightier than any others will and He will insure His success.

7 And when they have finished their testimony, the beast that rises from the bottomless pit will make war on them and conquer them and kill them,

8 and their dead bodies will lie in the street of the great city that symbolically is called Sodom and Egypt, where their Lord was crucified. 9 For three and a half days some from the peoples and tribes and languages and nations will gaze at their dead bodies and refuse to let them be placed in a tomb, 10 and those who dwell on the earth will rejoice over them and make merry and exchange presents, because these two prophets had been a torment to those who dwell on the earth. 11 But after the three and a half days a breath of life from God entered them, and they stood up on their feet, and great fear fell on those who saw them. 12 Then they heard a loud voice from heaven saying to them, "Come up here!" And they went up to heaven in a cloud, and their enemies watched them.

13 And at that hour there was a great earthquake, and a tenth of the city fell. Seven thousand people were killed in the earthquake, and the rest were terrified and gave glory to the God of heaven.

14 The second woe has passed; behold, the third woe is soon to come.

The Witnesses Death

Revelation 11:7-8 ~ 7 And when they have finished their testimony, the beast that rises from the bottomless pit will make war on them and conquer them and kill them,

8 and their dead bodies will lie in the street of the great city that symbolically is called Sodom and Egypt, where their Lord was crucified.

War is always an ugly thing. It can be a part of God's plan though which we will see here in these verses. The fact that it says that the beast made war on them means that these two witnesses didn't go easily but rather fought the beast. They didn't just lay down and give up their lives without a fight. They for sure didn't turn the other cheek which means that turning a cheek isn't always the thing to do in every situation.

These witnesses were fighting against evil for the glory of God which is something worthy to fight for and something every Christian is called to do. At times the fight may be verbal but other times it may be physical.

8 and their dead bodies will lie in the street of the great city that symbolically is called Sodom and Egypt, where their Lord was crucified.

During wars it's common to let your great enemy or at least its leaders lay in the streets dead or hang them in the center of town on display as a symbol of sorts, and also out of contempt and disgust for them and what they had done. It is also a reminder to people what can happen to them as well. It shows a lack of humility and is more a thing of pride and power.

In this verse the word “symbolically” is used which means it isn't the actual place but for some reason it stands in a way for that place, which is Jerusalem it seems.

9-10 ~ For three and a half days some from the peoples and tribes and languages and nations will gaze at their dead bodies and refuse to let them be placed in a tomb, 10 and those who dwell on the earth will rejoice over them and make merry and exchange presents, because these two prophets had been a torment to those who dwell on the earth.

This obviously is talking about the non believers worldwide who are doing this in rejection to God. It gives you a good indication of the effect these two witnesses had worldwide that everyone knew of them and the war against them and their death. The people celebrated because they thought in a way it was a defeat against God Himself. But it wasn't, it was a part of God's plan and will.

Verses 11-13 ~ But after the three and a half days a breath of life from God entered them, and they stood up on their feet, and great fear fell on those who saw them. 12 Then they heard a loud voice from heaven saying to them, “Come up here!” And they went up to heaven in a cloud, and their enemies watched them. 13 And at that hour there was a great earthquake, and a tenth of the city fell.

Seven thousand people were killed in the earthquake, and the rest were terrified and gave glory to the God of heaven.

Through death, destruction and the raising to life of the two dead witnesses God is glorified. God is glorified in the good and God is glorified in the evil. We may not always understand it, and we are not called to, we are just called to have faith and know God is in control.

The moment God is not in control is the moment God ceases to be God.

Revelation 11:15-19

15 Then the seventh angel blew his trumpet, and there were loud voices in heaven, saying, "The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign forever and ever."

In this verse there appears to be this transfer of kingship. The transfer is from Satan back to God and Christ. But we need to be careful with this verse I think, because whatever kingship Satan had God allowed it. Not only did God allow it but God granted Satan this kingship for a specific reason but it was for sure limited.

You may be asking yourself why, why would God allow Satan kingship over the world? It in some way fulfilled God's plan and glorified God. Was this absolute kingship? Meaning was God powerless over the world? No, at no time did Satan have absolute power and authority over the world. Satan was still under God's authority at all times but given certain reign over the world for a certain time. Satan was limited like with Job in what God allowed Satan to do.

God is at all times in control and High King over all of His creation. If God wasn't, God would not be God and we would have zero hope.

There is this interesting section of scripture where God actually tells us why

Potter and the Clay

Romans 9:21-24 ~ Has the potter no right over the clay, to make out of the same lump one vessel for honorable use and another for dishonorable use?

Who is the potter here? God/Jesus Who is the clay?
Us/all creation.

22 What if God, desiring to show his wrath and to make known his power, has endured with much patience vessels of wrath prepared for destruction, 23 in order to make known the riches of his glory for vessels of mercy, which he has prepared beforehand for glory— 24 even us whom he has called, not from the Jews only but also from the Gentiles?

Vessels of wrath vs vessels of mercy or the lost vs the saved. We would never truly understand God's mercy and grace if we didn't have something to compare it to, but God did give us something, that being the unsaved.

23 ~ “in order to make known the riches of his glory for vessels of mercy”

God allows sin and Satan and the unsaved so that we who are being saved can appreciate what we have in God's grace, mercy, love and His power in salvation.

Back to Revelation

Revelation 11:16 ~ *And the twenty-four elders who sit on their thrones before God fell on their faces and worshiped God,*

God takes back kingship over the world and the twenty four Elders then fell to their knees in awe again.

17 saying, “We give thanks to you, Lord God Almighty, who is and who was, for you have taken your great power and begun to reign. 18 The nations raged, but your wrath came, and the time for the dead to be judged, and for rewarding your servants, the prophets and saints, and those who fear your name, both small and great, and for destroying the destroyers of the earth.”

These Elders are giving thanks to God for both His wrath as well as His mercy and how God displayed His might over all of it perfectly.

19 Then God's temple in heaven was opened, and the ark of his covenant was seen within his temple. There were flashes of lightning, rumblings, peals of thunder, an earthquake, and heavy hail.

So God unveils the Ark of the Covenant and from it they see God's full glory.

It's as if God was saying, you think everything you have seen me do so far made you in awe, look at this! Like a peacock opening its tail feathers but so much better.

We can't even imagine the awesomeness of this but John can only describe it as he just has.

Revelation 12:1-6

I want to start by reading a verse from the last chapter because I think it is an important point to remember as we start this chapter.

Revelation 11:15 ~ Then the seventh angel blew his trumpet, and there were loud voices in heaven, saying, "The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign forever and ever."

So we want to keep this in mind as we look at the verses today. God and Christ have taken back full control of the earth and are now reigning over it.

We may have a question already which is if God and Jesus are back in control then why is this same type of story-line still going on? What's up with this dragon? Let's break this down and see if we can come to some conclusions.

So let's start with this ~ We have three characters of sorts in which we need to look at. We have a woman who is pregnant, the child within her, and a dragon. John is seeing this vision starting off as he gazes to heaven but it will transition to the earth.

1 And a great sign appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars.

She was pregnant and was crying out in birth pains and the agony of giving birth.

So it starts with this being a great sign, which means something pretty awesome is happening that involves this woman and her soon to be child.

She is clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet and a crown with twelve stars on it. Clothed with the sun is an indication that she had this brightness around her, could it be just light or could it be the Holy Spirit we don't know. Are these twelve stars on her crown a representation of the twelve tribes you think? We don't know for sure but it could be.

Who is this woman? Some say it is the virgin Mary and the unborn child is Jesus. Some say the woman is a representation of the church as a whole and that her unborn child is Jesus who it later says was caught up by God and seated on His throne. I'm not sure either of these fit perfectly to who she is.

I do think that the child for sure is Jesus because He was caught up by God and seated on His throne. This makes perfect sense.

I think we need to read on a little more in the hopes we can get a little more insight on this but I'm not sure we will.

3 And another sign appeared in heaven: behold, a great red dragon, with seven heads and ten horns, and on his heads seven diadems.

More questions, what does this dragon represent? Satan possibly? Verse nine will tell us it is Satan. What's Satan doing in heaven? Wasn't he cast out of heaven a long time ago? Is this somehow looking back in time?

This dragon has seven heads it says and ten horns. So three of the seven heads had two horns instead of one. Who knows what diadems are? They are either crowns or something on a crown. So this dragon is big, smart, and thinks a lot of himself that he gave himself seven crowns.

4 (1) His tail swept down a third of the stars of heaven and cast them to the earth.

Is this a third of the fallen angels? It seems so.

4 (2) And the dragon stood before the woman who was about to give birth, so that when she bore her child he might devour it. 5 She gave birth to a male child, one who is to rule all the nations with a rod of iron, but her child was caught up to God and to his throne, 6 and the woman fled into the wilderness, where she has a place prepared by God, in which she is to be nourished for 1,260 days.

I want to reflect on this child again for a moment, this is what we know so far. His mother who will birth him was wearing a crown with twelve stars on it, the child was born of that mother, this dragon “Satan” was attempting to devour the child but God swept him up to sit on his throne and rule.

5 She gave birth to a male child, one who is to rule all the nations with a rod of iron... Could the rod of iron be scripture? It is as sharp as a double edged sword.

The second part of chapter twelve which we will go over next week may help us tie some things together a little better I think, but to me they seem to be things happening over a long period of time and not necessarily in order.

It could be this weaving together is just an indication of God's will unfolding over the history of the creation of man from beginning to end in some ways.

Revelation 12:7-17

7-9 ~ Now war arose in heaven, Michael and his angels fighting against the dragon. And the dragon and his angels fought back, 8 but he was defeated, and there was no longer any place for them in heaven. 9 And the great dragon was thrown down, that ancient serpent, who is called the devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world—he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him.

If we look at the book of Genesis chapter one it says man was created on the 6th day. When we get to chapter 3 we have the introduction of Satan. So we can conclude that Satan was cast down relatively soon after the earth was created but before even Adam and Eve. At least that seems to make the most sense.

It's possible in whole or in part that God created earth as a place to put Satan and the fallen angels. You may ask why would God do this knowing that Adam and Eve would be created there?

What if God had cast Satan down before Adam and Eve were created and He didn't want to leave it as a place of sin and rather wanted to do something good there as well? Or it could just be God's plan of having sin there to tempt mankind and knowing they would fall into sin was just a part of His plan all along.

10-11 ~ And I heard a loud voice in heaven, saying, “Now the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of his Christ have come, for the accuser of our brothers has been thrown down, who accuses them day and night before our God. 11 And they have conquered him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, for they loved not their lives even unto death.

Who are the accused here? This could be the disciples at the time of Christ or a reference to the church as a whole. The accuser would of course be Satan.

12 Therefore, rejoice, O heavens and you who dwell in them! But woe to you, O earth and sea, for the devil has come down to you in great wrath, because he knows that his time is short!”

The Devil knows he can never go back to heaven after losing his battle there, he knows he lost again at the cross, and all he has is bitterness and anger. But the Devil has us to torment as much as God allows him to. Or maybe as much as we allow him to. In either case his time is short.

We are indwelt by God's Spirit. We can fall into this trap at times of fearing what Satan can do to us more than having faith in the indwelt Holy Spirit and how that power then protects us from him.

If we don't fear Satan then Satan has lost much or all of his power over us. Satan's work needs to have fear as one of his tools but he can use other tools as well and will use whatever one he finds will work best against you.

Even though Satan has lost two great battles do not let him win any battles against you. You are his last hope at winning. Don't be the reason for him getting a win.

13 And when the dragon saw that he had been thrown down to the earth, he pursued the woman who had given birth to the male child. 14 But the woman was given the two wings of the great eagle so that she might fly from the serpent into the wilderness, to the place where she is to be nourished for a time, and times, and half a time. 15 The serpent poured water like a river out of his mouth after the woman, to sweep her away with a flood. 16 But the earth came to the help of the woman, and the earth opened its mouth and swallowed the river that the dragon had poured from his mouth.

We need to remember not to take everything literally here but take it more metaphorically. Meaning it says the woman was given two wings, how about two angels for protection? Her going to the wilderness to be nourished for a time may just mean she is in a place of being protected. And everything that Satan tried to do to get at her, she was always being protected.

I think verse 13 and the pursued woman and child is Mary and Jesus, that is my conclusion anyway.

17 Then the dragon became furious with the woman and went off to make war on the rest of her offspring, on those who keep the commandments of God and hold to the testimony of Jesus. And he stood on the sand of the sea.

If this is Mary who would be the rest of her offspring be? Is it James and Jesus' other siblings? It is an interesting way to say it but I would have to say it is us the believers. Not that Mary birthed us as she did Jesus just that she is a part of it because she birthed Jesus and being believers are intimately connected to Jesus we in a way came from her in a human sense of course. Spiritually we can from God and the Holy Spirit.

As Christians we are protected in many ways. We are protected by God and His authority over what He allows Satan to do, we are protected by the blood of Jesus and His intercession for us and we are protected by the Holy Spirit in that we are guided throughout our lives. You can add as well angels who God may send on occasion as needed.

Revelation 13:1-10 The Two Beasts

In the last chapter, we read how God cast the Dragon or Satan out of heaven to the earth with a third of the angels because they had started a war against God in Heaven.

And today we will be looking at chapter 13 and we will see in this, the story of two beasts. One who was risen up out of the sea and the second risen up out of the earth. Each of these beast were given great powers from Satan to do his bidding.

So lets break this chapter into two parts and start by looking at the first beast.

1 And I stood upon the sand of the sea, and saw a beast rise up out of the sea, having seven heads and ten horns, and upon his horns ten crowns, and upon his heads the name of blasphemy.

Interestingly enough this beast in some way resembles the description of Satan in chapter 12:3 ~ “And another sign appeared in heaven: behold, a great red dragon, with seven heads and ten horns, and on his heads seven diadems.”

Both have seven heads and 10 horns but the beast here that comes out of the ocean has 3 more crowns than Satan.

Now it may seem fit that this beast in some way is higher in authority than Satan being it has three more crowns but this really isn't the case. Satan is the great deceiver and I think he is in some way trying to show the beast in a more powerful way with the crowns.

Jesus as our King was given a crown so Satan has to top that. Satan has suffered several losses so far as we know and he may have wanted to try and create the illusion that somehow this beast is a kind of new and improved version of himself.

This beast it says had written on its heads “the name of blasphemy”. This suggests to me that this name on its seven heads would somehow imply it has some divine status. Maybe that it is god or a Christ.

2 And the beast which I saw was like unto a leopard, and his feet were as the feet of a bear, and his mouth as the mouth of a lion: and the dragon gave him his power, and his seat, and great authority.

A leopard, a bear, and a lion are what makeup this beast visually. These are all things in which humans would be familiar with, and would look at these things as things of strength, power, cunningness, stealth, speed and I am sure we could include some other things.

It seems almost that if you were to ask someone what would the ultimate predator look like if you could combine parts from differing animals, it would be this beast. And Satan gave this beast power, his seat, and authority.

3 And I saw one of his heads as it were wounded to death; and his deadly wound was healed: and all the world wondered after the beast. 4 And they worshiped the dragon which gave power unto the beast: and they worshiped the beast, saying, Who is like unto the beast? who is able to make war with him?

The world will be easily deceived, and they will be easily deceived because they do not know God. Even many Christian's will be deceived, the weak will be, the ones that don't read their Bibles and study scripture, the ones who go to churches that are weak in their teaching and don't prepare Christians properly.

5 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. 6 And he opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme his name, and his tabernacle, and them that dwell in heaven.

Anyone that tells you that there is something better or something more powerful than God, is a blasphemous liar. Anyone that tells you there is more than one God, is a blasphemous liar.

Anyone who tells you that they are in some way divine, is a blasphemous liar. Anyone who tells you that you can be a god yourself is a blasphemous liar.

7 And it was given unto him to make war with the saints, and to overcome them: and power was given him over all kindred's, and tongues, and nations.

8 And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.

9 If any man have an ear, let him hear.

Jesus came to earth as a lamb ready for the slaughter. And Jesus will return as a lion. If we believe scripture then we should prepare ourselves for war because it will happen scripture says. I think we as well need to transition ourselves from the lambs that we are - to the lions that we need to be, as Jesus will be, in order to serve Jesus well.

10 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.

These are words of exhortation, exhortation means “to strongly encourage or urge someone to do something” that would be us the Christian.

This verse is not saying anything against us who will be at war against the beast but rather it is saying what will happen to the beast, what we the saints must do. Satan and his army will kill with a sword thus they shall be killed with a sword by us the saints.

This is a battle cry to the saints to fight against the coming evil. And if you look around this country today the war has already begun. The question is will you fight for God and for righteousness or will you succumb and bend a knee to evil and allow it?

Revelation 13:11-18

As an unsaved person we were much like Satan in our relationship to God, and I just wanted to share a few verse before we get started that talks about who we were pre-salvation.

Romans 3:9-18 ~ 9 What then? Are we Jews any better off? No, not at all. For we have already charged that all, both Jews and Greeks, are under sin, 10 as it is written: "None is righteous, no, not one; 11 no one understands; no one seeks for God. 12 All have turned aside; together they have become worthless; no one does good, not even one." 13 "Their throat is an open grave; they use their tongues to deceive." "The venom of asps is under their lips." 14 "Their mouth is full of curses and bitterness." 15 "Their feet are swift to shed blood; 16 in their paths are ruin and misery, 17 and the way of peace they have not known." 18 "There is no fear of God before their eyes."

Romans 5:10 ~ For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life.

James 4:4 ~ You adulterous people! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.

Friend of the world means that you are friends with the sin.

So this is our pre-salvation state, this is the place God finds us when God seeks us out. Knowing this deeply makes God's grace so much sweeter.

The Second Beast

Revelation 13:11 ~ Then I saw another beast rising out of the earth. It had two horns like a lamb and it spoke like a dragon.

So Satan calls up another beast to do his bidding, this one comes out of the earth. This one does not look as much the monster as the last beast which is intentional. Though it does speak like a dragon.

We have two representations of this beast here. It looks like a lamb (Jesus) and lies like the dragon (Satan). There is something fishy going on here with this beast, there is some great deception going on.

Matthew 7:15 ~ (Jesus) “Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves.

We know there have been many false prophets since Jesus' time, but this one is by far the greatest of them all.

12 It exercises all the authority of the first beast in its presence, and makes the earth and its inhabitants worship the first beast, whose mortal wound was healed.

This beast it says exercises all authority as the first but has a different goal in which it makes people worship the first beast. How it makes them do this we don't know. Remember the first beast had blasphemy written across its heads and I had mentioned this could be an indication that it was implying it was God or a god. Now the second beast is a false Christ who points to the first as god.

Mathew 28:18 ~ And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.

This is similar to what is happening with these beasts but it is false, they are a copy of the true God and the true Christ, and poor ones at that.

13 It performs great signs, even making fire come down from heaven to earth in front of people, 14 and by the signs that it is allowed to work in the presence of the beast it deceives those who dwell on earth, telling them to make an image for the beast that was wounded by the sword and yet lived.

People will see signs that appear so great that people will say “this has to be Christ” but the beast has made a mistake, it says to make an image of the first beast and we know God does not allow this.

Exodus 20:4 ~ “You shall not make for yourself a carved image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth”

So no idols, no matter if it is of God or Satan or anything else that people think should be worshiped. We are only to worship the true God in which no one has seen His face to know what He looks like. I'm not even sure if God has a physical face at all. Here is a question, what are we making idols of today?

15 And it was allowed to give breath to the image of the beast, so that the image of the beast might even speak and might cause those who would not worship the image of the beast to be slain.

There are a couple of things happening out in the world right now that are worrying many people and it is ai or artificial intelligence. This can take form in a few different ways one of which are computer generated images that look exactly like a person and speaks exactly like that person. It is so real you can't tell the difference between real and fake.

Another is robots and both of these things are to imitate the beast in a way that if someone would not worship it, this image could even kill people for not worshipping it.

16 Also it causes all, both small and great, both rich and poor, both free and slave, to be marked on the right hand or the forehead, 17 so that no one can buy or sell unless he has the mark, that is, the name of the beast or the number of its name.

People have said many things about these two verses and what they think it is, but as time has changed so has the ideas of what that could be. Some have said a physical mark such as the number 666, others have said a computer chip of sorts.

With the digital currency trend happening, I think that digital currency could be a part of it.

The dollar is slowly but surely being devalued through inflation over the last three years and I think this is intentional in order to make the transition to digital currency easier.

There are some here that can remember when our dollar was backed by gold and silver, and the government removed that backing long ago. I say what happened to all of our gold and silver, it is ours where is it? Is it still there or has it been depleted? We will never know.

18 This calls for wisdom: let the one who has understanding calculate the number of the beast, for it is the number of a man, and his number is 666.

Wisdom for the Christian comes from scripture and scripture alone. Though God many times does not give all the information we need we are still to seek it out in scripture with the hope of finding it.

Revelation 14:1-5

We ended chapter 13 and we saw three characters, and these were Satan, the Antichrist and the False prophet. And they came scripture said in order to make the people on the earth worship the Antichrist and if not then to be killed.

I couldn't help but to wonder how many Christians are going to stand strong during this time and be martyred for Christ? Few I feel unfortunately. How many self professing Christians will willingly worship the Antichrist? I also wonder how many that profess to be Christians and will be killed for not worshiping the beast, but yet Christ will still say to them "I never knew you?"

See just because we profess faith in Christ and we do works there still seems to be something more to it scripture says. I don't want to seem harsh, but if you love God's people it is important to make sure you teach that anything short of giving it your all, will not get you heaven.

I'm not sure there is a better time than now to talk about this for a moment while we are in this section of Revelation.

Matthew 7:21-23 ~ "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven,

but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. 22 On that day many will say to me, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?' 23 And then will I declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.'

2 Corinthians 13:5 ~ Examine yourselves, to see whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. Or do you not realize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you?

“Examine yourselves” it says. We know from Revelation 3 when Christ looks at the Church in Laodicea Christ is not happy with that church, with those self professing Christians there.

I can assure you that they all thought they were doing well. But Christ said they were “lukewarm” in their faith, they weren't giving it their all, they were only partially in and the requirement is fully in.

Christ calls for great sacrifice to be given to the work of the kingdom in order to make it into heaven. Christ calls for everything to come after Him and not before Him. Not football or baseball games, not your job, not vacations, not new cars and trucks, not even your family Christ says.

That is great sacrifice and agape love for Christ. And here is something else to think about, agape love isn't forced rather it is freely and generously given to a great extent.

Revelation 14:1-5

The Lamb and the 144,000

1 Then I looked, and behold, on Mount Zion stood the Lamb, and with him 144,000 who had his name and his Father's name written on their foreheads.

So we start off Chapter 14 with Christ appearing, and by Christ's side are the 144,000 from Israel in equal parts of the twelve tribes.

It is interesting that John references here that Christ stood on Mount Zion. It could be Jesus did or it could be just a contrast of the two beasts and the ground that they stood on, one being the sea and the other land while Christ He stands on the solid rock of the mountain. I think it is a representation of Who Christ is and what He stands for, the rock.

Mathew 16:18 ~ And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.

Jesus is saying He is the rock that the church shall be

built upon and nothing, not Satan, not the Antichrist or even the False Prophet shall come against it. Not the true church anyway.

2 And I heard a voice from heaven like the roar of many waters and like the sound of loud thunder. The voice I heard was like the sound of harpists playing on their harps

John hears this huge sound from heaven and it is so powerful that he is having a difficult time describing it. It was singing we will see in the next verses, singing from heaven from around the throne. It was like the roar of many waters, it was like thunder, and it was like many harps all at once together to make this beautiful noise all in worship to God and Christ.

If you ever wondered what the importance and power of singing in group worship is, this is a great way John describes it.

3 and they were singing a new song before the throne and before the four living creatures and before the elders. No one could learn that song except the 144,000 who had been redeemed from the earth.

I wonder, do you think the song was in Aramaic or Hebrew and that only the 144,000 in heaven could sing it? Everyone else there, was wondering what they were singing and no one knew, only that it sounded good.

4 It is these who have not defiled themselves with women, for they are virgins. It is these who follow the Lamb wherever he goes. These have been redeemed from mankind as firstfruits for God and the Lamb, 5 and in their mouth no lie was found, for they are blameless.

Here is something interesting about these 144,000. They were only men and they were virgins and they follow Jesus in heaven wherever He goes. They were redeemed from mankind as first fruits, they were not liars, and they were blameless.

Revelation 14:6-13

The Messages of the Three Angels

6 Then I saw another angel flying directly overhead, with an eternal gospel to proclaim to those who dwell on earth, to every nation and tribe and language and people. 7 And he said with a loud voice, “Fear God and give him glory, because the hour of his judgment has come, and worship him who made heaven and earth, the sea and the springs of water.”

When we think of “the gospel” we think of the gospel of salvation which is to believe on Christ as your personal Lord and Savior. The word “gospel” just means to give revelation or the telling of the truth of scripture. The fact is all of scripture is the gospel. This gospel the angel says is “the eternal gospel” or in other words the truth that spans all of eternity.

So what is this eternal gospel? It is to “fear God and give him glory”, it is the gospel of God's wrath and judgment. Some would say, well hold on now, we can't be preaching to fear God, God is love. Brothers and sisters God is equally love as he is wrath. You see the gospel of Christ is both of these things, It is that God is wrath and God is love. Two parts that are critical when sharing the gospel of Christ to others.

In the crucifixion of Christ we see judgment, wrath and love. Christ loved us so much that He willingly gave himself to absorb the full wrath and judgment of God, and God loved us so much that He shed His judgment and wrath on His Son for the payment of our sins.

And this angel not only tells all on earth to fear God but you must give Him all glory as well, and worship Him.

These two things are things that I think most Christians do not understand very well. I think most Christians only give God a small fraction of the glory and Worship He deserves.

This is the last call so to speak that God is giving mankind.... believe, glorify and worship God 100% or receive God's wrath and judgment.

8 Another angel, a second, followed, saying, “Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great, she who made all nations drink the wine of the passion of her sexual immorality.”

The big question is here who or where is Babylon? I think every country in the world should think it is themselves. I think most countries around the world though think it is America and it very well could be.

Has America caused other countries to be sexually immoral? For sure we have, we are at least one of the primary countries at minimum. We had a border in which woman and children were sold into sex slavery by the tens of thousands and we didn't do much about it. Pornography is easily obtained, men and woman are cheating on their spouses, our schools teach children to be sexually immoral as well, and I don't see much happening about any of these things.

9 And another angel, a third, followed them, saying with a loud voice, "If anyone worships the beast and its image and receives a mark on his forehead or on his hand, 10 he also will drink the wine of God's wrath, poured full strength into the cup of his anger, and he will be tormented with fire and sulfur in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb. 11 And the smoke of their torment goes up forever and ever, and they have no rest, day or night, these worshipers of the beast and its image, and whoever receives the mark of its name."

I think there is a good possibility that "the beast" could be a little different for everyone and that he may come in different forms. The question is what is the beast that you worship in your own life? What causes you to worship it more than God? Keep in mind much of this is figurative and the beast may not be what we think.

Hell is forever just as heaven is forever and we all need to start keeping in front of us what God says and what we are to do.

12 Here is a call for the endurance of the saints, those who keep the commandments of God and their faith in Jesus.

This is an appeal to us from God, keep the commandments of God and your faith in Jesus. We are given many opportunities to correct our Christian lives and to put God and Christ before everything. The entire Bible is a constant call to be diligent and endure.

Luke 6:38 ~ give, and it will be given to you. Good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap. For with the measure you use it will be measured back to you."

Everything we do is measured I think in the light of salvation as Christians. Who we are, the lives we live, and what we put into Christianity will be given back to us in measure. If you give little to nothing towards your salvation you will get the same as far as salvation goes. If you give much you will receive much which is salvation. Each has to look at their own life and hold it up to scripture and ask ourselves am I giving enough of myself? Is my life a living sacrifice for Christ?

13 And I heard a voice from heaven saying, "Write this: Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on." "Blessed indeed," says the Spirit, "that they may rest from their labors, for their deeds follow them!"

The way we live our Christian life is crucial to our salvation because it is the proof and the fruit of it. The lukewarm as we read back in chapter three do not gain heaven because their faith is weak and it shows.

The blessing is on those who die in their faith and faithfulness. The blessing can be here on earth but more likely it is the blessing of salvation.

As you may have heard me say before that the road to heaven is as narrow in the church as it is outside the church. What road are you on?

Revelation 14:14-20

Last week we looked at the three angels who came from heaven to proclaim an “eternal gospel” it said, and that eternal gospel was this ~ ***7 And he said with a loud voice, “Fear God and give him glory, because the hour of his judgment has come, and worship him who made heaven and earth, the sea and the springs of water.”***

The eternal gospel is “fear God” or receive his wrath. Now this obviously is to non believers. It is a last call of sorts, a last opportunity to worship the only true God or suffer the consequences.

This should tell us something very important. When salvation is at stake it is not necessarily love that should be preached to the unsaved first but God's wrath and hell unto the unrepentant sinner. This is what God does, and I am confident If God does this we are called to follow the same path.

God's wrath on the the unsaved is how we approach the unsaved and then we can follow it up with “but God loves you and as it says in **2 Peter 3:9 ~ *The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance.***

14 Then I looked, and behold, a white cloud, and seated on the cloud one like a son of man, with a golden crown on his head, and a sharp sickle in his hand.

Now I have to be honest, I have never used a sickle before, and when I think of one I usually identify it with the Grim Reaper, you know that ghostly looking guy that goes around cutting peoples heads off.

When I see the sickle, I sense the power that comes with it as it sweeps across cutting in two anything that gets in its way.

Here Christ himself will wield the sickle to cut down the unsaved for not worshiping God and repenting of their sin. Christ the Savior of the world takes a major role in the wrath of God upon the lost.

The verse says the sickle was sharp, this means Jesus was ready for this day and he insured that the sickle he would use was sharpened properly in order to do the job it was meant to do, that is with great efficiency. If that sickle was aimed at an unsaved person it was going to do the job that it was designed to do and with little effort.

15 And another angel came out of the temple, calling with a loud voice to him who sat on the cloud, "Put in your sickle, and reap, for the hour to reap has come, for the harvest of the earth is fully ripe."

This is interesting that an angel is giving instruction to Jesus on what to do. But this doesn't appear to be just any angel, it says that this angel came out of the temple of heaven or the temple of God himself.

This angel was given instruction by God to relay to Jesus to begin the harvest of the lost. This angel was a messenger of God the father.

Now I wouldn't think Jesus would need this to communicate with God, rather I would think that they are linked together in a way where Jesus would know everything God the father was thinking at all times, but this isn't the case it seems.

This shows I think that God is the head of the trinity, the one in charge, this is the Father's function in this relationship within the three. And within this it shows God is in some ways separate to an extent, or at least in part. Sovereign in within the trinity.

In the family or in the church we see a similar structure.

The father of a family or the pastor of a church needs to have some separation with some knowledge to the family or flock for many reasons.

Some may disagree with this but I think it is just part of the responsibility of one who leads for the protection and safety of those who they lead.

16 So he who sat on the cloud swung his sickle across the earth, and the earth was reaped.

I'm not sure this needs much explanation, the earth was reaped, by Jesus.

It is interesting that there is on one hand a sowing of the saved and on the other hand a reaping of the unsaved. Though there are two different means of this one is of God and one is of the world which is why it says "the earth was reaped".

Matthew 13:3-9 ~ 3 And he (Jesus) told them many things in parables, saying: "A sower went out to sow. 4 And as he sowed, some seeds fell along the path, and the birds came and devoured them. 5 Other seeds fell on rocky ground, where they did not have much soil, and immediately they sprang up, since they had no depth of soil, 6 but when the sun rose they were scorched. And since they had no root, they withered away. 7 Other seeds fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked them. 8 Other seeds fell on good soil and produced grain, some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty. 9 He who has ears, let him hear."

The road is narrow brothers and sisters and there is only one path. It is important that we "work out our salvation with fear and trembling" (Phil 2:12).

That is that we must strive to be all scripture says we must be. Salvation is work, we do not gain salvation by works but our works are proof of our salvation, and they flow from us naturally.

17 Then another angel came out of the temple in heaven, and he too had a sharp sickle. 18 And another angel came out from the altar, the angel who has authority over the fire, and he called with a loud voice to the one who had the sharp sickle (the angel), "Put in your sickle and gather the clusters from the vine of the earth, for its grapes are ripe."

This angel's sickle, is a little different than the sickle Jesus used. Jesus used a sickle that uses a large sweeping motion and cuts down large amounts at a time like wheat.

This angel's sickle is used to cut clusters off the earth's vine, like grapes. It could be these unbelievers were a little more dug in and had banded together in small groups and thus needed a little different approach for their harvest.

19 So the angel swung his sickle across the earth and gathered the grape harvest of the earth and threw it into the great winepress of the wrath of God. 20 And the winepress was trodden outside the city, and blood flowed from the winepress, as high as a horse's bridle, for 1,600 stadia.

1,600 stadia is 180 miles. This is how far the blood flowed and it flowed as deep it says as a horses bridle. Also I would say that this deep flow of blood went out in all directions.

This is a violent and gruesome description of God's wrath justly applied to those unrepentant unbelievers.

This application of wrath was not applied gently but rather was crushed into and through the unbeliever, it was not lightly applied but rather it was applied with great force and with harsh intent. As a winepress squeezes the last drops of juice from the grape this press meant for wrath squeezes the last bit of anything that is earthly meaningful, and replaces it with the fullness of God's horrific wrath.

Revelation 14:12 ~ *Here is a call for the endurance of the saints, those who keep the commandments of God and their faith in Jesus.*

This is the most important question you could ask yourself today, are you enduring? Are you keeping God's commandments and your faith in Jesus. Now with that question comes many things. The most important three things are

Matthew 22 ~ “*You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself*”

Matthew 28 ~ Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations (sharing Christ), baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you

Within this last verse I quoted is a combination of the first two verses I quoted. That's how important the third is.

If you have made a priority of these three things in your Christian life, then I would say you have done well good and faithful servant. If even one of these three things is missing, then I would say that you have extremely limited your chances to be in heaven.

Now I am not the Judge of this and I can only tell you what scripture commands and says and what faith is. The rest is up to you.....

Revelation 15:1-8

1 Then I saw another sign in heaven, great and amazing, seven angels with seven plagues, which are the last, for with them the wrath of God is finished.

Seven angel's with seven bowls filled with plagues of wrath. Now just keep in mind chapter 15 is just a lead-up to chapter 16, it's an introduction of sorts.

The words used here “is finished” means more like completed. But this completion doesn't end until the end of Chapter 16, here it is just beginning.

2 And I saw what appeared to be a sea of glass mingled with fire—and also those who had conquered the beast and its image and the number of its name, standing beside the sea of glass with harps of God in their hands.

Back in chapter 4:63 John says “and before the throne there was as it were a sea of glass, like crystal”, Now John makes another reference to a “sea of glass” but this one is much different.

Here is another contrast. Have you ever heard the term “crystal clear”? The sea has changed, it has gone from crystal clear to now fire.

Fire, is normally associated in scripture in two ways, one is of refinement, **1 Peter 4:12-13 ~ *Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you. But rejoice insofar as you share Christ's sufferings, that you may also rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed.***

The other is of judgment, **Matthew 25:41 ~ *Then he will say to those on his left, 'Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels.***

This fire is a fire of judgment.

It goes on to mention that beside the sea of glass and fire are those who had conquered the beast and they had harps of God. Who were these conquerors? They were those who didn't reject Christ, those who didn't worship the image, those who didn't receive the number of his name, those who continued to share the gospel, those who fought the battles both spiritually and physically, those who spoke up against evil and deceit. These are the conquerors....

3 And they sing the song of Moses, the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, "Great and amazing are your deeds, O Lord God the Almighty! Just and true are your ways, O King of the nations!

4 Who will not fear, O Lord, and glorify your name? For you alone are holy. All nations will come and worship you, for your righteous acts have been revealed.”

This song is a combination of two songs,

Great and amazing are your deeds, O Lord God the Almighty! Just and true are your ways, O King of the nations! Who will not fear, O Lord, and glorify your name? For you alone are holy. All nations will come and worship you, for your righteous acts have been revealed.

The placement of these last verses is interesting, it starts with verse five and six and John seeing the tent opening and revealing what he saw inside.

5 After this I looked, and the sanctuary of the tent of witness in heaven was opened, 6 and out of the sanctuary came the seven angels with the seven plagues, clothed in pure, bright linen, with golden sashes around their chests.

John now sees this spectacular sight as he looks up into heaven.

John says at this point that the seven angels came out of the “the sanctuary of the tent of witnesses” and they were dressed with pure bright linen.

The word pure means that it wasn't in any way dyed or contaminated. And around their chests were golden sashes.

It then seems to go back and explain things a little further, putting the scene back into the tent.

7 And one of the four living creatures gave to the seven angels seven golden bowls full of the wrath of God who lives forever and ever, 8 and the sanctuary was filled with smoke from the glory of God and from his power, and no one could enter the sanctuary until the seven plagues of the seven angels were finished.

It goes on to say at this point that one of the living creatures handed each of the seven angels a golden bowl each filled with the wrath of God “who lives forever and ever”.

The words “forever and ever” is to say that this God was the one and only true God.

And God himself being present, and God's glory being so incredible that smoke it says came from it, or because of it, from the glory and power.

As this was happening it was such a great and powerful thing that no one could enter into it other than God, the living creature and the seven angel's couldn't until it was completed and ready to be delivered.

It doesn't say why no one could enter. Was there danger there while the plagues were put in the bowls, did they not want it contaminated, was it a holy thing happening, was it because God himself was in there? I guess God only knows the answer to this.

Revelation 16:1-7

First Three Bowls

In chapter 15 we were given John's revelation of the sanctuary of the tent of witness in heaven, and in this tent were the seven angel's with the seven bowls of wrath, one of the four living creatures - and God Himself. This scene sets the stage for what we now are going to read in chapter 16.

The preparation and importance given to this event seems to me to be something extremely significant, which it is. It is in many ways a very structured and reverent affair being that God Himself is there overseeing that this is carried out precisely as He has determined it to.

So let's now see how this scene unfolds.

1 Then I heard a loud voice from the temple telling the seven angels, "Go and pour out on the earth the seven bowls of the wrath of God."

So the first question would be who instructed the seven angels to go and pour out the seven bowls of wrath on the earth? It could only be God and that He had given instruction to the primary living creature to announce it. It says "go and pour out the seven bowls of wrath of God" and if it were God saying it He wouldn't have to tell them it was from Him.

This command from God will have an immediate and sever impact on these unsaved people and instantly they will feel God's wrath upon them with the first bowl being poured out on the earth.

2 So the first angel went and poured out his bowl on the earth, and harmful and painful sores came upon the people who bore the mark of the beast and worshiped its image.

Though all of these bowls of wrath will affect the unsaved this bowl I think sets the stage for what's to come. This first bowl upon it's pouring out on the earth produced it says harmful and painful sores. Now the key word here to the severity of these sores is the word "harmful" that tells us that they were severe enough that they came with extremely serious health problems and possibly even produced death.

But God's plan was not for a quick death to these unsaved, God is going to put them through a series of plagues in which will cause them a long, painful and tormenting suffering.

God was not going to allow them to get away easily as in the days of Noah and the flood.

3 The second angel poured out his bowl into the sea, and it became like the blood of a corpse, and every living thing died that was in the sea.

This second bowl it says was like the blood of a corpse, in other words the blood was dead and dead blood starts to decompose just as a dead body does. It produces a stench that is overwhelming to say the least. And as the decaying process begins to happen it becomes toxic and filled with germs and diseases enough so that it killed every living thing in the sea.

A great source of food and nutrition was instantly gone.

4 The third angel poured out his bowl into the rivers and the springs of water, and they became blood.

The third bowl produced the same affect as the first but this time it was in the rivers and springs across the earth. Now not only another food source was removed but as well the water they needed to drink for survival was gone. The pain involved with dehydration over time is unimaginable.

Some of the side affects of not having water are severe headaches, stomach pain, your body and bowls start to shutdown, joint pain, and severe fatigue.

Now this may sound like the daily life of some, but I can assure you that each of these symptoms are magnified dozens of times over.

5 -7 And I heard the angel in charge of the waters say, “Just are you, O Holy One, who is and who was, for you brought these judgments. 6 For they have shed the blood of saints and prophets, and you have given them blood to drink. It is what they deserve!” 7 And I heard the altar saying, “Yes, Lord God the Almighty, true and just are your judgments!”

This is interesting because it is almost like those in heaven are consoling God that He was right to do this or maybe just agreeing with Him on this wrath.

God is a just God, and what that means is that the wrath that He is subjecting these unbelievers to is a deserving wrath. Now I will also say that God being a righteous and holy God, is what is required in order to have the right to apply this sort of punishment and judgment.

Revelation 16:8-16

In the last section we had read about the beginning of the seven bowls of God's wrath being poured out onto the world. The first bowl created painful sores on the bodies of the unbelievers, the second poisoned the sea with blood like a corpse, the third poured this same blood into the rivers and springs of the earth poisoning them as well.

I had mentioned that God's intention was not to kill these unbelievers quickly but rather to cause them to suffer greatly before their deaths. It is the complete justice and wrath of God being poured out on the guilty. It is what unbelievers deserve.

8 The fourth angel poured out his bowl on the sun, and it was allowed to scorch people with fire. 9 They were scorched by the fierce heat, and they cursed the name of God who had power over these plagues. They did not repent and give him glory.

God's righteous torment of those unwilling to believe, repent and glorify Him are as I have mentioned already feeling God's just wrath.

Imagine you are already walking around with these painful sores all over your body and now these extreme temperatures are literally scorching your body on top of that increasing the pain.

And you are unable to cleanse the sores because of the contaminated waters.

You also have nothing to drink because all of the water has been poisoned by the dead blood poured into it, all the fish are dead and the animals that depend on that water for survival are dying off as well from dehydration.

Romans 3:16 says this about unbelievers *“in their paths are ruin and misery”* and now in Revelation even more so.

10 The fifth angel poured out his bowl on the throne of the beast, and its kingdom was plunged into darkness. People gnawed their tongues in anguish 11 and cursed the God of heaven for their pain and sores. They did not repent of their deeds.

God now turns His attention to the beast and its kingdom. This fifth bowl will begin a direct attack from God on the beast itself. Keep in mind this is not the dragon or rather Satan. The Beast is the anti-Christ and there is also the false prophet who is under him.

Plunged into darkness may on its surface make us think of hell but it is not and other thoughts to the meaning are that they may have been blinded in some way or that they fell into some sort of confusion or chaos.

In either case there was some sort of mental or physical pain and suffering caused by this which led to them gnawing their tongues in agony.

Still with all of this pain and suffering the unsaved still did not repent of their sins against God but rather they cursed God.

12 The sixth angel poured out his bowl on the great river Euphrates, and its water was dried up, to prepare the way for the kings from the east.

During the first century the Parthian's would have been directly to the east which is now called Iran. But being this is in the future we don't really know who will be occupying this area.

13 And I saw, coming out of the mouth of the dragon and out of the mouth of the beast and out of the mouth of the false prophet, three unclean spirits like frogs. 14 For they are demonic spirits, performing signs, who go abroad to the kings of the whole world, to assemble them for battle on the great day of God the Almighty.

There is a final act of desperation here from what is called the “unholy trinity”. God is winning this war and Satan gives it one last attempt by releasing three unclean spirits.

These unclean spirits are attempting to do what they are used to doing which is to perform signs and attempt to trick or coerce people and kings from around the world to follow them into one last battle.

2 Peter 3:8-13 ~ 8 But do not overlook this one fact, beloved, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. 9 The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance. 10 But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a roar, and the heavenly bodies will be burned up and dissolved, and the earth and the works that are done on it will be exposed.

11 Since all these things are thus to be dissolved, what sort of people ought you to be in lives of holiness and godliness, 12 waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be set on fire and dissolved, and the heavenly bodies will melt as they burn! 13 But according to his promise we are waiting for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells.

This passage in 2 Peter fits well I think, and as we tie it now to verse 15 it seems to fit even more.

This is Jesus speaking.

15 (*“Behold, I am coming like a thief! Blessed is the one who stays awake, keeping his garments on, that he may not go about naked and be seen exposed!”*)

Stay awake, be ready, do not be unprepared. In other words are you living the Christian life? Do not be lukewarm but rather be on fire for Christ and the gospel? Test yourselves often to insure you are these things.

16 *And they (Satan, Beast, Anti-Christ) assembled them at the place that in Hebrew is called Armageddon.*

Armageddon if literal will be in northern Israel at a place called Megiddo. It will be a massive war of Christ against all the nations who come against Him. I have mentioned before I feel firmly that believers will be a part of Christ's army fighting in this physical and spiritual battle. But as much of Revelation what is literal and what is not can be confusing.

Revelation 16:17-21

The Seventh Bowl

17 The seventh angel poured out his bowl into the air, and a loud voice came out of the temple, from the throne, saying, "It is done!"

“It is done” or “it is finished”

As I read through this last section in this chapter I can't help but to notice in some ways the similarities between this and Jesus' crucifixion.

At the cross Jesus took on the sins of all those who would believe in Him as lord and Savior and they repented of their sins. Jesus also took on all of the many horrific and brutal beatings, humiliation, and sufferings ending with the last torture of the cross itself. Combined, these things were the full payment for every sin you and I have committed as believers.

God, has done things a little differently here though. Payment for sin and rebellion against God now has to be paid for by the people who committed these sins against Him. The unbelievers who have already passed are paying in hell, but these who remain alive will pay on earth and then in hell.

This torturous pouring out of these seven bowls onto unbelievers is Gods way of dealing with them.

Justice will fall on sin and unbelief, and the full wrath of God is their punishment. "It is done" There is no mercy here, there is no grace here, and I would say there is no love here. What there is is a righteous hate from God for these sinners.

About God:

Psalm 5:5 ~ *The boastful shall not stand before your eyes; you hate all evildoers.*

Malachi 1:2-3 ~ *I have loved Jacob but Esau I have hated*

18 And there were flashes of lightning, rumblings, peals of thunder, and a great earthquake such as there had never been since man was on the earth, so great was that earthquake.

In Matthew 27 we see as Jesus is dying darkness and earthquakes as God's wrath is finished on His Son. Here it is much the same, God is exhibiting Himself in a way that says I am God and yes I have done this. But this time the severity of this earthquake is like at no other time, it will be of epic proportions.

19 The great city was split into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell, and God remembered Babylon the great, to make her drain the cup of the wine of the fury of his wrath.

The words “the city split into three parts” says more about the severity of the earthquake and is not really an indication of there being three actual parts. That's how bad the earthquake was that it tore the “great city” apart.

The cities of the nations falling is I would say an indication of God destroying everything that has control and authority on a national, state and local level. That is governments for sure but could be anything that has authority at all. Governments in which God had told us once to obey, God has now destroyed because of their evil and sinful ways.

What we see is God taking back full control of the entirety of his creation.

Babylon in my opinion is not a single place but a reference to all these cities that this verse is talking about. Again they are corrupt and God is draining the last but most likely the worst of his wrath out on them.

It is the cities that control us out here in the country, they are the ones who set the tone for the rest to fall to evil with their unjust and un-biblical laws. God is holding them responsible most for the evil that had been created. But the country is far from perfect as well.

20 And every island fled away, and no mountains were to be found.

Think of an earthquake so strong that islands had sunk and mountains had come down and had leveled everything. A world wide earthquake of this magnitude would leave little left.

21 And great hailstones, about one hundred pounds each, fell from heaven on people; and they cursed God for the plague of the hail, because the plague was so severe.

These stubborn sinful unbelievers will curse God right to the end, there is no hope for them because they have never had any desire to turn from their ways and to God.

2 Peter 2:1-10 ~ But false prophets also arose among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them, bringing upon themselves swift destruction. 2 And many will follow their sensuality, and because of them the way of truth will be blasphemed. 3 And in their greed they will exploit you with false words. Their condemnation from long ago is not idle, and their destruction is not asleep. 4 For if God did not spare angels when they sinned, but cast them into hell and committed them to chains of gloomy darkness to be kept until the judgment; 5 if he did not spare the ancient world, but preserved Noah, a herald of righteousness, with seven others, when he brought a flood upon the world of the ungodly;

6 if by turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah to ashes he condemned them to extinction, making them an example of what is going to happen to the ungodly; 7 and if he rescued righteous Lot, greatly distressed by the sensual conduct of the wicked 8 (for as that righteous man lived among them day after day, he was tormenting his righteous soul over their lawless deeds that he saw and heard); 9 then the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from trials, and to keep the unrighteous under punishment until the day of judgment, 10 and especially those who indulge in the lust of defiling passion and despise authority.

Are these the times in which we see the beginning of Revelation? Is it the start of it all? Every generation thought that they were in the last days as many today think we are. But do not in any way cease the work in which every believer has been called to in sharing of the gospel because it is always our primary calling as a Christian.

Revelation 17:1-6

1 Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls came and said to me, "Come, I will show you the judgment of the great prostitute who is seated on many waters, 2 with whom the kings of the earth have committed sexual immorality, and with the wine of whose sexual immorality the dwellers on earth have become drunk."

We are deep into symbolism in this new vision that John is having. Verses 1-2 is talking about a prostitute, the kings of the earth and the drunk dwellers on earth.

Many would say Chapters 17-19 are describing in more detail the sixth and seventh bowls being poured out and this seems to fit I think, so this is how I am going to approach these chapters.

Babylon is not a literal place but it's what the world has become, and when I say the world I mean Satan and the demons and the beasts and all of their human followers. It is as well the governmental structure on most every level.

The great prostitute and Babylon are one in the same, it is just another name for it.

Many waters just means throughout the world, and within these many places are the kings and leaders of the world who willingly took part in the sinfulness of world.

These leaders not only took part in the sinfulness of the world but they were also the ones responsible in part to its downfall. They were the leaders guiding it to destruction.

Though in verse two it mentions sexual immorality it is not only this sin it is talking about, it makes this comment in light of calling the world or Babylon a prostitute. Have no doubt it is talking about all the sin and corruption that has brought the world to this point and under the wrath of God. But several Greek forms of the word “porn” are used throughout this chapter so that should tell you something.

Calling someone a prostitute is saying they are willing to do whatever asked for money, fame, or power and the worlds leaders are doing just that.

It finishes verse two with saying the dwellers of the earth, that is the unsaved, are drunk by it all. That means they followed these corrupt and sinful leaders and as well they took part in the evil and corruption and loved it and they are as much responsible.

3 And he carried me away in the Spirit into a wilderness, and I saw a woman sitting on a scarlet beast that was full of blasphemous names, and it had seven heads and ten horns.

This is just telling us the close relationship or bond between Satan or the anti Christ and the corrupt and sinful ways of the world.

4 The woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet, and adorned with gold and jewels and pearls, holding in her hand a golden cup full of abominations and the impurities of her sexual immorality.

These world leaders are very rich, they only wear the best cloths, they wear their gold, pearls and jewels to show off how rich they are. And they carry their sinfulness around with them because they are proud to be God's enemies.

There is a lot of deception going on here, outwardly they are seductive with all of their fine cloths and jewelry but in their cup it tells a different story doesn't it? Don't be lured in by them, stay close to God and as far away from them as you can.

The next time you see someone walking around with their golden cup asking you if you want to take a drink from it tell them NO, Christ is the only way for me.

1 Peter 5:8-9 ~ Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. 9 Resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same kinds of suffering are being experienced by your brotherhood throughout the world.

Now I am not saying all rich and powerful people are this way, no. There are many who are working hard for God and are wealthy and powerful. God can and does use whom He pleases as well as some of these.

So it is important for us to know who is who. We will know whom God's people are by their fruits. Do they believe in God and Christ and state it publicly and are unashamed to say they are believers? Do they work to better God's people? Do they support Israel (the land) openly? Do they love others? These are just some of the things to look for.

5 And on her forehead was written a name of mystery: "Babylon the great, mother of prostitutes and of earth's abominations." 6 And I saw the woman, drunk with the blood of the saints, the blood of the martyrs of Jesus.

To live is Christ and to die is gain, scripture says. We are called to be strong in our faith and to not veer from it.

Galatians 6:7-9 ~ Do not be deceived: God is not mocked, for whatever one sows, that will he also reap. 8 For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life. 9 And let us not grow weary of doing good, for in due season we will reap, if we do not give up.

We must stay diligent throughout all things in our lives to the work of the kingdom and the glory of God.

Revelation 17:7-12

The woman and the Beast

As I read through this section my thought was that this reads very much like a riddle. I'm not very good at riddles but lets give it a shot.

It begins with just as simple statement by the angel telling John that he will tell him the mystery of the woman. But again it's very much a riddle.

(John) When I saw her, I marveled greatly. 7 But the angel said to me, "Why do you marvel? I will tell you the mystery of the woman, and of the beast with seven heads and ten horns that carries her.

8a The beast that you saw was, and is not, and is about to rise from the bottomless pit and go to destruction.

As far as I understand this is the anti-Christ. There is some mimicking here, as Christ rose from the dead the anti-Christ will rise from the pit.

It takes a lot of power to rise out of this pit. It is an indication of how much evil there is that could make this happen. The good thing is we see that it says that it will go to destruction.

8b And the dwellers on earth whose names have not been written in the book of life from the foundation of the world will marvel to see the beast, because it was and is not and is to come.

These dwellers are obviously unbelievers, and once again they are in awe of evil. They know and want nothing else.

It says these unbelievers names had not been written in the book of life at the foundation of the world.

Question: Can you be saved if your name is not written in the book of life? It says that the names were written at the foundation of the world, so it seems to me at this point or any point after the names had been written until the end time if your name isn't in it salvation cannot happen. It cannot happen because you will never desire it.

9 This calls for a mind with wisdom: the seven heads are seven mountains on which the woman is seated; 10 they are also seven kings, five of whom have fallen, one is, the other has not yet come, and when he does come he must remain only a little while.

John says "This calls for a mind with wisdom." I'm not sure this is me or at least not enough wisdom most times.

The seven mountains it seems is a reference to Rome, Rome is famous for it's seven hills, matter of fact it was called by many in the first century “seven-hilled city” because of this.

To confuse things even more these seven heads not only represent seven mountains or hills they represent seven kings as well. Five kings that have fallen, one that is (present tense), and the last has not yet come.

The difficult thing is if you are trying to figure out a timeline of were we are today within these seven kings it is almost impossible.

We do know that the beast will be around throughout the lives of these seven kings. What we don't know is which kings and how long does each king live because that makes a big difference.

Are we at a point of time were the five kings are of past and died already or have we even begun with the first king yet? None of this is clear and there is only speculation. We actually could spend months just within these verses and still not be able to come to any firm understanding or conclusion.

Some speculate that we have gone through six kings and the only one left is the one to come. Some think that king is the king of England that sits on the throne today. All speculation though.

11 As for the beast that was and is not, it is an eighth but it belongs to the seven, and it goes to destruction.

After these seven kings there will be an eighth king, the final king, the anti-Christ. He is a part of the seven it says. Some say that there are more than one anti-Christ throughout history or that the anti-Christ comes in differing individuals throughout history.

12 And the ten horns that you saw are ten kings who have not yet received royal power, but they are to receive authority as kings for one hour, together with the beast. 13 These are of one mind, and they hand over their power and authority to the beast.

These seven kings of the seven heads are going to get some help from ten more kings. They will have power for a short time then they will give over their power and authority that they have been given back to the beast.

There are powers working behind the scenes right now throughout the world, and they are all working together for one cause and that is a one world government.

When you watch news stations like MSNBC or CNN and others around the world they all speak the exact same words, all scripted by someone or a group of powerful people to the same cause, total rule.

People have put together videos of hundreds of these news station all saying word for word the exact same thing. Who has this much power that they are working around the world trying to deceive and manipulate us? That is the question.

In any case we must stay God focused and stay the course of being Christ like to the best of our ability.

Revelation 17:13-18

The Beast, the Great Prostitute, and the Ten Kings or Kingdoms.

13 These are of one mind, and they hand over their power and authority to the beast.

The Beast, the Prostitute and the ten kings all come together for one purpose, to wage war against Christ. The kings and their kingdoms give over their power to the Beast meaning that they all bend the knee and worship the Beast and follow his instructions in this battle.

14(a) They will make war on the Lamb, and the Lamb will conquer them, for he is Lord of lords and King of kings, 14(b) and those with him are called and chosen and faithful.”

God does not give us a long drawn out story about this great battle. The only information God gives is Christ conquers the Beast. The reason given for Christ's victory is simple “*for he is Lord of lords and King of kings*” that is all the information we need to know. Everything else doesn't matter.

The last part of this verse says “*and those with him are called and chosen and faithful*”. So the question is, who are these whom Christ called, who are these that Christ chose, who are these that are the faithful of Christ? They are the believers, the Christians, they are no different than you and me.

Now we know again that this will be a great battle. Satan and his flock against Christ and His flock. I can assure you that Satan's flock will prepare themselves well for this battle, you can bet on it. So the next question is what are we doing to prepare for this battle, a spiritual and physical battle?

What are some of the things we will need for this battle? Let's break it up into two categories, the spiritual war and the physical war.

Spiritual war: Bible, great teaching, study and meditation on scripture, prayer.

Physical war: Training, the tools of war such as guns and bullets, knives, swords etc.

In Luke 22:35-38 ~ *And he said to them, “When I sent you out with no moneybag or knapsack or sandals, did you lack anything?” They said, “Nothing.” 36 He said to them, “But now let the one who has a moneybag take it, and likewise a knapsack. And let the one who has no sword sell his cloak and buy one.*

37 For I tell you that this Scripture must be fulfilled in me: 'And he was numbered with the transgressors.' For what is written about me has its fulfillment." 38 And they said, "Look, Lord, here are two swords." And he said to them, "It is enough."

Jesus is not against the sword, yes it is a tool for protection and war but still Jesus sees the need for tools such as these because Jesus knows that is how Satan fights at times. Satan fights as well both a spiritual battle and a physical one so we must prepare for both.

Now if scripture says no one knows the time and place how do we know when to get ready? We should always be ready.

The faithful will be ready both spiritually and physically at all times. Those who are not faithful fall back into Revelation three I think, the lukewarm, those who do not love Jesus enough to be prepared. They just go through the motions, they look like believers maybe on the outside but the heart and mind are not in the game.

15 And the angel said to me, "The waters that you saw, where the prostitute is seated, are peoples and multitudes and nations and languages. 16 And the ten horns that you saw, they and the beast will hate the prostitute."

They will make her desolate and naked, and devour her flesh and burn her up with fire,

Satan and the Beast in the end will turn on those unbelievers who followed them. The fact is Satan doesn't care about them or anyone, he doesn't love anyone, he doesn't have mercy and grace for his followers. Satan is a user of people to serve his own purpose and then he cares nothing about them when he is done with them and he discards them like garbage.

That's what unbelievers get not being a part of Christ's flock, they get used and abused by Satan.

Scripture says you will have a master either Satan or Christ. Unbelievers may think that Satan isn't their master but scripture says otherwise.

17 for God has put it into their hearts to carry out his purpose by being of one mind and handing over their royal power to the beast, until the words of God are fulfilled.

Now this is another interesting piece of scripture. Who put it into the unbelievers hearts to carry out the will of Satan? God It says, this was all for God's purpose. God put into unbelievers hearts a desire to serve and follow Satan until God's plan was fulfilled.

How do you feel about that? Why would God do this?

18 And the woman that you saw is the great city that has dominion over the kings of the earth.”

This great city has developed over time and it will become the hub of power during these times. As things progress, this evil city will, I think, have the last stand for the last great battle. We can only speculate on which city it is.

Revelation 18:1-3

In Luke 19:11-27 we see Jesus telling of this parable, The Parable of the Ten Minas. This parable is really about Himself and at the end we see this verse.

Luke 19:27 ~ But as for these enemies of mine, who did not want me to reign over them, bring them here and slaughter them before me.'"

Now this fits very well with what we just read in Revelation 17:14.

Revelation 17:14 ~ They will make war on the Lamb, and the Lamb will conquer them, for he is Lord of lords and King of kings, and those with him are called and chosen and faithful."

But after reading the verse in Luke 19:27 about how Jesus when He returns will call for the slaughter of His enemies, that is the unsaved, we need to understand that God and Christ hate the unbeliever who is unwilling to repent and believe.

Below are a couple of other verses to support this fact.

Psalms 5:4-5 ~ For you are not a God who delights in wickedness; evil may not dwell with you. The boastful shall not stand before your eyes; you hate all evildoers.

Psalm 11:5 ~ The LORD tests the righteous, but his soul hates the wicked and the one who loves violence.

***Romans 9:11-13 ~ though they were not yet born and had done nothing either good or bad—in order that God's purpose of election might continue, not because of works but because of him who calls—
12 she was told, “The older will serve the younger.”
13 As it is written, “Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated.”***

Scripture at times can be difficult to understand and hard to absorb why God does the thing He does. But I want to continue in what Romans says right after this verse.

***Romans 9:14-18 ~ What shall we say then? Is there injustice on God's part? By no means!
15 For he says to Moses, “I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion.” 16 So then it depends not on human will or exertion, but on God, who has mercy.
17 For the Scripture says to Pharaoh, “For this very purpose I have raised you up, that I might show my power in you, and that my name might be proclaimed in all the earth.” 18 So then he has mercy on whomever he wills, and he hardens whomever he wills.***

what is the importance and relevance of this you may be asking yourself.

I have mentioned before the importance of understanding the drastic cost of being an unbelieving wicked sinner and that the better we understand who we were pre-salvation then it makes it even more clear to us the great value of God's grace, love and mercy in our salvation.

God both hates and loves and being an unbelieving wicked sinner is at the far end on the spectrum of the hate side. God's grace, love and mercy for the believer are on the other side of the spectrum. They are the farthest apart as they could be, and to attempt to bring them closer together diminishes what God has done for the believer and it takes away from what Christ did on the cross and as well makes sin less wicked.

Now understand all scripture is true and the difficult thing at times is how how we take John 3:16 as true and the verses about how God hates the wicked as true and make them fit together?

John 3:16-20 ~ “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. 17 For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. 18 Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God.

19 And this is the judgment: the light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the light because their works were evil. 20 For everyone who does wicked things hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his works should be exposed.

The term “the world” can be a very general term and not specific enough in my opinion for it to actually mean every single person or thing, where as God hating the wicked are very specific.

God is patient though scripture says, and He desires all to come to faith.

I just want to make clear though that we as Christians are to love all in the hope that the wicked unbeliever will come to repentance and faith, that is our calling.

Revelation 18:1-2 ~ After this I saw another angel coming down from heaven, having great authority, and the earth was made bright with his glory. 2 And he called out with a mighty voice, “Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great! She has become a dwelling place for demons, a haunt for every unclean spirit, a haunt for every unclean bird, a haunt for every unclean and detestable beast.

Chapter eighteen now gives us some detail on the fall of Babylon. An angel with great authority it says, came down from heaven and the earth was made bright by the angels glory.

It is interesting that it isn't just mankind that have fallen here but also it mentions demons, unclean spirits, birds, and beasts. So animals as well have fallen to the will of Satan.

3 For all nations have drunk the wine of the passion of her sexual immorality, and the kings of the earth have committed immorality with her, and the merchants of the earth have grown rich from the power of her luxurious living.”

All nations and kings have drunk of the wine of the passion of her sexual immorality. Not some nations but all it says.

All nations is also called all the world. Here is where wording again needs to be properly understood. All nations or another way of saying it is all the world. Does all mean all or does the world mean all? No it doesn't, it is a general term. There are still Christians on earth still as we have read.

We know this because of verse 4 ***“Then I heard another voice from heaven saying, “Come out of her, my people, lest you take part in her sins.””***

There are still Gods people on earth in which this Angel is calling out from the rubble. The nations or the world, even though it says “all” does not mean everyone just as in John 3:16 “loved the world” doesn't mean everyone.

Revelation 18:4-24

In the last section in verse 3 we read about an angel speaking to John telling him how all the nations and all the kings have “drunk the wine of the passion of her sexual immorality”.

Being drunk on her wine (Babylon), really just means that the world has become intoxicated by sin, that they lust for sin. Yes there was sexual immorality as it says but there was much more than that going on I can assure you. Every imaginable sin against God was in full flow.

4 “Come out of her, my people, lest you take part in her sins, lest you share in her plagues; 5 for her sins are heaped high as heaven, and God has remembered her iniquities. 6 Pay her back as she herself has paid back others, and repay her double for her deeds; mix a double portion for her in the cup she mixed. 7 As she glorified herself and lived in luxury, so give her a like measure of torment and mourning, since in her heart she says, ‘I sit as a queen, I am no widow, and mourning I shall never see.’

As mentioned there are Christians still on earth “my people” even still now at the end of this great war against evil. Imagine how strong these Christians must be to endure everything that they have lived through.

Now being we don't know the length of time of everything that transpires in Revelation, we don't know if these believers were there at the beginning or were born somewhere along the way and became believers.

But for sure this group of believers who are still there have been a part of the army of Christ fighting to the point of victory.

I can assure you they are not in any way weak or soft Christians. They are the strongest of the strong both physically and spiritually. This is what we should be striving for today.

The day has come, God has called out His people, away from the final destruction so they don't get caught up in it. The kings mentioned and their kingdoms who all followed the Antichrist will see there last, and they will suffer the torment along with their master.

8 For this reason her plagues will come in a single day, death and mourning and famine, and she will be burned up with fire; for mighty is the Lord God who has judged her."

Read v18 again ~ "her plagues will come in a single day" is this a literal single day? Did all these plagues happen in one day? I'm not sure, can famine happen in one day?

9 And the kings of the earth, who committed sexual immorality and lived in luxury with her, will weep and wail over her when they see the smoke of her burning. 10 They will stand far off, in fear of her torment, and say, "Alas! Alas! You great city, you mighty city, Babylon! For in a single hour your judgment has come."

All these kings, the rich, the false churches, the politicians who all took part in the sins of the world under the Antichrist will run off to the outer areas where they will watch it all burn. I bet they think they are safe on the outskirts, but they are not. They may have momentarily escaped God's wrath but their final judgment will happen, they can't escape it.

11 And the merchants of the earth weep and mourn for her, since no one buys their cargo anymore, 12 cargo of gold, silver, jewels, pearls, fine linen, purple cloth, silk, scarlet cloth, all kinds of scented wood, all kinds of articles of ivory, all kinds of articles of costly wood, bronze, iron and marble, 13 cinnamon, spice, incense, myrrh, frankincense, wine, oil, fine flour, wheat, cattle and sheep, horses and chariots, and slaves, that is, human souls.

There is this saying that I remember, it says "he who dies with the most toys wins," the stuff we put value on will be worthless, no one buys it anymore, and I can assure you no one will care about it anymore.

Reality has hit everyone and what is of true value differs here. For the lost it is survival and for the believer it is Christ and salvation. Everything comes to complete clarity.

Romans 3:16-17 ~ *in their paths are ruin and misery, 17 and the way of peace they have not known* This is the life of the unbeliever.

14 “The fruit for which your soul longed has gone from you, and all your delicacies and your splendors are lost to you, never to be found again!” 15 The merchants of these wares, who gained wealth from her, will stand far off, in fear of her torment, weeping and mourning aloud, 16 “Alas, alas, for the great city that was clothed in fine linen, in purple and scarlet, adorned with gold, with jewels, and with pearls! 17 For in a single hour all this wealth has been laid waste.” And all shipmasters and seafaring men, sailors and all whose trade is on the sea, stood far off 18 and cried out as they saw the smoke of her burning. 19 And they threw dust on their heads as they wept and mourned, crying out, “Alas, alas, for the great city where all who had ships at sea grew rich by her wealth! For in a single hour she has been laid waste.

Anyone who was a part of making or selling all these things and that have become wealthy from their sales will see it all burn. No one to sell to because other things are so much more important.

You see all this stuff takes us away from Christ and Satan knows it so he brings stuff into our lives to distract us from what's important. Satan brings stuff into our lives and he makes us busy with things that are meaningless to God.

What if we did away with most of the stuff and most of the things that pull us away from God and instead put our time and our effort into serving Christ? What if instead of purchasing stuff our money went to building the kingdom? What if the majority of our time was spent praising and worshiping and building each other up? What if we spent our time out in the world sharing the gospel as we are called to?

20 “Rejoice over her, O heaven, and you saints and apostles and prophets, for God has given judgment for you against her!”

God it says here will bring judgment to the world for His people. God brought judgment once before for all those who would be saved in Christ Jesus. The judgment was cast upon Christ for our sins. This time God brings judgment and wrath to the world for us through Christ Jesus.

21 Then a mighty angel took up a stone like a great millstone and threw it into the sea, saying, “So will Babylon the great city be thrown down with violence, and will be found no more;

22 and the sound of harpists and musicians, of flute players and trumpeters, will be heard in you no more, and a craftsman of any craft will be found in you no more, and the sound of the mill will be heard in you no more, 23 and the light of a lamp will shine in you no more, and the voice of bridegroom and bride will be heard in you no more, for your merchants were the great ones of the earth, and all nations were deceived by your sorcery. 24 And in her was found the blood of prophets and of saints, and of all who have been slain on earth.”

Many have thought on who Babylon is but any guess would just be that, a guess. I am more to the side that it is the entire world and not just one place because that would make much more sense.

Revelation 19:1-5

In the last section we saw the end of what scripture calls “the great war” which is to be a war against Babylon. Babylon consists of all those under the power of Satan, the Beast and the Anti-Christ.

These people that follow them will be people in our family and people who are our friends. It will include all the people we as Christians failed to share Christ with. It will include all the people that couldn't see Christ in our lives. It will include all the people that we made feel uncomfortable when they came to church seeking Christ and left saying they didn't want any part of it.

Don't get me wrong, there will always be people who don't accept Christ and don't want any part of Him. But which of them are in that position because of us? That is the question each of us needs to ask ourselves.

1 After this I heard what seemed to be the loud voice of a great multitude in heaven, crying out, “Hallelujah! Salvation and glory and power belong to our God, 2 for his judgments are true and just; for he has judged the great prostitute who corrupted the earth with her immorality, and has avenged on her the blood of his servants.”

Heaven is rejoicing over God's victory and as well our victory. “Hallelujah” which means “praise the Lord”.

God always gets the praise for every good thing that happens, because every good thing comes from Him. He is the only one deserving of such praise, glory and worship.

Jesus Himself praises God time and time again in scripture for the good things that come from God.

Jesus understood this well and scripture here reveals it, a multitude in heaven are crying out, “Hallelujah! Salvation and glory and power belong to our God”

Salvation, power and glory everything belongs to Him. Though we thank Jesus for His willingness to go to the cross, God is the one who ordained it to happen and God is the one who saw it through. It is because of God and God alone.

19:2 ~ “*for his judgments are true and just*”

God's judgment on the wicked is His right as God. It is God who says what is right and what is wrong, it is He who says who are the righteous in Christ and who are the wicked, and it is He who says who will be in Heaven and who will be in Hell.

The rejoicing that is heard in Heaven is for their joy that is felt for the triumph over Babylon, it is joy for God's win for the righteous and it is joy for the condemnation of the wicked.

3 Once more they cried out, “Hallelujah! The smoke from her goes up forever and ever.”

All Heaven rejoices over the defeat and condemnation of the wicked and their wickedness.

The world and its worldly ways have been found guilty as charged. They are guilty for their sin and in chapter 17 the world is also found guilty for the blood of God's servants. God has avenged those martyred for Him.

Will you be one of the martyred who boldly without fear stands up against evil and proclaims God and proclaims Christ to the wicked, or will you be hiding in the corner cowering in fear being more afraid of the world than of God Himself?

What about right now in the world today, which are you?

4 And the twenty-four elders and the four living creatures fell down and worshiped God who was seated on the throne, saying, “Amen. Hallelujah!”

From the smallest to the greatest in heaven if you have proclaimed God and proclaimed Christ outwardly you will be one of these for sure rejoicing.

We are not given an example of a self professing Christian here that doesn't outwardly profess God and Christ because all true Christians do.

A self professing Christian is always willing and ready in an instant to fight both spiritually and physically when called upon. A self professing Christian who is not prepared to be martyred for God is not a Christian at all. As Christ gave Himself for us we then give ourselves for Him.

We need to not only look to see what scripture tells us but what it doesn't tell us as well because that at times is equally important.

There is a good reason God doesn't mention them along with the Christians we are reading about here, it's not hard to figure out, there are only two sides to this story. If they are not here then they must be apart of those on the other side who are being condemned to hell. That's the only two options we have.

Who we are as Christians makes a huge difference in the truthfulness of our profession of Christ.

5 And from the throne came a voice saying, "Praise our God, all you his servants, you who fear him, small and great."

From the throne means this is now Christ Himself speaking out, "Praise our God, all you his servants, you who fear him, small and great."

If I seem tough at times in my teaching it is out of love for Gods people so that as many as possible make it.

Revelation 19:6-10

The Marriage Supper of the Lamb

6 Then I heard what seemed to be the voice of a great multitude, like the roar of many waters and like the sound of mighty peals of thunder, crying out, “Hallelujah!”

So John hears this great multitude shouting out again “Hallelujah” he doesn't see them because they are in heaven shouting this. These seems to be a different group shouting than from what we read lastly.

There is somewhat of a description of them though that may give us an indication who they are. It is “like the roar of many waters and like the sound of mighty peals of thunder”.

Revelation 14:1-3 ~ *Then I looked, and behold, on Mount Zion stood the Lamb, and with him 144,000 who had his name and his Father's name written on their foreheads. 2 And I heard a voice from heaven like the roar of many waters and like the sound of loud thunder.*

So, could this be these 144,000 shouting from heaven who had been taken up and redeemed from the earth? It would make sense I think that this group is now rejoicing over this great battle that had been won.

6 “Hallelujah” For the Lord our God the Almighty reigns. 7 Let us rejoice and exult and give him the glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and his Bride has made herself ready; 8 it was granted her to clothe herself with fine linen, bright and pure” — for the fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints.

The battle has been won and the celebration is as a wedding. We as believers are the bride and Jesus is the groom. The question is are you ready?

Marriages just don't happen do they? There is an entire group of things that need to happen before two people get to the point of marriage and each step is crucial in order to have a great everlasting marriage. It is the same with believers, our marriage to Christ takes work and lot's of it. But we desire it and we know it is well worth it.

A proper introduction I think is the first point of any relationship. Were you properly introduced to Christ? In other words did you receive an accurate and complete gospel message when you became a believer?

Were you told about the severity of sin and how that sin caused separation between you and God? Were you told about God being a righteous, holy and just God and that He demands payment for that sin if you want to restore that relationship?

Were you told about Jesus and His willingness to absorb that payment for you if you accept Him as lord of your life? Were you told about the need for repentance? How about the need to grow in this relationship through the study of scripture and prayer? How about the agreement that once you are a believer you must share the gospel with others? Last, were you told how you need to live out your life as much like Christ possible?

See if you don't set the ground rules so to speak at the beginning of a relationship the chances of success in marriage are very small.

Well I didn't know I had to wash the laundry, clean the house, cook dinner and raise some bratty kids.

I didn't know I had to remember every important date to you, do the yard work, fix the cars, and bring you out to dinner and give you flowers.

What the expectations are in our relationship with God and Christ are vital for our growth and success and scripture tells everything we need to know.

9 And the angel said to me, "Write this: Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb." And he said to me, "These are the true words of God."

We are blessed by God and Jesus in this relationship of ours. Do you think God and Jesus feel the same way about us?

I can assure you of this, whatever effort you put into the earthly relationship with your spouse you will need to spend much more time in your relationship with God and Jesus.

10 Then I fell down at his feet to worship him, but he said to me, "You must not do that! I am a fellow servant with you and your brothers who hold to the testimony of Jesus. Worship God." For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.

Worship God!

As the years go on we should be becoming closer and closer in this relationship. We should know God's wants and desires intimately. We should be growing more and more in our knowledge of scripture and constantly be seeking out its wisdom. We should be broken when we have done wrong and ask for forgiveness for it whenever it happens.

Both individuals and churches must continually grow spiritually. Growth is a never ending thing and constantly needs to be nurtured and cared for. But unfortunately we often see little of this and both are more than not set in their ways.

Revelation 19:11-21

The war has been won but now those who are the enemies of God who are still alive will be dealt with eternally. This section to me can be a little confusing in a couple of parts and I will do my best to work through these sections.

The Rider on a White Horse

11 Then I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse! The one sitting on it is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he judges and makes war.

Now this doesn't say that the person on the horse is Jesus but there are many descriptions given to this rider that it should be more than obvious that it is Jesus.

Here are a few: Faithful and True, in righteousness he judges, he is called The Word of God, King of kings and Lord of lords.

There is no doubt this is Jesus because we see Him called many of these things throughout scripture.

12 His eyes are like a flame of fire, and on his head are many diadems (crowns), and he has a name written that no one knows but himself.

Jesus wearing many crowns I would say is because of his defeat of Satan and his followers. A single crown of thorns for his victorious work on the cross and now many crowns for his victory here. It seems fitting.

13 He is clothed in a robe dipped in blood, and the name by which he is called is The Word of God.

A question here is who's blood is this? Is it the martyrs? Is it the enemy he Just defeated? In Verse 15 just ahead it says "He will tread the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God" giving us the answer that it is God's enemies.

Isaiah 63:2-4 ~ Why is your apparel red, and your garments like his who treads in the winepress? 3 "I have trodden the winepress alone, and from the peoples no one was with me; I trod them in my anger and trampled them in my wrath; their lifeblood spattered on my garments, and stained all my apparel. 4 For the day of vengeance was in my heart, and my year of redemption had come.

A winepress if you can imagine is a contraption with a tub that you fill with grapes, and you screw down this circular board and as it is lowered more and more it crushes the grapes squeezing out the juice from the grapes to then be used to make into wine. So this reference is one that tells us that Jesus crushed his enemy. That gives us a pretty clear description of Jesus' victory I would say.

14 And the armies of heaven, arrayed in fine linen, white and pure, were following him on white horses. 15 From his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations, and he will rule them with a rod of iron. He will tread the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God the Almighty. 16 On his robe and on his thigh he has a name written, King of kings and Lord of lords.

The armies of heaven, who are these? I would say it is a mixture of a few. It is I am sure the angels as well as the saints who have passed on that being the believers and martyrs. I would also say it is us the true believers who are still alive through it all.

Back in Revelation 17:14 ~ They will make war on the Lamb, and the Lamb will conquer them, for he is Lord of lords and King of kings, and those with him are called and chosen and faithful.”

I have said this before, we as believers need to start understanding who we are in Christ and that is that we are warriors for Christ. And being warriors for Christ we need to prepare ourselves constantly.

Ephesians 6:13-18 ~ Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm. 14 Stand therefore, having fastened on the belt of truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness,

15 and, as shoes for your feet, having put on the readiness given by the gospel of peace. 16 In all circumstances take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one; 17 and take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, 18 praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end, keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints

The “gospel of peace” some would say see we need to be peaceful and I would say yes we need to be peaceful when at all possible or we need to make peace happen or create peace when there isn't whenever possible. But it isn't always possible is it?

Romans 12:18 ~ If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all.

If possible, as far as it depends on you. This is telling us that at times peace isn't always possible because another will not let us have peace. Peace does not always depend on just us because there is another involved and if they do not want peace but rather they want war we may have no choice but to be at war against the evil that comes against us.

17 Then I saw an angel standing in the sun, and with a loud voice he called to all the birds that fly directly overhead,

“Come, gather for the great supper of God, 18 to eat the flesh of kings, the flesh of captains, the flesh of mighty men, the flesh of horses and their riders, and the flesh of all men, both free and slave, both small and great.”

A feast of all the fallen evil ones. Why let the birds go without when by their nature cleaning up is what they do

19 And I saw the beast and the kings of the earth with their armies gathered to make war against him who was sitting on the horse and against his army. 20 And the beast was captured, and with it the false prophet who in its presence had done the signs by which he deceived those who had received the mark of the beast and those who worshiped its image.

It seems like a final last stand of sorts for a moment but the war is won and they are all captured.

These two were thrown alive into the lake of fire that burns with sulfur. 21 And the rest were slain by the sword that came from the mouth of him who was sitting on the horse, and all the birds were gorged with their flesh.

Who do you want to be in this story? Do you want to be on the side of Jesus and his victory or do you want to be on the side of Satan and his defeat? Prepare yourselves then brothers and sisters.

Revelation 20:1-6

Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, holding in his hand the key to the bottomless pit and a great chain. 2 And he seized the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years, 3 and threw him into the pit, and shut it and sealed it over him, so that he might not deceive the nations any longer, until the thousand years were ended.

There is a group of Christians who for the most part are fairly sound in what they believe except for in my opinion this 1,000yrs that we are discussing today.

Just briefly, they believe that the 1,000yrs is symbolic rather than an actual 1,000yrs. Now I don't have a problem with that if the thought is it's not exactly 1,000yrs but just a reference to a long amount of time.

The problem is though even though they do believe it means a long amount of time they also believe that the thousand years started at the point that Jesus rose from the dead and ascended into heaven.

The bigger problem with that thought is that they really don't believe in the thousand year reign of Christ in a way which scripture gives us and that Satan will be locked up. They also don't believe in the new Heaven and new Earth, they can't because Satan is still doing his evil right now.

Now I understand that this book of Revelation is symbolic in many ways but it still follows a certain time frame and I am a firm believer that we have not arrived yet to the point Revelation starts.

Many would ask, why didn't God Bind up Satan and throw him into the pit right after Satan was cast out of heaven? God chose not to and it isn't for us to understand.

I also mentioned before why would God send Satan down to earth if He knew He was going to create mankind and put us here?

So Satan is bound and thrown into the pit, and the next words we read are "After that he must be released for a little while."

After everything that has happened God is going to let Satan out knowing Satan is never going to change his ways. But God does this anyway, why? Because God chooses to.

It is none of our business to know why God does what he does, He has every right to do what He wants. And even if He did tell us why, we still probably wouldn't understand.

4a Then I saw thrones, and seated on them were those to whom the authority to judge was committed.

Now this verse is much explanation. In the book of Daniel we may get a little info on this.

Daniel 7:21-22 ~ As I looked, this horn made war with the saints and prevailed over them, 22 until the Ancient of Days came, and judgment was given for the saints of the Most High, and the time came when the saints possessed the kingdom.

Now again not a complete explanation but that's what we have and it does us no good to go round and round with this.

4b Also I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for the testimony of Jesus and for the word of God, and those who had not worshiped the beast or its image and had not received its mark on their foreheads or their hands. They came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years.

This is called the first resurrection of the dead. The reason why it's called the first is because we don't see the unbelievers being raised up yet. The unbelievers will not be raised until The Great White Throne when they are to be judged. For now all those who have made it to heaven will reign with Christ for one thousand years.

Verses 5 explains what I just said, ***5 The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were ended. This is the first resurrection.***

6 Blessed and holy is the one who shares in the first resurrection!

Over such the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ, and they will reign with him for a thousand years.

If we get to this point, if we are one of those who make it to reign with Christ for 1,000yrs what great joy there will be.

Revelation 20:7-15

The Defeat of Satan

7 And when the thousand years are ended, Satan will be released from his prison

Verse 7 starts off with Satan being released from the Bottomless Pit but God does something interesting here, He doesn't allow the Beast or the False Prophet out along with him. God understands that the three of them being out is for sure a bad idea but Satan is allowed out.

8 and will come out to deceive the nations that are at the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them for battle; their number is like the sand of the sea.

How many grains of sand are there in the sea, a lot right? This is just a reference to a lot. A lot of Christians who have been on the earth with Christ allowed themselves to be deceived by Satan.

There is this difficulty to understanding who is still on earth. At times it seems that both Christians and unbelievers are and at other times just Christians.

It seems as if God needed here another cleansing of sorts.

That even while being alive with Christ risen from the dead by the first resurrection they still fell victim to Satan and sin.

The First Resurrection (Back to 4)

4 Then I saw thrones, and seated on them were those to whom the authority to judge was committed. Also I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for the testimony of Jesus and for the word of God, and those who had not worshiped the beast or its image and had not received its mark on their foreheads or their hands. They came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years.

These that have fallen, among them were martyrs that have been beheaded, those that did not worship the Beast or its image, who had not received the mark, among these are now the fallen.

How could these believers having gone through all that they had gone through for Christ now fallow Satan? Verse 10 says Satan deceived them so they will be believers at least in part.

9-10 ~ And they marched up over the broad plain of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city, but fire came down from heaven and consumed them,

10 and the devil who had deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and sulfur where the beast and the false prophet were, and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.

God did not take long to respond to this. These fallen Christians joined forces with Satan to attack believers who were camped out and before they could kill these believers God it says sent fire down upon them to consume them.

11 Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. From his presence earth and sky fled away, and no place was found for them.

God appears, and when God appears everything else flees from His presence. No earth, no sky, no stars. When God takes the stage there is nothing else that can challenge is glory, everything leaves so He alone has 100% of the attention.

12 And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Then another book was opened, which is the book of life.

So we have books here not just one. One book is the Book of Life and in this book are all the names of those who came through it all and are still faithful believers in Christ as Lord and Savior.

The other books are the books containing the names and all the things in the lives of the unbelievers who will be judged for their sins.

And the dead were judged by what was written in the books, according to what they had done. 13 And the sea gave up the dead who were in it, Death and Hades gave up the dead who were in them, and they were judged, each one of them, according to what they had done. 14 Then Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. 15 And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.

The dead which are the unbelievers, their final judgment is the Lake of Fire.

I had mentioned on many occasions that salvation and repentance primarily should be based upon what we have just read in this final judgment. That the unbelievers sin and separation from God will only land them in one place and there are no pleasantries there.

Salvation based upon anything other than Christ is not salvation at all but is a false gospel that leads to the Lake of Fire. Thus the importance put upon us the Christian to get it right because souls are counting on us to.

Revelation 21:1-8

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. 2 And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.

I am sure you can imagine that after years of war against Satan and the devastation of the Seven Bowls being pored out that there isn't going to be much left.

The first bowl poured out on the earth created painful sores, the second bowl contaminated and poisoned the sea that killed every living thing in it, the third bowl killed everything in the rivers and springs, the fourth bowl was poured out on the sun and scripture says it scorched with fire, the fifth bowl was poured out on the beast and his followers and it caused great pain, the sixth bowl dried up the river Euphrates, the seventh bowl was poured into the air and it caused great storms and earthquakes.

What if anything could be left after all this? Surely not much I imagine....

There is a mention in verse one about the sea being no more, is it talking about the actual sea? In Isaiah there is a reference that possibly could give some clarity.

Isiah 57:20 ~ But the wicked are like the tossing sea; for it cannot be quiet, and its waters toss up mire and dirt.

The sea could most likely be a metaphor for unbelievers. The sea is a mighty thing so my conclusion is that this is talking about a great number of unbelievers, so many they are like a sea, a sea of wicked unbelievers.

John then sees out of Heaven the new Jerusalem. The old Jerusalem was a Jewish place and now the new Jerusalem is a Christian place. It is not a restoration of the old earth but rather it is a complete replacement just like what will happen with our bodies. God wants to insure there is no contamination from the first.

There is a section of verses in the book of Romans that I think is important for us to read.

Roman 18:19-23 ~ 19 For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the children of God, 20 for the creation was subjected to futility, not of its own will, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope 21 that the creation itself will be set free from its enslavement to decay and will obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. 22 We know that the whole creation has been groaning together as it suffers together the pains of labor,

23 and not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly while we wait for adoption, the redemption of our bodies.

So you see it isn't just us waiting for this all to happen, verse 22 says "the whole creation" that's everything that has been created is waiting for this moment.

3 And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God.

Not only are we going to have Jesus with us but God himself will be with us as well. We will have no sin within us at this point for God cannot be among sin and sinners in any way. We know God is everywhere now but it won't be the same as it will be.

4 He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away."

What an experience it will be when this day comes. We will be it seems God's perfect human creation as it was in the beginning.

5 And he who was seated on the throne said, "Behold, I am making all things new." Also he said, "Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true." 6 And he said to me, "It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end.

What a great contrast, Jesus first came as the Lamb to be slaughtered and now Christ is the great conqueror, a mighty warrior, the Lion of Judah.

Revelation 5:5 ~ And one of the elders said to me, "Weep no more; behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has conquered, so that he can open the scroll and its seven seals."

It goes on to say ~

To the thirsty I will give from the spring of the water of life without payment. 7 The one who conquers will have this heritage, and I will be his God and he will be my son.

This is talking about us, those who have made it all the way to this point here in Revelation.

8 But as for the cowardly, the faithless, the detestable, as for murderers, the sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars, their portion will be in the lake that burns with fire and sulfur, which is the second death."

And here we have the opposite for the unbelievers, but I think we could apply some of these to the lukewarm Christians that consume the majority of the church today. What will happen to them on the last day only God knows, but it sure doesn't seem that it will be anything good.

Revelation 21:9-27

Many will say that we Christians are the bride of Christ and that is true in part, and they will usually add that it's not a building or a place but it is us and I would disagree with this to an extent and we will see why here.

9 Then came one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues and spoke to me, saying, "Come, I will show you the Bride, the wife of the Lamb." 10 And he carried me away in the Spirit to a great, high mountain, and showed me the holy city Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God

I have not seen in Revelation that the church building will continue in the holy city Jerusalem and I think it should be obvious why, the church that we know now has been a great failure. Here though the bride or wife of the Lamb is a place and within it Christians and I would say that the two together make a whole. But this place is not controlled or overseen by people but rather God and Christ themselves.

It is important to notice here that what the angel is telling John is that there is a new bride of Christ and it is the New Jerusalem and not the church. So is the New Jerusalem a person or a place? It is both.

That tells me that when we see the bride of Christ mentioned in other parts of scripture that the building at least in part is the bride of Christ as well. It is an imperfect highly flawed and at times corrupt false image of the bride of Christ.

I think the two honestly are inseparable to a certain extent and this is what I mean by that. What good is a church building without Christians inside? What good is a Christian who doesn't want to gather with the body of Christ? The church is the gathering place and the church is the Christians that gather there. Can we gather other places? Yes and we do but wherever we gather it is still an imperfect place.

So now in Revelation 21 the gathering place for the Christians is no longer a building but an entire place, the New Jerusalem, a perfect place.

Ephesian 5:25-27 ~ *Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, 26 that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, 27 so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish.*

John, back in verse four had stated that he saw the “new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God.”

I imagine because of the magnificent beauty of it all that it must have been a lot to take in because John does not give a detailed description of until now. I would think he must have been in a bit of shock from it all.

John starts off with this description:

11 having the glory of God, its radiance like a most rare jewel, like a jasper, clear as crystal. 12 It had a great, high wall, with twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels, and on the gates the names of the twelve tribes of the sons of Israel were inscribed 13 on the east three gates, on the north three gates, on the south three gates, and on the west three gates. 14 And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them were the twelve names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.

Twelve gates, twelve angels, twelve tribes. Three gates at the east, three gates at the north, three gates at the south and three gates at the west all with an angel standing at each. We don't know if these angels were protectors or greeters. Above each gate the name of a tribe.

The city had twelve foundations and on each of them the name of an apostle. That gives you an understanding of the importance of the apostles, that they were considered such a foundational part of Christianity.

15 And the one who spoke with me 16 The city lies foursquare, its length the same as its width. And he measured the city with his rod, 12,000 stadia. Its length and width and height are equal.

12,000 Stadia = 1,380 miles by 1,380 miles and 1,380 miles high.

17 He also measured its wall, 144 cubits by human measurement, which is also an angel's measurement.

144 cubits is about 72 yards thick

18 The wall was built of jasper, while the city was pure gold, like clear glass. 19 The foundations of the wall of the city were adorned with every kind of jewel. The first was jasper, the second sapphire, the third agate, the fourth emerald, 20 the fifth onyx, the sixth carnelian, the seventh chrysolite, the eighth beryl, the ninth topaz, the tenth chrysoprased, the eleventh jacinth, the twelfth amethyst.

Can you imagine this city of Gold? I don't think it was even the best part, the foundation of the wall with all these jewels to me must be the most incredible sight.

21 And the twelve gates were twelve pearls, each of the gates made of a single pearl, and the street of the city was pure gold, like transparent glass. 22 And I saw no temple in the city, for its temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb.

23 And the city has no need of sun or moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and its lamp is the Lamb. 24 By its light will the nations walk, and the kings of the earth will bring their glory into it, 25 and its gates will never be shut by day—and there will be no night there. 26 They will bring into it the glory and the honor of the nations. 27 But nothing unclean will ever enter it, nor anyone who does what is detestable or false, but only those who are written in the Lamb's book of life.

What an awesome description. An unimaginable place where Christ is our temple. No more churches and denominations just Jesus.

There is no need for light because the glory of God will be the only light needed. And inside nothing will be unclean and no sin will be there.

Revelation 22:1-11

Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb 2 through the middle of the street of the city;

Revelation has been a great study over these last several months and I have really enjoyed it. I feel as though I saw and understood so many new things and it has been amazing.

I want to take us back to the book of John 4:14 and read this verse for us about the woman at the well.

John 4:14 ~ but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him will never be thirsty again. The water that I will give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life.”

Does Jesus say here that He is the water in which he is talking about? I would say yes He is and here in Revelation we see that the water flows from the thrones of both God and Jesus. Now being they are on the thrones it can mean that both God and Jesus are the source of this water meaning it is coming from them. It could also possibly be the thrones themselves in which the water is coming from but I would say this is unlikely.

We do understand that the water Jesus is talking about is salvation and salvation comes from faith in Him and His work on the cross. Jesus is salvation, they are one in the same. We also understand that it was God who sent Jesus to the cross. So this water in Revelation is most likely a representation of salvation, a river of salvation that runs through the streets of this new Jerusalem. It is the flow of the salvation of the saved.

(2) also, on either side of the river, the tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit each month. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.

So now let's turn to Genesis 3:22-23 ~ ***Then the LORD God said, "Behold, the man has become like one of us in knowing good and evil. Now, lest he reach out his hand and take also of the tree of life and eat, and live forever—" 23 therefore the LORD God sent him out from the garden of Eden to work the ground from which he was taken.***

We have the Tree of Life pulled from The Garden and transplanted into the city of the New Jerusalem. But again is this really talking about a tree? Many think it is a metaphor for Jesus and I would agree which means we see Jesus again in the beginnings of scripture.

John 15:5 ~ I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing.

Tree/Vine it may be similar enough for the same meaning. If that is the case then the Tree of Life that God was talking about in the Garden was Jesus.

Back in Revelation 2:7 ~ He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To the one who conquers I will grant to eat of the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God.'

It seems obvious to me Jesus is the tree of life.

3 No longer will there be anything accursed, but the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and his servants will worship him. 4 They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads. 5 And night will be no more. They will need no light of lamp or sun, for the Lord God will be their light, and they will reign forever and ever.

What a beautiful image John must be seeing based upon these descriptions, the perfect place.

6 And he said to me (angel), "These words are trustworthy and true. And the Lord, the God of the spirits of the prophets, has sent his angel to show his servants what must soon take place."

This angel is just reminding John that this is a vision from God and it is a revelation of things to come. The angel says the reason for this book is to show us as well what is to come.

Why you may ask? So that we can prepare ourselves for these things and for the great battle and what follows.

7 “And behold, I am coming soon. Blessed is the one who keeps the words of the prophecy of this book.” 8 I, John, am the one who heard and saw these things. And when I heard and saw them, I fell down to worship at the feet of the angel who showed them to me, 9 but he said to me, “You must not do that! I am a fellow servant with you and your brothers the prophets, and with those who keep the words of this book. Worship God.”

John is giving us his sworn testimony for the things he envisioned “I, John, am the one who heard and saw these things”.

10 And he said to me, “Do not seal up the words of the prophecy of this book, for the time is near. 11 Let the evildoer still do evil, and the filthy still be filthy, and the righteous still do right, and the holy still be holy.”

Every piece of scripture is important to us as believers which is why John is told “Do not seal up the words.” We are reminded how important every word of scripture is.

2 Timothy 3:16-17 ~ All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, 17 that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.

For John to have gone through all of this and then not be able to share Revelation would not make much sense, at least to me. As confusing this book can be at times the knowledge we get from it is as important as in any other book in the Bible.

Revelation 22:12-21

In this last section this is Jesus speaking and it is reflecting back a ways and is about Jesus' return.

12 “Behold, I am coming soon, bringing my recompense with me, to repay each one for what he has done. 13 I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end.”

Recompense: to pay back for good or bad

And if there is still any doubt about who Jesus is he makes it clear once more by saying “I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end”

14 Blessed are those who wash their robes, so that they may have the right to the tree of life and that they may enter the city by the gates.

15 Outside are the dogs and sorcerers and the sexually immoral and murderers and idolaters, and everyone who loves and practices falsehood.

The reference to washing their robes really is just saying those who have become believers and lived by what we are told in scripture and have finished the race bearing much fruit.

These Christ says, have the right to Him, the tree of life.

No one else has the right but those who have shown themselves to be all in for Jesus. Those who have put everything before Him. Those who have given great sacrifice for Him and the mission to share the gospel.

The Cost of Following Jesus

Luke 9:57-62 ~ *As they were going along the road, someone said to him, "I will follow you wherever you go." 58 And Jesus said to him, "Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head." 59 To another he said, "Follow me." But he said, "Lord, let me first go and bury my father." 60 And Jesus said to him, "Leave the dead to bury their own dead. But as for you, go and proclaim the kingdom of God." 61 Yet another said, "I will follow you, Lord, but let me first say farewell to those at my home." 62 Jesus said to him, "No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God."*

The life of a follower of Jesus gives much for this great blessing. Thus the gate is narrow.

16 "I, Jesus, have sent my angel to testify to you about these things for the churches. I am the root and the descendant of David, the bright morning star."

I may add to the true churches not the false ones.

17 The Spirit and the Bride say, “Come.” And let the one who hears say, “Come.” And let the one who is thirsty come; let the one who desires take the water of life without price.

The price talked about here is the price of salvation not servitude. Christ was the only one capable of paying the price for salvation. We are just called to give our lives over to him in servitude. Scripture says we are slaves to Him upon salvation, willing slaves.

18 I warn everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: if anyone adds to them, God will add to him the plagues described in this book, 19 and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God will take away his share in the tree of life and in the holy city, which are described in this book.

In other words any religion that says they follow Christ must follow the Bible in full. I had mentioned that even a pastor's failure to teach controversial scriptures is taking away from scripture thus may not share in the Tree of Life. That is the burden placed upon us as pastors and teachers.

20 He who testifies to these things says, “Surely I am coming soon.” Amen. Come, Lord Jesus!

To testify is to share the gospel, they are one in the same thing.

This is why it is so important to share the gospel as we are all called to.

If you are afraid to share it or don't know how to share a proper gospel then it is extremely important that you figure it out before it is too late. Look to be discipled by someone more knowledgeable than you.

21 The grace of the Lord Jesus be with all. Amen.

Epilogue

Revelation has been a complex book to attempt to understand. Even John himself was not sure in many cases what it was he was seeing and experiencing.

I think our hope is that having the knowledge of this complicated book will give us some insight if the end times happen within our lifetime.

But we must keep in mind as Matthew 24:36 states that no one knows the day or the hour in which this will all begin except God himself. Knowing this we must continue to do our part in the calling to share the gospel with everyone we can.

