

Lehman Strauss calls the Revelation "one of the most neglected and most controversial books in the Bible."¹ Certainly, the last book of the Bible has been a threat to most laymen and many Pastors. Yet in order to fully appreciate God's plan that began in Genesis, one must make serious attempts to understand just how God plans will unwind in the future.

AUTHOR:

Four times the author identifies himself as John (1:1,4,9; 22:8). Further internal evidence reveals that the author was a Jew, well versed in Scripture, a church leader who would have been well known to the seven churches in Asia Minor, and a man who truly believed that God's forces would some day triumph over evil for all eternity. Iranaus, the pupil of Polycarp, who was in turn the pupil of John, the son of Zebedee (the disciple whom Jesus loved²), firmly substantiates the authorship through his own testimony, "John also, the Lord's disciple, ... says in the Apocalypse..."³. He continues on in this portion and quotes almost verbatim Revelation 1:12-16; 5:6; and 19:11-17.

John identifies himself with others of the suffering saints as their "brother and companion in tribulation" (Rev. 1:9) as he spent his days on the dreary island of Patmos.

DATE:

The traditional date for the writing of the Revelation is during the latter part of Domitian's reign (81-96), however some date the book even earlier, during Nero's reign (54-68).

Again, according to Iranaus, John lived during the reign of Domitian, and was freed from bondage shortly after his death in 96⁴. This was a time of intense persecution for the church, hence the phrase in 1:9, so it is very reasonable for a revelation of assurance be given to the church at this time. The date of 95 or 96 is held by almost every conservative scholar, including Thiessen⁵, Walvoord⁶, and Barnes⁷, based on the testimony of Iranaus.

RECIPIENTS:

The first chapter gives us the names of the churches to whom this letter was written. There are seven of them, all found in Asia Minor. The term "Asia Minor" meant different things to different authors. Barnes points out that it could mean (a) the whole eastern continent, (b) either Asia or Asia Minor, (c) the southwestern part of Asia Minor of which Ephesus was capital⁸. It seems that in this case, John refers to the southwestern part of Asia Minor, due to the fact that all the churches are in relatively close proximity, in that region. The fact that John was instructed to only write to these seven churches does not negate the fact that there were other churches in that area: i.e. Laodicea is near

to Colossae. However, it seems that these seven are principal churches, and that there was some reason why they should be particularly addressed. Some have suggested that these were the seven postal centers serving seven smaller regions⁹.

Apparently, although only small paragraphs are directly given to each church, the entire letter was sent to each.

OCCASION AND PURPOSE:

The church, during the time of Domitian's reign (81-96) was experiencing *great* trials and persecution. Hence, this letter of encouragement would have come at an opportune time, especially to a suffering church (such as the ones in Asia Minor). Revelation 1:1 provides the purpose of the letters to the churches; "to show his bond-servants, the things which must shortly take place..."

Several things must be noted at this point. The bondservants of Christ are those who are committed to serving the Master. Eight times in the book the admonition "He that hath an ear, let him hear" (2:7; 11, 17, 29; 3:6, 13, 22; 13:9), is found. When a servant is dedicated to the Master, he will listen to his Master's voice. John's purpose was disclosure, hence, Revelation is not a "closed" book, but one that is to be read and understood by the church. The church today does not listen as the bondservant, and so the Revelation remains a mystery to many.

The phrase "must shortly take place" has been the subject of much debate. Walvoord, in explaining it states, "That which Daniel declared would occur 'in the latter days' is here described as 'shortly' (Gr., *en tachei*), that is, 'quickly or suddenly coming to pass', indicating rapidity of execution after the beginning takes place.¹⁰ Strauss agrees, noting the English word "tachometer" and its connotating a device that measures velocity.¹¹

Albert Barnes points out another aspect of this, in that the Greek phrase "*dei genesthai*" "would imply more than mere futurity. The word used ... implies some kind of necessity".¹² Surely, part of what John was conveying was the faithfulness of God; that in the end, what he said would happen, would indeed happen, and with incredible speed. For these early Christians, news about God's final triumph over evil would have given them the hope necessary to hold fast to the faith. God would prevail! Certainly, there hope was for God's judgment to come soon, to alleviate their sufferings, yet from history it is known even today, these events are future. It has become the hope of the twentieth century bondservants: those who listen!

Summary: John records the Word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ in order to present rebuke, but more importantly, provide hope for the afflicted Christian in the Asia Minor region. It is a book that reveals the person, power and program of Jesus Christ, detailing the events which will take place immediately before, during, and following the second coming of Christ, emphasizing God's love and faithfulness towards his own, and stern judgment to those who are not.

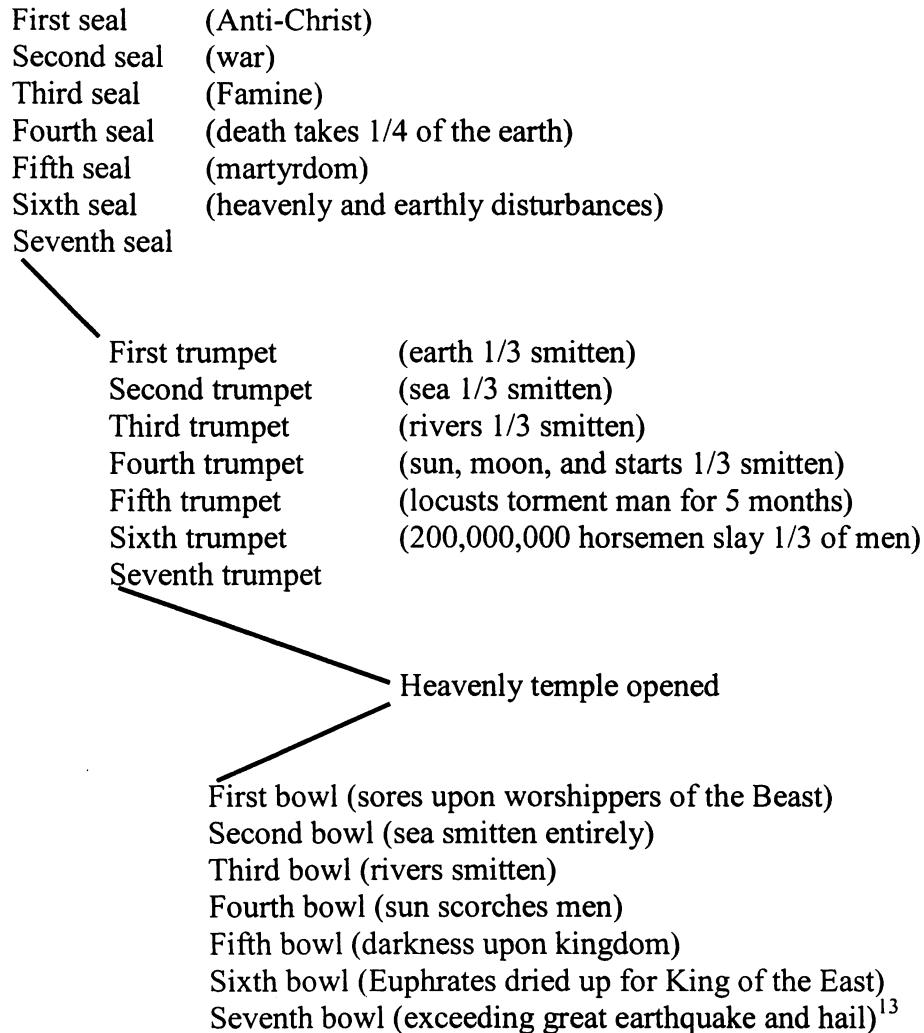
OUTLINE:

- | | |
|--|--------------|
| 1. The Things Which You Have Seen | Chapter 1 |
| A. Prologue | 1:1-3 |
| B. Personal Greetings | 1:4-8 |
| C. Person and Power of Christ | 1:9-19 |
| 2. The Things Which Are | Chapter 2, 3 |
| A. Message to Ephesus | 2:1-7 |
| B. Message to Smyrna | 2:8-11 |
| C. Message to Pergamum | 2:12-17 |
| D. Message to Thyatira | 2:18-29 |
| E. Message to Sardis | 3:1-6 |
| F. Message to Philadelphia | 3:7-13 |
| G. Message to Laodicea | 3:14-22 |
| 3. The Things Which Shall Be Hereafter | Chapter 4-22 |
| A. John's Vision | 4-5 |
| a. God's Majestic Throne | 4:1-11 |
| i. The Door Into Heaven | 4:1 |
| ii. The Throne of Heaven | 4:2 |
| iii. The Person of Heaven | 4:3 |
| iv. The Vision of Heaven | 4:4-11 |
| b. God's Magnificent Scroll | 5:1-14 |
| i. The Seven Sealed Scroll | 5:1-4 |
| ii. The Lamb who is Worthy | 5:5-14 |
| B. The Tribulation | 6-20 |
| a. The Seals Revealed | 6:1-17 |
| i. First Seal: Conquest | 6:1-2 |
| ii. Second Seal: War | 6:3-4 |
| iii. Third Seal: Famine | 6:5-6 |
| iv. Fourth Seal: Death | 6:7-8 |
| v. Fifth Seal: Martyrdom | 6:9-11 |
| vi. Sixth Seal: Physical Disturbances | 6:12-17 |
| b. Interlude: Salvation During the Tribulation | |
| i. Suspension of Judgment | 7:1-3 |
| ii. Salvation of Jews | 7:4-8 |
| iii. Salvation of Jews and Gentiles | 7:9-17 |
| c. The Seventh Seal Unveils Seven Trumpets | 8-9 |
| i. Silence in Heaven | 8:1 |
| ii. Seven Angels Burn Incense | 8:2-5 |
| iii. Seven Trumpets | 8:6-9:21 |
| 1. First Trumpet: Vegetation Smitten | 8:6-7 |
| 2. Second Trumpet: Sea Smitten | 8:8-9 |
| 3. Third Trumpet: Waters Smitten | 8:10-11 |
| 4. Fourth Trumpet: Heavens Smitten | 8:12-13 |

5.	Fifth Trumpet: Men Smitten	9:1-12
6.	Sixth Trumpet: Men Killed	9:13-21
iv.	The Mighty Angel and the Little Scroll	10:1-11
1.	One Angel, Seven Thunders	10:1-4
2.	One Pronouncement, the End of the Age	10:5-7
3.	One Book, Sweet and Bitter	10:8-11
v.	The Two Witnesses	11:1-14
1.	John Measures the Temple	11:1-2
2.	Their Program and Power	11:3-6
3.	Their Presentation	11:7-14
vi.	The Seventh Trumpet	11:15-19
1.	The Trumpet Sounds	11:15
2.	The Twenty-four Elders Worship	11:16-18
3.	The Ark of the Covenant in Heaven	11:19
vii.	The Conflict in Heaven and Earth	12-15
1.	The Woman and the Dragon	12:1-13:1
2.	The Beast from the Sea	13:2-10
3.	The Beast from the Earth	13:11-18
4.	The Lamb and the 144,000	14:1-5
5.	Three Angels and Three Messages	14:6-13
6.	Judgment of the Sickle	14:14-20
7.	Seven Angels and Seven Plagues	15:1-8
viii.	The Seventh Trumpet Heralds Seven Bowls	16:1-21
1.	First Bowl: Sores on the Worshippers of the Beast	16:2
2.	Second Bowl: Death of the Sea	16:3
3.	Third Bowl: Death of the Rivers	16:4-7
4.	Fourth Bowl: The Sun Heats Up	16:8-9
5.	Fifth Bowl: Darkness	16:10-11
6.	Sixth Bowl: Euphrates Dries Up	16:12-16
7.	Seventh Bowl: Great Earthquake	16:17-21
d.	The Fall of Babylon	Chapter 17-18
i.	The Woman on the Beast	17:1-17
ii.	Babylon Falls	18:1-2
e.	The Heavenly Hallelujah	19:1-10
f.	The Second Coming of Christ	19:11-21
4.	The Millennium	
A.	The Millennial Reign of Christ	20:1-6
B.	Satan's Final Rebellion	20:7-11
C.	The Great White Throne of Judgment	20:12-15
5.	The New Heaven and New Earth	21:1-22:6
A.	The New Jerusalem	21:1-27
B.	The River of Life	22:-1-6
6.	The Final Word	22:7-21

This outline is based partly on the chronology of the Tribulation events. A helpful chart in light of this is provided by Gary Cohen in his book, Understanding Revelation.

The Chronology Pattern of the Unloosing of the Judgments



This will be discussed further, however, in order to see the structure of the book, the outline was constructed in such a way as to show the progression of the judgements: i.e. The seven trumpets are the seventh seal.

ARGUMENT:

1. The Things Which You Have Seen - Ch. 1

John records the events of his vision in order "to show God's servants what must soon take place" (Rev. 1:1). As the angel came to him, John realized the importance of what he was seeing and passed this on to his readers in the form of promised blessing to

the one who hear it and take it to heart. John gives greeting to the seven churches and sets the stage for all that he is to write them by introducing the person of Christ as he saw him in Heaven. He records the words of Jesus that commanded him to write what he was to see in order to give the setting, as well as give his letters authority in the seven churches. There is no doubt that the believers knew John, as he was their "brother and companion in suffering" (1:9), and so this letter would have had great impact upon he readers in his day. There is great hope to be found in the Word of God, and John sought to encourage his brothers in this way.

2. The Things Which Are - Ch. 2,3

John writes to seven churches, as he was instructed by Jesus, in order to share with them the message of Jesus. The Basic pattern for each church is one of commendation, complaint and correction (except for Laodicea, which received no commendation). The interpretation of the letters to the churches has received much attention over the years. The theological significance of the seven churches begins with the fact that these were seven literal, geographical churches in the region of Asia Minor (as noted above). Each letter corresponds precisely to the need of the church to which it was addressed. Each church was regarded as a "regular" body of believers and demonstrated conditions relevant to all churches of that time. Some theologians have also seen significance from a dispensational approach in that each of the churches may represent a different period of church history. However, because this is an argument and not a theological interpretation, it will receive only this mention. Walvoord states that "a study of the messages to the seven churches, and the general trend indicated confirms other Scripture that, instead of progressive improvement and a trend toward righteousness and peace in the church age, it may be expected that the age will end in failure as symbolized in the church of Laodicea."¹⁴

Each letter has it's own distinctive characteristics, but the similarities lend themselves to Christ's purpose: encouragement and exhortation. Each letter begins, "I know thy works" and concludes with "he that hath ear, let him hear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the churches. To him that overcomes, I will give the right to eat from the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God."

3. The Things Which Shall Be Hereafter - Ch. 4-22

Here John records the remainder of his vision on the isle of Patmos. As he is transported into Heaven and sees the unfolding of the scroll, he records for his readers all that he is instructed to do, in order to detail the events which will take place immediately before, during and following the second coming of Christ, so that they might be encouraged in that hope, and motivated to lives of servanthood in Christ.

A. John's Vision Ch. 4,5

A fitting beginning to the unfolding of history, John is transported into Heaven to see God in His glory. Unable to describe the one sitting on the throne, because God is the one "whom no one has seen or can see" (1 Timothy 6:16). John can only revel in the light of the glory of God and portray it as reflected brilliance of precious stones with an emerald rainbow encircling the throne. Chapters 4 and 5 are the introduction and background of the tremendous sweep of prophetic events predicted in the rest of the

book. Walvoord states that in order to properly understand the rest of the prophecies, one must see these chapters as future. "A literal interpretation of the prophecies beginning in chapter 4 is not fulfilled in any historic event and must therefore be regarded from the futuristic viewpoint if it is indeed valid prophecy. The event anticipated in the angel's promise to "show thee things which must be hereafter" (4:1), should be regarded as a prediction of events which shall occur at the end of the age."¹⁵

As the four living creatures continually praise the holiness of God, the 24 elders fall down I worship, laying their crowns at His feet. John includes this in his message as a glimpse of Heaven, and of God. The paragraph from 4:6-11 is important to his message because as seen in the letter to Laodicea, the church had forgotten God, his holiness and majesty, his honor and glory. John sought to impress upon his readers just who God is, in order to confirm the letters he had written.

Chapter 5 introduces Christ as the Lamb of God, the only one worthy to take and open the scroll. As the focus of a Christian's faith, Christ is seen in this passage as worthy, deserving, glorified, mighty, and the reader is left awestruck by the marvelousness of His presence in Heaven. The stage is now set for the unveiling of the end of the age.

John introduces the remainder of the book with a look into heaven, at the majesty of God on his throne and the magnificent scroll which will reveal the last days of man on this earth, in order to grab the attention of the reader, so for him who hears and heeds will overcome!

B. The Tribulation

In these chapters, John records the events of his vision as the scroll is unrolled revealing the seven seal judgements, seven trumpet judgements, seven bowl or vial judgements, as well as inserts to the chronological events of the tribulation in order to fully reveal all that God showed to him concerning the end of the age. These events must be seen as future. Dr. Walvoord, in summarizing this in the Bible Knowledge Commentary states:

"The vision in chapters 4-5 is described in 4:1 as "after this," that is, after the revelation to the seven churches... Since the scroll in 5:1 is "sealed", the clear implication is that the seals are broken at a time after chapter 5. All attempts to find fulfillment of the seals in history have failed to yield any uniform interpretation with no two commentators agreeing. Actually there is no sequence in history that clearly corresponds to these events. So it may be concluded that they are yet future."¹⁶

For the churches in 96, this news would have been perilous yet comforting. To see the persecution and plagues of this section would have left them quite alarmed, yet with the promise of final victory, there would have been great hope. John records for the churches these events in order to provide that kind of hope for them, in their own troubled times.

1. The Seals Revealed - Ch.6:1-17

This begins what the Bible calls the Tribulation. The world has seen many disasters during its history, but none like the ones that are to follow. Four horsemen symbolize conquest, war, famine and death. This imagery may be related to four horsemen of Zechariah 1:8-18; 6:108 as seen in the colors of the horses.

The rider on the white horse, the first seal, has been identified as Christ, the Anti-Christ, and the spirit of conquest. Gary Cohen identifies the rider as the Anti-Christ, one who has the bow of warfare, but has not yet received the victor's crown, until he begins his ride. This of course negates the suggestion that Christ is the rider, for he is the conqueror of death, and will himself give out crowns before the tribulation.¹⁷

The fifth seal reveals the martyrs of the Tribulation to that point. This points to the fact that the judgements are successive, not concurrent. The Lord tells them to wait a little while longer, until all that would die as martyrs were there. This is the first real glimpse of the promised hope for the suffering church that John offers to his readers. Jesus promises to avenge the blood of the martyrs, when all of the are present; i.e. when the time has come for his second decent to earth.

The sixth seal unveils a might earthquake, which shakes even the foundation of the universe. The sun is darkened etc., and chaos results on the earth. This is the first indication that God has begun directly intervening into human affairs. The first four are the result of evil man, however, this originates in God as a divine punishment inflicted upon a blasphemous world. It is now that man begins to understand God's judgement, but instead of calling to God for mercy and repentance, he calls upon the rocks to fall on him, and hide him from the face of God. The churches, as they read this must have felt a sense of awe as they saw God's unleashed judgement, but also a sense of fear as they saw their own disobedience in light of John's personal letters to each.

2. Interlude: Salvation During the Tribulation - 7:1-17

John records an interlude to the seal judgments, that God revealed to him concerning 144,000 Jews (12,000 from each tribe) who would be saved during the tribulation, sealed with the seal of God, and would witness, bringing uncountable numbers of Jews and gentiles to salvation. This interlude directs the attention to these two groups without advancing the narrative. The answer to the question, "will people get saved during the tribulation?" is an astounding yes! This insert shows the mercy and grace of God, even in the midst of terrible judgement. The reader can constantly be assured that through all the turmoil of the period, God will yet save an immense throng out of every nation. Chronologically, vs. 1-8 must occur during the early stages of the tribulation, in order for their witness to spread. Yet vs. 9-17 must occur during the second half, probably just before Christ returns to earth. It is a constant reminder of God's grace.

3. The Seventh Seal Unveils Seven Trumpets - Ch. 8-9

John records the opening of the seventh seal and he, along with all of Heaven is silenced for one half hour and then the seven angels are given trumpets. The contents of the seventh seal are not explicitly mentioned yet the seven trumpets are seen immediately after the opening of the seventh seal. Scroggie, in his discussion of the chronological order of the book of Revelation states: "The trumpets do not double back over all or some of the seals, but lie under the sixth seal, and proceed from it."¹⁸ Hence it is incorrect to speak of the trumpets as following the seals, for they are the seventh seal! It must be noted that the trumpet judgements are more severe and intense than the seal, and likewise the bowl judgements are more severe and intense than the trumpet judgements.

John reports these judgements to further the chronology of the end times for his readers. The trumpet judgements become intense as God curses the earth, the water, the heavens and men. The fifth and sixth trumpets introduce the reader to the first and second woes. The fifth trumpet looses demonic torment upon the earth, in forms that John could only describe as locusts, like horses fit for battle (9:7). As fearful as this was, it was only the first of three woes that complete the trumpet judgements. The second woe releases four angels from the Euphrates who go and kill 1/3 of all the men. Never since Noah has such a substantial proportion of the earth's population come under God's righteous judgement. The third woe is the seventh trumpet.

4. The Interlude Between the Sixth and Seventh Trumpet - Ch. 10-11:14

John again places this interlude after the sounding of the sixth trumpet, but before the seventh. The angel that descends, and the seven thunders must have been awesome to John, and too much for the author to record, as he is told to seal it up. John includes this section in order to again encourage his readers that God is indeed in control, as seen in the resurrection of the two witnesses.

The Seventh trumpet is sounded in 11:15-19 and the 24 elders bow down in worship and praise for God's actions. They are seeing the light at the end of the tunnel of persecution. Great hope is to be found in this small section, offering again, encouragement to the readers in Asia Minor.

5. The Conflict of Heaven and Earth - Ch. 12-15

The woman, representing the nation of Israel, gives birth to a son who is swept up into heaven before the red dragon (the Anti-Christ) can kill him. Persecution for three and a half years will follow as the nation is scattered into the wilderness. John gives the readers this detailed account in order to prepare them for what will visit their nation.

The beast that comes out of the sea is none other than the Anti-Christ. The allusion to Daniel's beast (Dan. 7:2-7) is obvious, as the Anti-Christ performs the "miracle" of being raised from the dead. This is used by the Anti-Christ to exalt himself as God in the rebuilt temple in Jerusalem. John offers his explanation of this chapter in verse 10. Patient endurance and faithfulness is John's plea for the saints during this time as he again returns to the theme of his letter.

As an encouragement to chapters 12 and 13, and his admonition in 13:10, John offers a glimpse of heaven and the 144,000 faithful witnesses as they stand with the Lamb of God, Christ himself. The beauty of John's description can not help but encourage and strengthen the reader. The sound of Heaven, as the harpists playing on a harp, the new song, that only the 144,000 could learn, and the title of "first-fruits to God and the lamb" would offer hope to the persecuted reader. The three angels announce that the time has come for God's judgment. The result of this announcement was to be fear and worship of God and a special reward for those Christians who died in the last three and a half years of the tribulation.

The angel calls out to Christ to being the harvesting of the world, like ripe fruit that has begun to rot, the world is an immoral place. Walvoord points out that the passage does not tell us exactly what this first harvest is, but that it may represent the judgements of Revelation in general, whereas the second harvest is the final climactic

one¹⁹ The harvest is certainly a devastating affair, as John points out in vs. 20, the blood rose as high as a horse's bridle for about the length of Palestine from north to south.²⁰ Chapter 15 introduces the last of the three-sevenfold judgments: the bowls of wrath. With these seven, the judgment of God's wrath will be completed (v.1). The promise of John in verses 2 through 4 of the place of privilege of those who had overcome the beast would have offered great motivation to those who were weak in the faith in 96. God's judgment had finally come, and He would be victorious!

6. The Seventh Trumpet Heralds Seven Bowls - Ch 16.

John offers the reader the description of the seven bowl judgments in order to follow up on what he has written in the last four chapters (God's final judgment on earth), as well as to conclude the unrolling of the scroll by the Lord.

The first bowl afflicts the worshippers of the Beast with sores that were ugly and painful. The second bowl causes the sea to turn into blood, and everything in it died. The third bowl destroys the rivers and streams by turning them into blood. In a smaller interlude to the bowl judgments, John offers a glimpse into the mind of those who dwell in heaven, as the angel in charge of the waters declares God as just, giving the earth what they deserve for shedding the blood of His servants. This almost appears for the reader as vengeance and vindication for all that is happening to God's servants.

The fourth bowl causes the sun to heat up and burn those exposed to it. Instead of repenting, people choose to curse God. This becomes a repeating theme throughout the remainder of the judgments. Mankind refuses to repent, even when in extreme agony, and his blasphemy increases as the pain intensifies.

The fifth bowl, judgment is upon the throne of the beast. The result is darkness, pain and the accumulated effect of the preceding judgment when sores were inflicted as in the first vial.

The sixth bowl judgment prepares the way for the kings from the East by drying up the Euphrates river. It is at this point that the forces of Satan combine to prepare the battle of Armageddon. The forces of the kings gather in the valley, expecting to destroy the forces of God.

The seventh bowl judgment unleashes the most violent earthquake of earth history, splitting the great city in three and destroying cities in every nation. Mountains and islands disappear from the earth, so that they can not be found. In conjunction with this great earthquake, 100 pound hailstones fall on men from the sky. Again, they cursed God instead of repenting.

7. The fall of Babylon - Ch. 17-18

John records the women on the Beast and the fall of Babylon in order to share with the reader the beginning of the end of the Revelation of Christ. Chapter 17 opens with one of the angels of the bowl judgments inviting John to see the punishment of the great prostitute. The identity of the women seems to point to religion that has left the true God and committed fornication with the kings and people of the earth and whose fruit has been the persecution of the true saints (17:1-6). This final appearance sees that harlot dressed in scarlet and purple with gold and jewels, signifying that up to this point, she has been successful at her task of destroying people with her harlotry. The beast, upon whom she rides, is none other than the ruler who is empowered and ruled by Satan himself. The

seven hills are the seven kings, of which five have already come and gone. This points to the Roman Empire in which John found himself in 96. Domitian, the emperor who was persecuting the church, was sixth ruler. The seventh ruler is not identified according to Walvoord.²¹ The eighth king that verse 11 adds is obviously identical to the final world ruler, the man who heads up the final world empire destroyed by Christ at his second coming.

The ten horns are ten kings according to 17:12. Cohen states: "It is clear that the ten horns...are the ten kings of the Revived Roman Empire in the endtime."²² Whoever they are, they have one thing in mind, and they surrender all their power to the beast in order to fulfill it: the destruction of Israel. At the beginning of the seven-year tribulation, these ten nations will support the beast (v. 13) who will make a covenant with Israel.²³ These ten nations will eventually destroy the harlot (v. 16-18), possibly at the midpoint of the seven years, when the Anti-Christ declares himself as God. The last verses of chapter 17 reveal to the reader that the woman is also the great city of Babylon. This indicates the combination of religious and political power that will be characteristic of the false church in the last days.

Chapter 18 reveals the destruction of political Babylon as the angel cries, "Fallen, fallen is Babylon the Great!" (18:2). After the destruction of the harlot, the Anti-Christ not only represents the sole political structure on earth, but the only religious structure also. The remainder of chapter 18 is a vivid description of the city and the atrocities associated with it that warrant its destruction.

8. The Heavenly Hallelujah - Ch. 19:1-10

With the harlot and the city destroyed, the citizens of heaven shout out a great hallelujah. The twenty-four elders bowed down before God (v.4) and the wedding supper of the Lamb is announced. John writes these things as he was commanded in order to show that it is God who is ultimately responsible for the fall of evil in the world, and is worthy to be praised for his mighty works.

9. The Second Coming of Christ - Ch 19:11-21

As John saw Heaven open, he saw prophetically Christ's second coming and the events which follow it. The end of the age is at hand. This must have filled his readers with great anticipation as they read of the final victory of Christ over the evil forces of this world. Their persecution was not in vain!

John records for the reader, the appearance of Christ as a just judge, ready to make war, descending on a white horse. The Anti-Christ and false prophet are thrown into the fiery lake of burning sulphur. The armies will be destroyed so that the vultures will not be able to eat all of the flesh! At this point, the defeat of the earth's wicked will be complete and will be finalized as later judgments search out the unsaved in other parts of the earth and also kill them. (Matt. 24:31-45).²⁴

C. The Millennium - Ch. 20:1-15

This chapter presents the fact that Jesus will reign on the earth for the period of 1000 years. A literal interpretation offers no other understanding other than the fact that these are a literal 1000 years, where Christ will physically reign on the earth. John

records this in order to give the plan of God to his readers, so as to give them hope for the future.

These events follow those of chapter 19 (as 21-22 follow 20). Those on the thrones indicate that the saved of history are resurrected to live through the millennium, while those who are in the thrones are those who persevered through the tribulation, even to death. Those who "did not come to life until the thousand years were ended" are the unsaved of the world: they will be judged at the end of the millennium.

At the end of the thousand years, Satan will be loosed from his prison and will once again attempt to take over the kingdom. This final rebellion will deceive people from all over the world and bring them to Jerusalem. They will, however, be destroyed by fire from heaven and Satan himself will be cast into the lake of fire, the place of eternal torment.

The second resurrection takes place, where the wicked of history are raised and judged at the Great White Throne. They are then cast into the lake of fire with Satan, the Anti-Christ and the false prophet. This is the second death.

D. The New Heaven and New Earth

The familiar words "I saw" introduce these two chapters that describe the creation of the new heaven and earth. John records these events as a proper conclusion to the book, allowing the readers to know the final outcome, in order that they might be encouraged and convicted in their Christian walk.

Summary:

John, in obeying the voice of the angel in chapter 1, outlines for the readers the end of history in order to present rebuke, but more importantly, provide hope for the afflicted Christians in the Asia Minor region. It is a book that reveals the person, power and program of Jesus Christ, detailing the events which will take place immediately before, during and following the second coming of Christ, emphasizing God's love and faithfulness towards his own, and stern judgment to those who are not.

Endnotes:

¹ Lehman Strauss, The Book of the Revelation, p. 17.

² John 13:23.

³ Henry C. Thiessen, Introduction to the New Testament, p. 317.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ John F. Walvoord, Revelation, p. 14.

⁷ Albert Barnes, Barnes' Notes on the New Testament, p. 1531.

⁸ Ibid. p. 1543.

⁹ NIV Study Bible, p. 1296.

¹⁰ Walvoord, p. 35.

¹¹ Strauss, p.21.

¹² Gary Cohen, Understanding Revelation, p. 98.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Walvoord, p. 53.

¹⁵ Ibid. p. 102.

¹⁶ John Walvoord, "Revelation", The Bible Knowledge Commentary, Vol. 2, p. 946.

¹⁷ Cohen, p. 88.

¹⁸ Walvoord, Revelation, p. 150.

¹⁹ Ibid., p 222