

Study Guide for the Book of Revelation

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Outline of Revelation

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 - B. Establishment of the New Jerusalem (21-22)

Interpreting Revelation

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1. Revelation is the story of Jesus Christ (1:1). Keep your eyes on who he is and you'll not go far a field in your exegesis.
2. Revelation is an apocalypse (1:1). Therefore we must expect:
 - a. Eschatological perspective. This is not so much a prediction of future events as it is a radical expectation that you are living in the last days. That changes how one talks, walks, believes, and prays.
 - b. Wild, figurative language that uses numbers, colors, and hyperbolic beasts and turmoil to make a non-literal point.
 - c. Cryptic language to speak only to insiders.
3. Revelation is performative not merely informative. That is, the goal is not so much to explain the future as it is to alter the present. The primary purpose of this book is to encourage believers to hang on to Jesus. In short, it is a guide for living through terrible times (1:3)
4. Revelation is a promise (1:3, cf. 14:13; 16:15; 19:9; 20:6; 22:7; 22:14). It is the only book that comes with this kind of "money-back" guarantee. The general story line is simple: We win. It's closest relative is the book of Acts. Both tell of the victory of Jesus only Acts is history, whereas Revelation is apocalypse; Acts centers on the victory of the Holy Spirit through the church, Revelation centers on the defeat of Satan in the world.
5. Revelation was applicable to the first century (1:4).
6. Revelation was written for tribulation times (1:9). Thus, those who are familiar with suffering will likely have a better handle on this book than others. In this way it is similar to Job. Existentialism is important to interpretation of this piece. Revelation is not a calendar but a template. When placed over any period of suffering it makes sense out of life that seems to be catastrophic and out of control.
7. Revelation is a book of victory, not fear (1:17). The only ones who should be frightened by this book or unbelievers (who slough it off) and nominal believers who are lukewarm. They should be terrorized into worshiping Jesus.
8. Revelation tells of past, present and future events (1:19). Where we draw the line here is the key.
9. Revelation is cyclical. We come to what looks like the end eight different times (6:12-17; 8:5; 10:6-7; 11:15-19; 14:7, 14-20; 16:14-18; 19-22).
10. It tells of the coming of Jesus, "I am coming" (2:5, 16; 3:11; 16:15; 22:7, 12, 20).

THE SEVEN CHURCHES OF REVELATION 2-3

| CHURCHES | PICTURE OF JESUS | PRAISE | REPROACH | PUNISHMENT | PROMISE |
|---------------------|---|---|---|---|--|
| Ephesus | Holds 7 stars, walks among the 7 lamps | Hard work, perseverance, i.d. & intolerant of wicked men & false teachers | Forsaken 1 st love — remember & repent | Remove lamp | Eat from the tree of life which is in the paradise of God |
| Smyrna | 1 st and last, dead and rose | Affliction and poverty, slander, therefore faithful | | | Crown of life and not hurt by the 2 nd death |
| Pergamum | Has a sharp, double-edged sword | Remain true amidst Satan's throne | Teaching of Balaam & Nicolaitans; sexually immoral and eat foods sacrificed to idols — repent | Come and fight with the sword of my mouth | Hidden manna, white stone, new name known only by those who receive it |
| Thyatira | Son of God, blazing eyes, feet of bronze | Deeds, love, faith, service, perseverance, growth | Tolerate Jezebel, sexually immoral, and eat foods sacrificed to idols --repent | Bed of suffering, kill children according to your deeds | authority over the nations |
| Sardis | Holds 7 spirits and 7 stars | A few are unsoiled | Dead and incomplete deeds — wake up, remember and repent | come like a thief | walk with Christ, dressed in white, name in the book of life (acknowledged by God) |
| Philadelphia | Holy and true, key of David, what he opens no one shuts | Kept word and not denied Jesus | | | Make false Jews acknowledge them, keep them from trial, make them a pillar, get a new name — God's |
| Laodicea | Amen, faithful, true, ruler of God's creation | | Lukewarm and poor — buy gold, white clothes and salve (= repent) | Spit you out | Table fellowship with Jesus; reign with Jesus on a throne |

A Comparative Chart of God's Judgments

| | Seven Seals (Rev 6; 8) Cf. Zech 1:8-12; 6:1-8 | Seven Trumpets (Rev 8-9; 11) Cf. Exo 8-9 | Seven Bowls (Rev 16) |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | White Horse; rider with a bow War | Hail & fire mixed with blood 1/3 of the vegetation destroyed | Poured on the Earth Sores on those marked by the beast (Exo 9:10f) |
| 2 | Red Horse, rider with a sword Murder | Blazing mountain 1/3 of the sea, its creatures and ships | Poured on the Sea Everything in the Sea died (Exo 7:19ff) |
| 3 | Black Horse, rider with scales Famine | Falling star 1/3 of rivers and springs | Poured on rivers and springs Drinking water turned to blood |
| 4 | Pale Horse, rider named death Pestilence | Sun, moon & stars Loss of 1/3 of the lights | Poured on the Sun People scorched with fire |
| 5 | "How Long Lord?" Martyrs | "Star" opens the Abyss; Smoke and scorpion locusts come out 5 months of the sting-sickness for those not sealed by God 1ST WOE IS PAST | Poured on the beast's throne His kingdom plunged into darkness; men gnawed their tongues and cursed God because of their sores. |
| 6 | Earthquake, Galactic turmoil Natural Disasters; Nations Overthrown; or Judgment | Release of the four angels at the Euphrates & 200 million troops 1/3 of mankind killed by fire, smoke and sulfur 2nd Woe is Past | Poured on Euphrates river; the water tried up to prepare the way for the kings of the East Three frog-demons gather the nations for battle against God |
| 7 | Silence & Seven Trumpets | Loud voices in heaven; God's temple in heaven opened Judgment | Poured into the air Lightning, thunder, earthquake |

JESUS UNVEILED THROUGH REVELATION (1:1)

- 1:5 Jesus is the faithful witness, firstborn from the dead, ruler of the kings, blood liberator
- 1:13 One like a Son of Man (cf. Dan 7:13–14)
- 1:13–15 Jesus is the King, priest, warrior, God
- 1:16 He holds the seven stars, and a doubled edged sword comes out his mouth
- 1:17 Jesus is the first and the last, cf. 22:13
- 1:18 Jesus has the keys to death and Hades (cf. ‘key of David’, 3:7), he is the living one
- 5:5 Jesus alone has all authority for judgment,
- 5:5-6 The Lion is the Lamb and the Lamb is the Shepherd (7:17)
- 5:6 He is God (in the center of the throne). With all power (7 horns) and all spiritual insight (7 eyes). He is worshiped as God (5:11-14)
- 5:8 He receives the prayers of the saints
- 6:16-17 He is frightening in his retribution!
- 12:5 He rules with an iron scepter
- 19:11-16 Jesus returns as a victorious and powerful warrior. His name is ‘word of God’
- 19:16 He is the ‘king of kings and lord of lords’
- 21:22-23 Jesus and God are the temple and the light of the New Jerusalem.

PIVOTAL VERSES FOR INTERPRETATION:

- *Rev 1:7 Look, he is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him, even those who pierced him; and all the peoples of the earth will mourn because of him. So shall it be! Amen.* One of the themes of this book is the woes for those who oppose Christ. That is, they are going to get it when he returns.
- *Rev 1:17 Do not be afraid. I am the First and the Last. Rev 22:13 I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End.* Here we have the bookends of this vision. Jesus stands center stage. When we learn that he is the main attraction, we find comfort in the midst of tribulation.
- *Rev 1:19 Write, therefore, what you have seen, what is now and what will take place later.* This is a rough sketch of the chronology of the book.
- *Rev 3:10 Since you have kept my command to endure patiently, I will also keep you from the hour of trial that is going to come upon the whole world to test those who live on the earth.* This book is a promise to those who hold on and do not abandon Christ when they go through suffering. We will be spared the wrath of God and much of the suffering inflicted upon this earth.
- *Rev 6:10-11 They called out in a loud voice, "How long, Sovereign Lord, holy and true, until you judge the inhabitants of the earth and avenge our blood?" Then each of them was given a white robe, and they were told to wait a little longer, until the number of their fellow servants and brothers who were to be killed as they had been was completed."* Often the righteous suffer along with the wicked the calamities of God as well as persecution from the world. It feels like God has abandoned us. He has not! Hold on and you will see God's justice.
- *Rev 7:3 Do not harm the land or the sea or the trees until we put a seal on the foreheads of the servants of our God.* God's people are exempt from some of the judgment God inflicts upon the earth.
- *Rev 9:20 The rest of mankind that were not killed by these plagues still did not repent of the work of their hands; they did not stop worshiping demons, and idols of gold, silver, bronze, stone and wood--idols that cannot see or hear or walk.* The suffering God allows to take place on the earth is (1) to call men to repentance, (2) harden the unrepentant, (3) justify God when he really has to get tough and all Hell breaks loose (cf. Rev 16:5-6, 9).
- *Rev 13:10 If anyone is to go into captivity, into captivity he will go. If anyone is to be killed with the sword, with the sword he will be killed. This calls for patient endurance and faithfulness on the part of the saints.* We cannot control the temporal destiny of saints who are subject to the beastly governments of this world because we cannot speed up the "42 months." But we will overcome the beast by patient endurance in suffering. (Cf. 14:12)

- *Rev 18:4 Then I heard another voice from heaven say: "Come out of her, my people, so that you will not share in her sins, so that you will not receive any of her plagues.* Apparently, the saints are not kept from suffering but are commanded to avoid immorality.
- *Rev 21:22-23 I did not see a temple in the city, because the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple. The city does not need the sun or the moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and the Lamb is its lamp.* So here, we finally are . . . Eden Restored. This is the goal and the heart of God all along.
- *Rev 22:12 "Behold, I am coming soon! My reward is with me, and I will give to everyone according to what he has done.* This book is primarily designed to change the way we live and worship God.

Questions over Revelation

8:13; 9:12 — What are the three Woes? *The first woe appears to be the first five trumpets (and bowls ?). The second is the sixth and the third is the seventh (i.e. Judgment).*

8:1 — What does the silence in heaven for ½ hour symbolize? *Likely the astonishment at the punishment God is about to inflict. It may be similar to the silence in a court room before the verdict is read.*

9:2-11 — What are these locust-scorpions? What is the sting they inflict on the unmarked? They are Destroyers, but why? Is this secularism/paganism? A devastation that comes out of the abyss? *The locusts are a play off of the Egyptian plagues, combined with Parthian equestrian invaders, both of which were highly feared at the time (cf. Joel 2:5). Their torture of five months covers the full life-span. In other words, this punishment is extraordinarily long and severe. The message is that God is going to use demonic forces to torture unbelievers in the most frightening terms you can imagine.*

9:13-16 — What is the job of these four angels? *They apparently have the power to summon some sort of army whether they are fire-spitting demons or some human army pictured in wildly frightening terms, to annihilate a third of mankind. It is likely, considering that they are bound and holy angels never are, that they are demonic hosts God uses to inflict punishment (vs. 7:1).*

9:17-19 — What are these horses? What do they represent? How do they differ from the locusts other than they have the power to kill? *These horses, combined with their riders (the two are indistinct), play off the Parthian warriors, the greatest threat to the Roman Empire and the greatest Jewish hope for liberation.*

10:2, 5, 8 — Why is the angel standing on both the sea and the land? What does this represent? *Dominion over all the earth both land and sea. After all, both land and sea will receive the strokes of God's wrath.*

10:3-4 — What are these seven thunders? What is it they said? *The seven thunders likely represent the completion of God's declaration of judgment. The fact that we are not allowed to know what they said is instructive. We can't know all involved in our suffering but we know from whence it comes.*

11:3 — Who are these two witnesses (literal or figurative)? *Clearly they represent Moses and Elijah (v. 6), the two great prophets of the O.T. We should not expect their return, but a prophetic voice of judgment on the earth from wherever that comes — two literal figures, the church, OT/NT, etc.*

13:3, 12-15 — What does this fatal wound of the beast symbolize? And how is it healed? *The precise phrase is also found at 5:6 in reference to the Lamb. There is some sort of fabricated imitation going on here. This may have reference to Nero who committed suicide in AD 68 [Seutonius Nero] and was later believed to have risen from the dead.*

13:18 — What is the mark of the beast? *The idea is identifying one's allegiance either to God (7:2) or the beast (13:18). 3 Maccabees 2:28-30 gives an account of how this kind of i.d. had been used before. This is not likely a physical mark but an outward sign of conformity.*

14:3 — Why could no one learn this song except the 144,000? *This likely signifies that no one understands the nature of redemption except the redeemed.*

14:10 — Will hell be open to the view of Angels and Jesus eternally?

14:19-20 — What is the significance of 1600 stadia? *1600 is the square of 40, the traditional number for punishment (Num 14:33; Deut 25:3; Gen 6-9, etc.)*

17:7-14 — Who are these kings? *Rev 17:8 is almost certainly a play off of Nero-redivivus myth and 1:8 "I am the Alpha and the Omega," says the Lord God, "who is, and who was, and who is to come, the Almighty." In other words, this is the king who tries to imitate Christ but whose doom is certain. The numbers 7 and 10 are not precise numbers but eschatological imagery. Seven represents completeness of God's dealings with men and ten seems represent "full measure." Thus John views most of the emperors to have already come and the time is short before the end (according to Beasley Murray). Perhaps a better solution is to view each king as a major anti-god kingdom: Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Persia, Greece, Rome (Walvoord). Numbers 7 & 8 are yet to come. Although Strauss thinks it may be seven Emperors (p. 249). The number 10 is adopted from Dan 7:7ff. They represent the line of kings leading up to the antichrist.*

17:15-18 — To what political events could this possibly refer? Walvoord suggests the woman (ecumenicalism and papal power) will be destroyed by the anti-christ in the middle of the tribulation. Strauss believes it is ancient Rome. However, Beasley-Murray points out that if that is what John believed (and he thinks it is), then John was wrong. Although he shows that John is combining three cities to represent false religion. Babylon was the city that sat on many waters, Jerusalem was the seat of those who falsely claimed to be God's people and Rome was seat of political power and the place of seven hills.

REVEALED SYMBOLS

| Text | Symbol | Interpretation |
|--------------|--------------------------|---|
| 1:20 | Seven Stars | Seven messengers |
| 1:20 | Seven lamp stands | Seven churches |
| 5:6 | Seven Eyes of Jesus | Seven Spirits of God |
| 5:8 | Bowls of Incense | Prayers of the Saints |
| 12:9 | The Great Dragon/Serpent | Satan |
| 12:17 | Offspring of the Woman | Those who obey God |
| 13:18 | Mark of the Beast | Man's number, 666 |
| 16:13 | Frog spirits | Spirits of demons with deceitful miracles |
| 17:8(11) | Beast | The 8 th king who was; is not; Abyss |
| 17:9 | Seven heads | Seven hills/seven kings, five fell, one is, and one who is to come remains briefly. |
| 17:12 | Ten horns | Ten brief kings |
| 17:15 | Water | Multiplicity of people and language |
| 17:18 | Woman | The Great city — Babylon the Great (In the first century, only one adequately fulfilled this description) |
| 19:8 | Fine Linen | Righteous acts of the saints |
| 20:2 | Dragon | Satan |
| 20:4-5 | Reigning with Christ | The 1 st resurrection = conversion (cf. 20:6) |
| 20:14 & 21:8 | Lake of Fire | The 2 nd death |
| 21:9-10 | Bride | New Jerusalem |

Images to Examine

- (1:4) **Seven Spirits** (1:4; 3:1; 4:5; 5:6) -- used only in Revelation. According to 1:4 it looks like the Holy Spirit as part of the Trinity. In 4:5 the “Seven Spirits” are seven lamps and in 5:6 they are seven eyes (cf. Zech 4:10), (and horns?). They are possessed by Jesus (3:1; 5:6).

- (1:10) **Loud Voice** [φωνὴν μεγάλην], used 24 times (verses) in Revelation. Apparently indicates either the intensity of the messenger or more likely, the magnitude of the message.

- (1:12) **Seven Golden Lampstands** -- This seven pronged lamp (Num 8:2) was part of the furnishings of the Holy place along with the table of show bread (Exo 26:35). It was made out of pure gold and was for giving light (Exo 35:14), symbolic of the Holy Spirit (Zech 4:1-7). Here they represent the seven churches (Rev 1:20).

- (1:13) **Robe** reaching down to his feet and a **golden sash** --This appears to be the garb of the priest in the temple (Exo 28:4; 29:5), and indeed, the very dress of God in the temple (Isa 6:1). The only difference is the priests’ sash was of blue linen, Jesus’ is of gold.

- (1:14) **White hair** -- This is a picture of God himself from Daniel 7:9 *"As I looked, thrones were set in place, and the Ancient of Days took his seat. His clothing was as white as snow; the hair of his head was white like wool. His throne was flaming with fire, and its wheels were all ablaze."* (For “Ancient of Days” see also Daniel 7:13 & 22).

- (1:14) **Eyes of blazing fire** -- Rev 1:14; 2:18; 19:12. Fire typically indicates judgment. Thus, this seems to symbolize the coming judgment of Jesus as he views the affairs of earth.

- (1:15) **Bronze feet** -- Bronze represents value (third behind gold and silver); strength, since weapons of war are made from it; and holiness, since many of the utensil of the temple are made from bronze.

- (1:15) **Many Waters** -- Its primary significance is its deafening sound (Rev 1:15; 14:2; 19:6), indeed it describes the very voice of God (Eze 43:2) and the movement of the great creatures (Eze 1:24). But rushing waters also symbolize judgment as in the destruction of a flood (Job 20:28).

- (1:16) **Stars** --These are the “angels” or better, the “messengers” (i.e. preachers) of the seven churches (1:20). Most of the time, stars in the bible are used to show the multiplicity of some entity. Here, however, the symbolism is that of “light” (cf. Dan 12:3; Phil 2:15). Individuals who are moral guides are sometimes called “stars” whether the influence is good (Num 24:17; Rev 22:16) or bad (Isa 14:12; Jude 1:13).

- (1:16) **Double edged sword** -- an allusion to the Word of God (Eph 6:17; Heb 4:12). In other words, Jesus’ words are God’s words.

- (1:16) **Shining face** -- Moses' face shined after being in the presence of God (Exo 34:29-30, 35). More to the point, however, is the plea of the Psalms (8 X's), for God to make his face shine on us and thus bless us with his radiant goodness.
- (1:17) **Fell down as though dead** — This is the typical response to a non-incarnational appearance of Jesus (Eze 1:25-28; Dan 7:13-14; 10:4-9).
- (2:7) **Paradise of God** — (cf. Lk 23:43; 2 Cor 12:4), the word itself means a garden, park or even a hunting ground. In Scripture it indicates the rest for good disembodied souls, and specifically in the presence of God.
- (2:11) **Second Death** — (cf. 20:6, 14; 21:8), this is the lake of fire (20:14), that is, hell.
- (2:17) **Manna** — This mysterious sustenance was provided by God from heaven (Exo 16:31-35; Num 11:6-9). Jesus claimed that he was like manna in so much as he was spiritual sustenance provided by God from heaven (Jn 6:48-58). Here, then, overcomers are promised eschatological sustenance as a reward for faithfulness.
- (2:17) **White Stone** — This appears to be a reference to the Urim and Thummim. Twelve stones were engraved with the twelve names of the sons of Israel. This priestly vest was used for making decisions (Exo 28:9-14). The implication is that whoever has his name on the vest is part of God's people.
- (2:28) **Morning Star** — (Isa 14:12; 2 Pet 1:19; Rev 2:28; 22:16). It has something to do with brightness and represents great leadership. It is a description of Jesus at least at Rev 22:16.
- (3:4) **White** — This is the color of victory (2:17; 3:4-5; 6:2, 11; 19:11, 14), purity (1:14; 3:18; 7:9, 13-14; 19:14) and authority (4:4; 14:14; 20:11), all of which go hand in hand!
- (3:8) **Open door** that no one can shut -- The most likely connection is with Mt 25:10-11 and Lk 13:25, parables of a wedding banquet. Invited guests walk through an open door. Those who are rejected have the door shut on them.
- (3:5) **The Book of Life** — (Psa 69:28; Phil 4:3; Rev 3:5; 13:8; 17:8; 20:12; 20:15; 21:27). This is a registry of God's people, apparently written at the creation of the world.
- (4:3) **Jasper & Carnelian** — The mention of these stones signifies beauty, wealth, and perhaps also translucence. That is the Wow, Oh, and Oooh of heaven.
- (4:5) **Lightning** is a sign of judgment and comes with the territory in the presence of God.
- (4:6) **Sea of glass** — glass represents purity (Rev 21:18) and transparency (Rev 21:21). The sea seems to represent separation. In 15:2 this glassy sea mixed with fire appears to separate the wicked from the righteous. Here in 4:6 the sea separates John from the transcendent God (cf. Eze 1:22). It is not until Rev 21:1 that there is no longer any sea. While the sea brings opportunity for commerce and wealth, it was also extremely dangerous and took the lives of a lot of people.

- (4:6) **Four living creatures** — These are apparently some kind of servants of God whose primary task appears to be proclamation and praise of God (Eze 1:5; Rev 4:6; 4:8; 5:6; 5:8; 5:14-6:1; 6:6; 7:11; 14:3; 15:7; 19:4). These look an awful lot like the four creatures of Eze 1:5-14 and the Seraphs of Isa 6:2. In fact, there appears to be a deliberate connection between Rev 4-5 and Eze 1-3: The four creatures (Eze 1:4-15); the sea of glass (Eze 1:22); a sapphire throne (Eze 1:26); the appearance of the Son of Man (Eze 1:26-27); a rainbow (1:28); A commission to preach (Eze 2:3-8); a two-sided scroll (Eze 2:10) and a bitter/sweet scroll the prophet had to eat (Eze 3:1-3).
- (5:5) **The root of David** — This is a symbol of the Messiah, fulfilled in Jesus (Isa 11:10; 53:2; Rom 11:17-18; 15:12; Rev 22:16).
- (5:8) **Harp** — Instruments for making loud festive music (Rev 14:2). Both the four living creatures (5:8) and the martyrs (15:2) have them in Revelation.
- (6:2) **White Horse** — White appears to be a symbol of victory and purity (see above). The horse is a symbol of either war or the transportation of a king. Here the horses clearly symbolize war. They most certainly reflect the same idea as Zech 1:8 & 6:2 — God's harbingers of judgment.
- (6:4) **Red** may indicate the guilt of sin (Isa 1:18), but here refers to bloodshed (Isa 63:2; Nah 2:3).
- (6:12) **Earthquake** — This is an eschatological sign of God's judgment (Isa 13:13; 29:6; Eze 38:19; Hag 2:6; Zech 14:4; Mt 24:7; Mk 13:8; Lk 21:11).
- (6:12-13) **Galactic signs** — This looks a lot like Joel 2:31. These signs are a harbinger of God's judgment which appears to be in force throughout the Christian dispensation (Acts 2:20). In prophetic vocabulary, these heavenly signs are used to describe the downfall of great nations (Babylon, Isa 13:10; Tyre, Isa 24:21-23; Egypt, Eze 32:7). Here, however, appears to be the culmination of the age as God comes in judgment and rattles the earth.
- (7:1) **Four Angels/Four winds** — These angels seem to be God's harvesters that have the power to gather the elect (Mt 24:31) or to bring destruction to the wicked if they let the four winds go (Jer 49:36; Dan 7:2).
- (8:1) **Seven** — It appears often in the context of judgment and cleansing. It may signify four (humanity) and three (divinity) as they come together.
- (8:5) **Censer** — These censers were filled with incense and represent the prayers of God's people. This censer, the prayers of the saints, is hurled to the earth and brings about God's wrath on behalf of the martyred saints. This is God's answer to the prayers of 6:10.
- (8:5) **Thunder/lightning/earthquake** — these three are used together only in Rev 8:5; 11:19; & 16:18. Each time they indicate the final judgment.

- (8:7) **Hail & Fire** — this takes us back to the plagues of Egypt (Exo 9:19-34) when God inflicted hail along with lightning flashes that destroyed the vegetation of the land.
- (9:1) **Abyss** — This bottomless pit is the place where Demons are imprisoned (Lk 8:31) and where Satan will be imprisoned (Rev 20:1-3). Out of the Abyss comes smoke and locust-scorpions (Rev 9:2-3), the Destroyer angel (Rev 9:11); and the beast (Rev 11:7; 17:8).
- (10:1-2) **Mighty Angel** — a number of elements reminds us of the throne room of chapter 4 — rainbow, shouting, robed in a cloud, face like the sun, legs of fiery pillars. In other words, this guy comes straight from God. There are also several strong ties here to Ezekiel [a rainbow (1:28); A commission to preach (Eze 2:3-8); a two-sided scroll (Eze 2:10) and a bitter/sweet scroll the prophet had to eat (Eze 3:1-3)]. The message Ezekiel had to preach, however, is one of doom, not of repentance. This does not appear to be “the gospel” but a prophecy of doom (10:11).
- (11:3-4) **The Two Witnesses** — These two olive branches and two lampstands come straight out of Zechariah 4:3, 11-14. They are described as the two servants anointed to serve the Lord of the Earth. Presumably they are the ones who announce the content of the bitter-sweet scroll (Rev 10:10-11) which may be the same as the flying scroll (Zech 5:1-3). At Rev 1:12, 20, these lampstands are the seven churches and in Zechariah (4:1-7) there is a strong connection to the Holy Spirit. Of course the allusion to two witnesses reminds us of Moses’ injunction for a legal witness. Thus, this may represent a Spirit-empowered legal witness proclaiming God’s judgment on the earth.
- (11:5-6) **Fire comes from their mouths** — This is a description of God’s spoken judgment (2 Sam 22:9). This power is also given to his prophet (Jer 5:14). Allusion is also made to the power God gave Elijah to shut up the rain and Moses to strike with plagues.
- (13:1-2) **Beast from the sea** — This looks an awful lot like Dan 7:1-7 with the four kingdoms. That makes sense in light of (a) water symbolizing many peoples, tribes and tongues (17:15) and the description of the beast as a leopard, bear and lion. He also appears to be trying to imitate the Christ: (a) 10 diadems (13:1 vs 19:12); (b) blasphemous name (13:1 vs 19:11-12, 16); (c) Causes men to worship Satan (13:4 vs 1:6); (d) a seemingly fatal wound (13:3, 12, 14); (d) he has the power and throne and authority of the devil (13:2 vs. 12:5, 10).
- (13:1) **Ten horns and Seven heads** — This connects the dragon (12:3) with the beast. In Daniel 7:24, the 10 horns represented the 10 kings of the Seleucid line and the seven heads came from the four beasts the third of which had four heads. Here the beast certainly represents the anti-god Roman Empire and it’s seven heads are its emperors.

- (13:11) **The second beast** (cf. Enoch 60:7ff.; Baruch 29:4)— this appears to be the false prophet (16:13) or false religion which exercises the power of these beastly governments whether that be atheistic humanism, voodoo, Muslim, Hindu, etc. He looks like the beast of Dan 8:3ff. In other words, the real power behind these nations is Satan. Satan and these two beasts seem to form an evil trinity in opposition to God, Jesus and the Holy Spirit. And they mark their men just as God marks His (13:16ff, vs. 7:3).
- (14:8) **Babylon the Great** — appears to be Jerusalem (a symbol of national Israel) the great prostitute who seduces the nations (16:19; 17:1-2, 5)
- (14:10) **The wine of God's fury** — this is reminiscent of Jeremiah 25:15 when God made the nations drink of the wine of his wrath.
- (15:3) **The song of Moses** — Cf. Exo 15:1-17, a praise to God for his victory over Pharaoh and Egypt, the symbol of the oppressors of God's people. The song of the Lamb is perhaps Rev 5:9-10.
- (15:7) **Seven bowls** — We have moved from seals to trumpets to bowls or more accurately, cups (cf. Isa 51:17ff.; Jer 25:15ff.). The seals were a revelation, the trumpets were warnings, but the bowls are pure punishment. The seals were things suffered by the saints along with the rest of the earth (6:10). These are things inflicted by mankind on itself as well as nature. The trumpets are inflicted on unbelievers (7:3, 8:3, 9:4). These are things suffered through God's angels and demons. The bowls appear to be inflicted by God's own hand (16:9).
- (17:1) **The great Prostitute** — This almost surely has reference to Israel. Metaphorical uses of prostitute in the OT refer primarily to Israel (cf. Eze 23:1-44; Hos 4:11-19). But that does not necessarily mean ethnic Israel, but those who falsely claim affinity with God. Just as the Beast tries to imitate Christ, so this woman is a cheap imitation of the bride of Jesus (the church; chapter 13). Cf. Beasley-Murray, pp. 250-251.
- (17:1-2) **Seated on Many Waters** — that is a good geographical description of Babylon and all its rivers and canals. But in 17:15, the interpretation is given of peoples, multitudes, nations and languages.
- (17:3) **The scarlet beast** — With its seven heads and ten horns and blasphemous names this is clearly the beast of Rev 13:1.
- (20:8) **Gog & Magog** — This story from Eze 38-39 tells of how God will summon the peoples of the North to attack his people only to find themselves destroyed. This is what the end will be like.
- (21:1) **New heaven and new earth** — (Isa 65:17; 66:22; 2 Pet 3:13), talk about renovation!

Symbolism in Apocalyptic Literature

1. Beasts = Empires/Kingdoms
2. Stars = messengers/angels
3. Woman = people/city
4. Horns = power
5. Eye = vision/knowledge
6. Wings = Mobility
7. Trumpets = Superhuman/divine voice
8. Sharp Sword = Word of God
9. White = Purity (Rev. 1:14; 2:17; 3:4-5; 6:11; 7:9, 13; 14:14; 19:14)
10. Palm Leaves – Triumphal Entry/Victory Parade
11. Crowns = Kingship Victory
12. Purple = Royalty/luxury/debauchery (Rev. 17:3-4; 18:12, 16).
13. Black = Death, disaster, punishment (Rev. 6:5, 12).
14. Red = Blood/war (Rev. 6:4; 8:7, 8; 9:17; 11:6; 12:3; see also 1:5; 5:9; 6:10, 12; 7:14; 8:7, 8; 11:6; 12:11; 14:20; 16:3, 4, 6; 17:6; 18:24; 19:2, 13 for references to blood).
15. One = Unity
16. Two = companionship, increased strength, legal witness (11:1f., cf. Deut. 17:6; 19:15)
17. Three = Divine (Rev 1:4ff; 12–13)
18. Three and a Half = Indeterminate but short time of suffering (Rev. 11:2-3, 9, 11; 12:6ff.; 13:5; cf. Dan. 7:25)
19. Four = Earthly (Rev. 4:6, 7, 8, 9; 5:8, 11, 14; 6:1, 3, 5, 6, 7; 7:1, 11; 9:14)
20. Six = failure, doom, sin (666)
21. Seven = 3 + 4 = Divine dealing with the earth
22. Ten = Completion, sometimes in connection with evil (2:10; 12:3; 17:3, 12, 16; 20:1ff.).
23. Twelve = 3 X 4 = (Rev. 4:4; 7:1ff.; 12:1; 21:12, 14, 20, 21).

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