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TA Ministries is a non-denominational and non-profit faith ministry founded in 1989 when the book '*To Catholics Whom I Love*' was written by Terry Arnold. This book went through several re-prints and served as a fruitful outreach to Roman Catholics.

In 1996 the ministry became a full-time operation with the introduction of a free newsletter, later named '*Diakrisis (Australia)*'.

Diakrisis is published bi-monthly to *teach, inform* and *equip* the church of Biblical truths and to warn of false teaching. It has also been a valuable reference aid to hundreds of pastors/elders.



A Fresh Look at Revelation

by

Terry Arnold

Book 1



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14:20 *'And the winepress was trodden without the city, and blood came out of the winepress, even unto the horse bridles, by the space of a thousand and six hundred furlongs'.*

This battle will be fought in the plains of Esdraelon near Meggiddo, about 60 miles north of Jerusalem (Rev.16:16). The battle will be a fierce slaughter, even with blood in places as deep *'even unto the horse bridles'* and in *'the space of a thousand and six hundred furlongs'* (Aprox.200 miles).

The distance here of *'a thousand and six hundred furlongs'* should be taken literally. Both the *'thousand'* (*'chilioi'*) and the *'six hundred'* (*'hexakósioi'*) are cardinal numbers (*'héx'* - six; *'hekatón'* - one hundred). (Similarly is the *'thousand years'* in chapter 20. If the number of a *'thousand'* is indefinite another Greek word *'murios'* is used - 1Cor.4:15; 14;19).

The word *'furlong'* is the Greek *'stádion'*, a measure of distance. The Olympic course was originally a stadium in length (approximately 600 feet or 200 yards).

Words such as *'winepress'* and *'without the city'* show the Jewish nature of this book. The battle of Armageddon is referenced in Daniel and other books but Zechariah chapter 14 has arguably the most graphic description of the events before the coming of the Lord to Jerusalem. It describes the Lord *'gathering all nations against Jerusalem to battle and the city shall be taken'* (vs.2) before *'The Lord shall go forth, and fight against those nations...'* (vs.3). Christ will descend and split the Mount of Olives in two (vs.4). There will be darkness (vs.6,7) before *'the Lord shall be king over all the earth'* (vs.9). The forces of the antichrist and the false prophet will be utterly crushed and thrown into the Lake of Fire (Ch.19).

How do we summarise all this but with fear and reverence for the soon coming God of gods, the Lord of lords, the King of kings! *'It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God'* (Heb.10:31); *'Serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling. Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and you perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all they that put their trust in him'* (Ps.2:12).

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There is a striking parallel to this event in Isaiah 63:1-6 where similar metaphors are used of ‘treading in the wine vat’ in ‘anger’ and ‘fury’: ‘For the day of vengeance is in mine heart, and the year of my redeemed is come. And I looked, and there was none to help; and I wondered that there was none to uphold: therefore mine own arm brought salvation unto me; and my fury, it upheld me. And I will tread down the people in mine anger, and make them drunk in my fury, and I will bring down their strength to the earth’.

Joel 3:11 also features the same event with the same metaphors: ‘Assemble yourselves, and come, all you heathen, and gather yourselves together round about...and come up to the valley of Jehoshaphat: for there will I sit to judge all the heathen round about. Put you in the sickle, for the harvest is ripe: come, get you down; for the press is full, the fats overflow; for their wickedness is great. Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision: for the day of the Lord is near in the valley of decision. The sun and the moon shall be darkened, and the stars shall withdraw their shining’ (Joel 3:11-15).

14:15-19 ‘And another angel came out of the temple, crying with a loud voice to him that sat on the cloud, Thrust in your sickle, and reap: for the time is come for you to reap; for the harvest of the earth is ripe. And he that sat on the cloud thrust in his sickle on the earth; and the earth was reaped. And another angel came out of the temple which is in heaven, he also having a sharp sickle. And another angel came out from the altar, which had power over fire; and cried with a loud cry to him that had the sharp sickle, saying, Thrust in your sharp sickle, and gather the clusters of the vine of the earth; for her grapes are fully ripe. And the angel thrust in his sickle into the earth, and gathered the vine of the earth, and cast it into the great winepress of the wrath of God’.

Armageddon is further foreshadowed here. This is a scene John sees in the temple in Heaven with a fourth angel ‘crying with a loud voice to him that sat on the cloud’. The picture is of the Lord as harvester and coming in judgement to which He commits to Christ: ‘The Father judges no man, but has committed all judgment unto the Son...And has given him authority to execute judgment also, because he is the Son of man’ (Jn.5:22,27).

The ‘sickle’ is a symbol of divine judgment in the harvest of the earth. This will be a frightening execution (detailed in chapter 16) with death in the oceans, death by the scorching of the sun, water will be turned to blood, a darkness, and a mighty earthquake before the battle of Armageddon in chapter 17.

The fruit of the earth is ‘fully ripe’ (vs.15,18). God’s sickle of judgement will be cast into ‘the great winepress of the wrath of God’.

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Part 1; Chapters 1-4

For years I have been studying and then preaching or teaching expositionally through the Old Testament and most of the New Testament. I had even tackled the book of Daniel which I have never found to be an easy book to exegete. I avoided the book of Revelation preferring to have others with more expertise preach through this book. I have at times grown weary and almost confused at the differing views of the ‘rapture’, ‘tribulation’ and ‘millennium’. Some of the polemics on this subject have arguably been to the detriment of the Gospel and to the danger of one being consumed with the second coming more than the first coming.

But recently I was greatly convicted to take a few days sabbatical, find a lonely retreat and prayerfully read through the book of Revelation verse by verse with no commentaries or references, but with attention to the hermeneutics of the symbols and signs. Prayerfully I wanted to explore *what should be ‘literal’ or ‘figurative’* and *why*; as well as the *timing and order of events*. Much of this was done using standard methods such as finding the same *symbols, signs and wording* elsewhere (Scripture interprets Scripture). It is also necessary to have at least studied the book of Daniel first, as much of Revelation is referenced in Daniel.

The experience was one I will never forget and the hours vanished away as the scenes in revelation became so real. Indeed the book begins with promising a ‘*blessing*’: *‘Blessed is he that reads, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein: for the time is at hand’* (1:3).

In these articles (part 1 here) I am not primarily interested in the various views (‘Premill’, ‘A-mill’, ‘Post-mill’, etc) but rather the *interpretation* (hermeneutics) of the images and symbols, as well as the *time* element and *order* of each scene. It is too easy to read this book with a preconceived ‘grid’ of any one view - of which there are many - The ‘Preterist’ view see the majority of the book as having occurred by AD 70; the ‘historist’ view see the events as having occurred in historical periods through history (usually all but chapters 20-22); the ‘futurist’ view sees most of the book as future. Then there are the further views on the timing of the ‘Rapture’, the ‘Great Tribulation’ and the ‘Millennium’, etc.

The Timing and Order

Chapters 1-4 are written about things which are past, present and future. In particular *chapter 1 verse 19 is a defining verse* in that it separates the *time* and *order* of the visions given to John: *‘Write the things which you have seen, and the things which are, and the things which shall be hereafter’*.

14:12 ***‘Here is the patience of the saints: here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus’***

The perseverance of the saints is seen here. The commandments here is ‘*entoles*’ (not ‘*nomos*’ - the law) and is synonymous with the Word of God (1Jn.2:3-7; 1Cor.7:19; 1Jn.3:22). Because this verse refers to the middle of the Great Tribulation and the judgements thereof it is clear that there will be a remnant who will endure and thus ‘keep’ the faith, holding to His Word. God preserves these saints as His elect (Jn.5:24; 6:37-40; 10:27; Rom.8:28-30; Phil.1:6).

God’s grace not only saves but it then keeps.

14:13 ***‘And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, says the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them’***

Twelve times a voice commands John to ‘*write*’ (1:11,19; 2:1,8,12,18; 3:1,7,14; 19:9; 21:5). The ‘*voice from Heaven*’ refers John to the saints who die as ‘*in the Lord*’. The phrase is used of living and dead saints, those beloved in the Lord (Rom.16:7), called in the Lord (1Cor.7:22), who marry in the Lord (1Cor.7:39), and are ‘chosen (elected) in the Lord (Rom.16:13).

Interestingly, here the Spirit speaks directly - ‘*Yea, says the Spirit*’ (and again in 22:17). The phrase ‘*that they may rest from their labours...*’ refers to the time with the Lord after death and to their rest from the toil and hardships of the Tribulation endured. Many, as with Antipas (2:13) have been martyred. Their ‘*works do follow them*’ because of their true and steadfast faith.

14:14 ***‘And I looked, and behold a white cloud, and upon the cloud one sat like unto the Son of man, having on his head a golden crown, and in his hand a sharp sickle’***

The end of the judgements and the battle of Armageddon is near. This is the worst period ever seen on earth (Matt.24:21,22). God’s fury is about to be poured out at the hands of the ‘*Son of man*’ who has the ‘*golden crown*’ (‘*stephanos*’ - a crown of ‘victory’) and a ‘*sharp sickle*’ ready to reap judgement. Many scriptures refer to this time: ‘*And I will punish the world for their evil, and the wicked for their iniquity; and I will cause the arrogance of the proud to cease, and will lay low the haughtiness of the terrible...I will shake the heavens, and the earth shall remove out of her place, in the wrath of the Lord of hosts, and in the day of his fierce anger...*’ (Is.13:11-19). ‘*The Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of temptations, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished*’ (2Pet.2:9). ‘*But the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men*’ (2Pet.3:7).

14:8 ***‘And there followed another angel, saying, Babylon is fallen, is fallen, that great city, because she made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication’.***

Some believe the second angel here is likely Michael, him being mentioned in the previous chapter (12:7). Angels are literally ‘messengers’ (‘*ággelos*’) to announce something from the Lord such as occurred with the angels to the shepherds, the angel to Zacharias and Joseph, etc. In Revelation they are particularly messengers of judgements.

The ‘*great city*’ here called ‘*Babylon*’ is further detailed in Revelation 17 and 18, which could well be the antichrists kingdom. This ‘*city*’ has influenced ‘*all nations*’ with her spiritual fornication and thus incurs God’s ‘*wrath*’. (The original Babylon was founded by Nimrod and was the place of the first false religion and rebellion against God - Gen.11).

14:9-11 ***‘And the third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, If any man worship the beast and his image, and receive his mark in his forehead, or in his hand, The same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation; and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb: And the smoke of their torment ascends up forever and ever: and they have no rest day nor night, who worship the beast and his image, and whosoever receives the mark of his name’.***

As with the city of Babylon, any who partake of the ‘*worship of the beast and his image*’ and thus received the ‘*mark*’ thereof will incur God’s wrath. This third angel with a ‘*loud voice*’ warns the earth of what is to come. The ‘*wrath*’ to be poured out will now be in full measure ‘*poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation*’. These people will suffer eternal ‘*torment*’ in the lake of ‘*fire and brimstone*’ and ‘*in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb*’. The ‘*presence*’ here may refer to the fact that God is omnipresent and so his presence will be known even in Hell.

There are many who flatly refuse to accept this graphic description as literal as it does not describe their ‘*loving god*’ and so the justice here is not accepted. Yet others will accept it as the literal Hell, but deny other parts of Revelation as literal, (such as the 144,000 men in chapter 7 and a literal 1,000 years in chapter 20). But this same description of an eternal Hell is repeated in many other books (Is.66:24; Dan.12:2; Matt.3:2; Lk.3:17; Matt.18:8; 25:41; Mk.9:48; Matt.25:46). The final Hell (the Lake of Fire) is an eternal monument and testimony to God’s *perfect justice* and wrath upon sin, of which in ages past He has warned of. Psalm 11:6 is just one example; ‘*Upon the wicked he shall rain snares, fire and brimstone, and a horrible tempest: this shall be the portion of their cup*’. Mercy ends here for those who have resisted and are unrepentant, remembering too that this judgement has followed the preaching of the ‘*everlasting Gospel*’ (vs.6,7).

The believers and the ‘*church*’ are initially spoken of frequently as being on earth. But neither is mentioned as on earth after chapter 4, but rather only described as in Heaven or about the throne.

The book has a strong sense of imminency in the timing and order of things. The word ‘*quickly*’ (‘*tachú*’) is used often and shows the promptness and swiftness of which many of the events will take place.

All the events appear to be leading towards judgement upon the earth and Christ finally appearing and ruling the nations as king. The judgements are graphic. It is clear that this will be the culmination of the wrath of God finally overflowing to a world that refuses to repent.

The book also has a strong and undeniable Jewishness with constant references to Jerusalem, Israel and the Jews. The ‘*New Jerusalem*’ is also later described in great detail.

Hermeneutics, Symbols, Signs and Sights...

I confess in the past to having been influenced by some who half convinced me that this book could not be easily or mostly understood because of its many symbols, signs and prophetic supernatural sights. But by applying *common sense* and *Biblical rules*, one can ascertain what the original author meant to say (called ‘*exegesis*’). Too many confuse the descriptions by John by stating they are too mystical or symbolic to understand. The problem too is applying allegorical interpretations to signs and symbols and descriptions that appear too ‘*incredible*’ to take literally. Interestingly, some of the descriptions that would have seemed ‘*impossible*’ to take ‘*literally*’ even decades or a century ago are now quite credible to be taken so because of technology and machinery which now make them ‘*possible*’! The ‘*every eye shall see*’, the two hundred million horsemen in Revelation 9, the peoples and nations viewing the dead bodies of two witnesses in Revelation 11:9, the ‘*mark of the beast*’ and more, have now become literally ‘*possible*’ with technology and media. Arguably it begs the question as to how much that has been allegorised is really a lack of faith in what the inspired word in this book says that John ‘*saw*’.

Allegorizing is the practise of finding meanings for the text. The problem with this is there is no definitive way of checking the accuracy of the interpretation as *the interpreter becomes the final authority*.

What is often missed in the book of Revelation is the statements showing that John the apostle is told to write ‘*what you see*’. Phrases ‘*like*’ and ‘*like as*’ are also commonly used throughout this book (also in many other books in the New Testament that would be taken ‘*literally*’) to indicate John is writing *what he sees* or at least comparing what he sees to the closest known object he is familiar with or understands. John, if he uses such comparative language, is describing a literal event, not one which is symbolic, figurative or allegorical.

If we cannot understand one symbol then that does not give us license to treat the whole book in a symbolic way. Each symbol or figure must be treated on its own and *searched out elsewhere* to derive the meaning. In this book there are also hundreds of references to Old Testament passages and other New Testament books.

One of the first ways to ascertain if a text is to be taken literal or figurative is to ask the question - 'Is the language *obviously* figurative?' For example, Jesus used the bread and wine as obvious *symbols* or *figures* when He said that they were His 'body' and 'blood'. Jesus also said '*I am the door*' (Jn.10:7-9); '*I am the way*'; '*I am the light of the world*'. An example of an obvious figurative expression is '*the cattle on a thousand hills*' (Ps.50:10). It is Hebraic poetic language. (The word '*eleph*' here for '*thousand*' is elsewhere used to denote a large quantity). Again, allegory is usually *obvious* in scripture. The parables of Jesus are examples of use of allegory. The symbols in the Parable of the Sower (Matt.13:3-9) are all explained by Jesus in verses following.

If the word or phrase does not harmonise with the subject being discussed, this also is a possible use of figurative language. But in many passages the *text actually tells the reader* it is to be taken figuratively or allegorically. The classic case is Galatians 7:21-31 where a '*bondwoman*' and a '*freewomen*' are used as figures in a discussion about an old covenant and the new covenant - but we are told '*which things are an allegory: for these are the two covenants; the one from the mount Sinai, which engenders to bondage, which is Hagar*' (vs.24). Another example is in John chapter 6 - '*eat my flesh and drink my blood*' is shown to be figurative language in vs.63 where Jesus states that '*The words I speak to you are spirit and life*' and John concludes '*you have the Words of eternal life*'. Similar obvious figurative language is '*your words were found and I ate them*' (Jer.15:16); '*How sweet are your words to my taste, sweeter than honey to my mouth*' (Ps.119:103).

Why is it that in our own English language we seem to know what is figurative language, yet in this last book of Revelation the range of views from literal to allegorical are so numerous as to be confusing to many? When we say '*it's raining outside*' we know it is literal; when we say '*it's raining cats and dogs*' we know it is figurative, *but that it has a literal meaning*. When we have a figurative expression, we have a literal meaning. *It is this aspect I feel has been lost in interpreting the book of Revelation*.

The book of Revelation does have examples of *obvious* figurative language. In Revelation 12 there is a '*woman*' giving birth to a '*manchild*'. The '*woman*' is a '*wonder*' ('*semeion*' - a '*sign*'). This '*sign*' obviously is a metaphor for something else. The Old Testament consistently describes Israel as a '*woman*' (Mic.4:9,10; Is.54:5, Jer.31:32, etc). Christ is born of the nation Israel (Heb.7:14). The passage is *obvious* allegory.

14:4,5 '***These are they which were not defiled with women; for they are virgins. These are they which follow the Lamb wherever he goes. These were redeemed from among men, being the firstfruits unto God and to the Lamb. And in their mouth was found no guile: for they are without fault before the throne of God***'.

These are those from '*among men*' ('*anthropos*' - generic word for person or mankind). They are not the only ones 'redeemed' during the Great Tribulation, yet by now it is likely there are few others left to be redeemed since most are rejecting God and those left have been mostly martyred.

These 144,000 were set apart (sanctified) by God (vs.1) and have not been tainted with the lusts of the ungodly world. They have rejected all which is false, the satanic signs and the delusions of the time (2Thess.2:8-12). They are '*without fault*' (blameless). As John sees it in time and space - they '*follow the Lamb wherever He goes*'. They are the first fruits of Jews from out of the Tribulation.

14:6,7 '***And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people, Saying with a loud voice, Fear God, and give glory to him; for the hour of his judgment is come: and worship him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters***'.

The angel here is literally flying through the space above the earth (the atmosphere or the space below the sun - Gen.1:8; 2Cor.12:2 cp. Rev.21:1) and preaching the '*everlasting Gospel*'. Although in scripture the Gospel is variously described as the '*Gospel of the kingdom*', the '*Gospel of Jesus Christ*', the '*Gospel of God*', the '*Gospel of salvation*', the '*Gospel of peace*' etc, it is the same Gospel preached throughout the New Testament. It is about the person of Jesus Christ sent by God to atone for sin, to satisfy God's broken law and to justify men by Christ. It calls on all to repentance from sin and belief in Christ and the merits of Christ's work on the cross as a sacrificial offering to God.

All '*nations, and kindred and tongues*' will hear this Gospel '*with a loud voice*'. All are told to '*fear God and give him glory*' - two strong themes throughout all scripture. Indeed, the entire Bible has its purpose in the one theme to '*give glory to Him*'!

A warning is given of '*the hour of his judgement is come*'. This will be the final appeal to sinful humanity to '*worship*' the creator who '*made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters*' (Ps.19:1-4 Rev.4:11). The seal and trumpet judgements are past, and yet to come is '*the hour of judgement*' - being the '*vial*' ('*bowl*') judgements before the battle of Armageddon.

In **Part 8** (Chapter 13 - *Diakrisis* May/June 2021) - The antichrist and the false prophet arise with their 'mark of the beast'. They are given power by God to do great signs and wonders. Authority is given to the beast to slaughter the saints. There will be false worship of the beast. Prophecy will reach a climax...

Part 9 Chapter 14

Chapters 12-14 are an interlude before chapter 14 returns to the judgements.

14:1 'And I looked, and, lo, a Lamb stood on the mount Zion, and with him a hundred forty and four thousand, having his Father's name written in their Foreheads'.

This is a literal 144,000 of Jewish descent, not a number to be spiritualised, or as Jehovah Witnesses say, the elite of their own. They are from the *tribes of Israel* (7:4-8); they are 'virgins...redeemed from among men' who *speak* and 'follow the lamb' (vs.4,5). They preach the Gospel. There is no hermeneutics to interpret this as the 'church', the 'saints' or any other entity but what it clearly states as Jewish evangelists on earth preaching the Gospel to a world under impending final judgement. They are 'sealed' (7:1-8), protected for the dangerous work they will do in the last days of the Great Tribulation. The sealing (ch.7) shows they are on earth, as any sealing would not be necessary in Heaven. In chapter 7 they are seen early in the tribulation; in chapter 14 they are seen near the end, triumphant in survival and at Mount Zion where the Lord will return and reign over the earth (Ps.48, Is.24:23, Joel 2:32, Obadiah 17 & 21, Mic.4:1).

The 'name' on their 'forehead' is a name of 'the Father', which exact name we are not told.

14:2,3 'And I heard a voice from heaven, as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of a great thunder: and I heard the voice of harpers harping with their harps: And they sung as it were a new song before the throne, and before the four beasts, and the elders: and no man could learn that song but the hundred and forty and four thousand, which were redeemed from the earth'.

The 'voices' of the 144,000 to John sounded like 'many waters' and 'a great thunder'. Note also the use of musical instruments in Heaven as we do on earth in praising God and his works and often with a 'new song' (see Ps.33:2,3; 40:3; 96:1,2; 98:1,2; 144:9; 149:1; Is.42:10).

The 'new song' in scripture often refers to a song *borne out of experience*. In Exodus 15 Moses and Miriam sang a new song of deliverance at the Red Sea. In Revelation chapter 5 we saw 'the four beasts and four and twenty elders' prostrated before the Lamb in worship, with harps singing a 'new song' of redemption (vs.8,9). Here in chapter 14 it is about the 'redemption' of the 144,000.

Learning to identify which aspects of a passage are figurative and which are literal in the book of Revelation is paramount to correct interpretation. The expectation to be 'blessed' (1:3) is surely dependant on understanding the text by sound interpretation.

From the outset in chapter 1 verse 1 the writer (John) states clearly that the revelation in this book is 'signified'. The Greek word '*semaíno*' refers to a mark or sign to 'show' something. The New Testament use of the same word is to *make something known*. In John 12:32,33 (also in 18:32; 21:19) Jesus states 'And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me. This he said, signifying ('*semaíno*') what death he should die'. Here Jesus clearly shows what he meant by a previous figure.

Thus *from the outset the book of Revelation is to be understood by the events to come to pass!* It is the unveiling ('*apokálupsis*') of truth (1:1-3; 22:10). It is not expected we will understand exactly how, what date, or arguably what every symbol or figure represents without some searching and study. But we are expected to be 'shown' '*things which must shortly come to pass*' (vs.1) and then further '*things which must be hereafter*' (4:1).

What we are to understand in this book is *what John sees*. He was told to write down what he 'saw' (vs.2). '*What you see write in a book*' (1:11). Over and over we read '*I saw*' (1:12,17; 4:4; 5:1,2; 6:1,2,9; 7:1,2; 8:2; 9:1,17; 10:1,5; 13:2; 14:6; 15:1,2; 16:13; 17:3,6; 18:1; 19:11,17,19; 20:1,4,11,12; 21:1,22). *What he sees is what we must see also*, no matter how wild the figures or symbols may seem! Most of the identities are found in Heaven or about the throne. The descriptions are exactly what John literally 'saw' and what we are expected to literally see exactly as described.

Chapter 1

Chapter 1-3 literally reads of events in John's day and their immediate future. In contrast chapters 4-22 argue strongly for future events. To fit all events after chapter 4 into a restricted past view or to periods of past history is fraught with inconsistencies as well as *denying elements of the Lord's return* in later chapters.

The first three chapters present much *detail* of *seven churches*. There is evidence within the detailed texts to show that they were real churches existing in that day. Characters within these churches are also described ('Antipas' 2:13). There are commentators who have amassed evidence to show that these churches existed and in real places. If we accept the place Patmos (vs.9) as literal, where John was given the visions, then why not also take the 'churches' as literal?

By application the seven churches arguably could represent and be copied by churches of our present day. And no doubt we can learn by that. But the amount of detail concerning the entire seven churches as a whole makes it difficult for those who would attempt to fit them into churches in history or as churches now.

The expression in **verse 3** *'the time is at hand'* (repeated in 22:10) is a common phrase throughout scripture to denote *imminency*. This is a most important aspect of this book and is a timeless expression for the reader to be ready for the coming of the Lord.

In **1:4** we come across the first mention of a 'figure' unknown on earth - the *'seven spirits'*. Many strange and allegorical interpretations have been pronounced for these 'seven spirits'. But the same 'seven spirits' is mentioned in 3:1; 4:5; 5:6. By collecting data we are told they are *'before the throne'*; they are *'of God'*; are *'seven lamps of fire burning before the throne'* and the person who has these spirits is the *'lamb'* (Jesus Christ) *'having seven eyes which are the seven spirits of God'*. These seven spirits are also mentioned in Zechariah 4:10 where the *'Lord of Hosts'* is mentioned with *'those seven; they are the eyes of the Lord, which run to and fro through the whole earth'*. Isaiah 11:1,2 states: *'And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots: And the spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord'*.

The *'seven spirits'* are that which emanate from Christ, the *'lamb'*. At best we can say they are a searching ministry to the world. Again, it is what John *'saw'* that is literal here. In the revelations within this book John saw many supernatural creatures in Heaven and about the throne within a supernatural environment.

There is also an emphasis on the number 'seven' through John's various revelations which does indicate an expression of completeness throughout the Bible (Ex.25:30-40). In this book there are *'seven churches'*, *'seven Spirits'*, *'seven golden candlesticks'*, *'seven stars'*, *'seven lamps of fire'*, *'seven seals'*, *'seven horns'*, *'seven eyes'*, *'seven angels'*, *'seven trumpets'*, *'seven thunders'*, *'seven thousand'*, *'seven heads'*, *'seven crowns'*, *'seven plagues'*; *'seven vials'*, *'seven mountains'*, and *'seven kings'*.

In **1:7** *'he comes with the clouds and every eye shall see him'*. Is the *'clouds'* here to be literal or allegorical? Clouds are generally taken to be literal in many passages throughout the Bible. The same expression is found in Matthew 24:30 and Daniel 7:13. If the coming of the Lord is visible and literal then why not the *'clouds'* also? (Zechariah 12:10 also has Israel visibly seeing the Saviour and mourning).

Are we to take *'every eye'* here to be literal? At the time the book was written this may have seemed impossible; but today, is this not now conceivable and cannot the Lord make this possible?

In **1:10** we have the mention of the *'Lord's day'* as being the day John received the visions and revelations. The *'Lord's day'* was a common expression in early centuries for Sunday, synonymous with the *'first day of the week'*.

This word *'mark'* is the Greek *'cháragma'* meaning an engraving, or an impression or symbol. In the past many have scoffed at whether such events and such a mark could be taken literally. However, the technology for all this is already here and being used! This is another reason why a literal approach to the Bible interpretation must be taken more seriously today .

This in chapter 13:16 is the first mention of the *'mark'* of the beast which is further described in Revelation as *'a mark or the name'* (13:17); it being *'in the forehead or hand'* (14:9); that many in the *'vial'* (bowl) judgements will also receive an ulcerous *'sore'* who took the *'mark'* (16:2); all who receive it will finally suffer the *'wrath of God'* and be *'tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb'* in an eternal Hell (14:10,11; 19:20); but some who did not take the mark will have *'gotten the victory'* over the beast and this mark, and be seen in Heaven (15:2; 20:4).

There have been wild claims too numerous to mention as to what this *'mark'* is, and too often found to be in error as time passes. However, we are exhorted to have *'wisdom'* and *'understand'* that it is *'the number of a man'* and that number is *'666'*.

If we were left to our own devices we would surely perish with the world, as described here in graphic terms in this chapter. *'For the great day of His wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?'* (Rev.6:17).

But thanks and glory be to God *'For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ, Who died for us, that, whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with Him. Wherefore comfort yourselves together, and edify one another, even as also you do'* (1Thess.5:9-11).

Revelation chapter 13 is a stark warning to fear God; to proclaim the Gospel accurately; to keep his holy Word in doctrine and in practise. God's purpose is to *'deliver us from the wrath to come'* (1Thess.1:10).

The Grace which saves is the Grace which delivers. ***'God commends His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, being now justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him'*** (Rom.5:8,9).

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13:12-14 ***‘And he exercises all the power of the first beast before him, and causes the earth and them which dwell therein to worship the first beast, whose deadly wound was healed. And he does great wonders, so that he makes fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men, And deceives them that dwell on the earth by the means of those miracles [signs] which he had power to do in the sight of the beast; saying to them that dwell on the earth, that they should make an image to the beast, which had the wound by a sword, and did live’.***

Despite this second beast being ‘*like a lamb*’, nevertheless, he will speak ‘*as a dragon*’ (vs.11) and thus ‘*exercise all the power of the first beast*’. His work is to cause all that ‘*dwell on the earth*’ to ‘*to worship the first beast*’. (‘*Dwell on the earth*’ is a phrase often used for the unsaved - vs.8,12; 3:10; 6:19).

He will persuade mankind with ‘*great wonders*’ and even ‘*fire from heaven*’. These ‘*miracles*’ (‘*signs*’) will be accompanied by the call to ‘*make an image*’ to the antichrist and worship him, just as Nebuchadnezzar did in the days of Daniel the prophet (Dan.3).

Today we already have a false gospel of signs and wonders and the prophesying of extra biblical words. But this false prophet will repeat and imitate Christ’s miracles and that of the magicians in Pharaoh’s court. Unlike most of the charlatans of today these signs may well be real and demonically inspired.

13:15-18 ***‘And he had power to give life unto the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak, and cause that as many as would not worship the image of the beast should be killed. And he causes all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond, to receive a mark in their right hand, or in their foreheads: And that no man might buy or sell, save he that had the mark, or the name of the beast, or the number of his name. Here is wisdom. Let him that hath understanding count the number of the beast: for it is the number of a man; and his number is Six hundred threescore and six’.***

‘*The image of the beast*’ here takes on a life of its own with a power to speak and cause the death of those who would not worship it, although not all on the world will die (at least one third of Israel will be alive in the end - Zech.13:8,9).

People from all classes ‘*both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond*’ will be required to receive ‘*in their right hand or in their foreheads*’ the ‘*mark or the name of the beast, or the number of his name*’ - without which none will be able to ‘*buy or sell*’. Thus there will be great pressure to take this ‘*mark*’.

The expression ‘*I...heard behind me a great voice, as of a trumpet*’ is an expression which is common throughout the Bible where heavenly voices or speaking seem unique to the heavenly places and with sounds like ‘*thunder*’ or ‘*many waters*’. Note the words ‘*as of*’. The voice sounded ‘*as of*’ a trumpet sound. This is *how* John literally heard the voice.

In 1:11 the ‘*lamb*’ identifies himself as the divine ‘*Alpha and Omega, the first and the last*’. It is here that the figure of ‘*seven golden candlesticks*’ is revealed. How should we interpret this expression? Vs.20 tells us exactly what this ‘*mystery*’ is - they are *literally* the ‘*seven churches*’.

1:13,14 describes a person who John literally ‘*saw*’. The person is ‘*in the midst of the seven candlesticks one like unto the Son of man*’ (vs.13). Note the expression ‘*like unto*’ - again such phrases indicate John under inspiration is writing *what he literally sees* and then who he understands the person to be - ‘*the son of man*’. This person is ‘*clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about the paps with a golden girdle. His head and his hairs were white like wool, as white as snow; and his eyes were as a flame of fire*’ (vs.13,14). Daniel 7:9 has a similar description.

1:15,16 ***‘And his feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace; and his voice as the sound of many waters. And he had in his right hand seven stars: and out of his mouth went a sharp two-edged sword and his countenance was as the sun shines in his strength’.***

The *figure* of the ‘*seven stars*’ are then explained in verse 20: ‘*The mystery of the seven stars which you saw in my right hand, and the seven golden candlesticks. The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches: and the seven candlesticks which you saw are the seven churches*’.

1:17 has the reaction to this vision of the person of Christ: ‘*And when I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead*’. The expression here in other places denotes a fear and a dread of death. (Note the difference to those false teachers today who cite armchair like conversations and prophetic discussions with God and Christ).

1:18 has John being told not to fear from the one who is ‘*the first and the last: I am he that lives, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive forevermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death*’. How are we to interpret ‘*the keys of hell and death*’? The person of Christ states He has the ‘*keys*’ to Hades and death as well as the ‘*key of David*’ (3:7). John does not see these ‘*keys*’ but is told by Christ of them. Elsewhere ‘*keys*’ are used as a figure of power or authority (Is.22:22; 3:7; Matt.16:19:18:18).

1:20 is as previously mentioned - the literal interpretation of the figures of the ‘*seven stars*’ and the ‘*seven golden candlesticks*’: ‘*The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches: and the seven candlesticks which you saw are the seven churches*’.

Chapter 2

2:1-7 has the 'He' as Christ himself from chapter 1 speaking to the 'church at Ephesus'. Verse 7 introduces a 'tree of life': 'To him that overcomes will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God'. The 'tree of life' is mentioned 10 times in scripture. The three times in Genesis is taken literal by many. Proverbs has 4 mentions which are obviously figurative to do with character. Revelation has three mentions and all to do with the 'paradise of God' or the 'New Jerusalem' city, the latter with great detail in later chapters. If the 'tree of life' is not literal then it at least it carries a meaning of *eternal life*.

2:10 Christ speaks to the 'church in Smyrna' and prophesies a period of 'tribulation ten days'. The phrase 'ten days' is mentioned *eleven times* in scripture. Throughout the book of Revelation there are instances of 'days' (11:3,9,11; 12:6) and 'years' (20:2-7) and 'times' (12:14) for certain events to take place. If the 'ten days' in verse 10 are not literal then what do we do with the mention of several instances of 3.5 years which matches Daniel and other books and clearly speak of a set period of a great tribulation? Days and years are usually taken literal in the Gospels and Epistles and so why is it that we would not take them literal in this book of prophecy? The Old Testament uses are clearly literal references. The uses in Daniel are also hardly to be taken anything but literal - Daniel challenges the Babylonians to give him '10 days' with a certain diet to prove God (Dan.1:12,14,15). The New Testament also has 'ten days' as clearly literal in Acts 25:6 where there is a 'ten days' period before a judgement upon Paul by Festus. Not once in all the ten times is the phrase '10 days' even hinting any symbolic meaning. There is no reason why the eleventh use of 'ten days' of tribulation for the church at Smyrna would not be literal. Yet many ascribe all sorts of periods (such as 'ten periods of persecution by Rome'), *which arguably hand the interpretation over to the reader rather than the scriptures*. Thus many succumb to the invention of changing the literal meaning because it is a book or genre of 'prophecy'. But again, there is also *prophetic passages* in many other New Testament books usually taken as literal. Nevertheless, this is not a matter of any heresy to be wrangled over.

Verse 10 also has the phrase 'be you faithful unto death, and I will give you a crown of life'. The 'crown of life' here can be translated 'the crown which is the life'. Elsewhere it refers to eternal life (James 1:12; 1Pet.5:4; 1Cor.9:25; 2Tim.4:8).

2:13 states the 'church in Pergamos' 'dwells...where Satan's seat is'. The figure of 'Satan's seat' could well refer to Pergamos at this time being immersed in an area where there was much worship of many false gods.

2:14 mentions a rebuke for those who held to the 'doctrine of Balaam who taught Balac to cast a stumblingblock before the children of Israel, to eat

The antichrist may 'overcome' the saints here physically, but never spiritually, for 'neither death, nor life...nor things to come...shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord' (Rom.8:38,39).

13:8-10 '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. If any man have an ear, let him hear. He that leads into captivity shall go into captivity: he that kills with the sword must be killed with the sword. Here is the patience and the faith of the saints'

The 'book of life' belongs to 'the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world'. The names in it are those 'chosen before the foundation of the world' (Eph.1:4; Rev.17:8). All those unsaved and not in that book will 'worship' the antichrist, the first 'beast'.

Many people will be slaughtered as is seen in the proverb here: 'He that leads into captivity shall go into captivity: he that kills with the sword must be killed with the sword'. But they are to accept that this is God's will in this - 'Here is the patience and the faith of the saints', remembering that the saints killed will be seen in Heaven victorious (15:2-4).

Although the antichrist will wage 'war on the saints' (Rev.11:7), God's admonition is 'Wherefore let them that suffer according to the will of God commit the keeping of their souls to him in well doing, as unto a faithful Creator' (1Pet.4:19).

13:11 'And I beheld another beast coming up out of the earth; and he had two horns like a lamb, and he spoke as a dragon'

The second 'beast' here is the final false prophet similar in nature to the first beast (the words 'another beast' uses the Greek 'allos' - 'another of the same kind'). He is the agent for the antichrist and the last of all false prophets (Dt.13:1-5; 13:3,4; 18:22; Jer.23). As many false prophets do, he will come as if in 'sheeps clothing' (Matt.7:15).

Today we are plagued with false prophets in many churches who every day prophesy supposedly what God has said apart from, and extra to, the 'more sure word of prophecy...the prophecy of the scripture' (2Pet.1:19,20). These people and their churches are forerunners of the final false prophet!

This false prophet comes 'out of the earth' rather than 'out of the sea' as does the antichrist (vs.1). Many believe this to be the abyss and so this being would have demonic power. Others say it is out of a revived Roman empire.

This second beast has 'two horns like a lamb' - suggesting seemingly less harmful than the first beast, being a deceiver rather than a dictator like the antichrist.

There are various interpretations of the statement *'wounded to death'*, but it does appear that the Antichrist here is either assassinated and is resurrected; or he is wounded in some way and recovers. It could well be a counterfeit sign. Whatever event this is, whether it be true or counterfeit, it will be a sign and wonder (vs.12-15) that will have the populace *'worship the dragon and the beast'* with the saying *'who is like unto the beast [and] able to make war with him'* - words that would be only for God himself (Ex.15:11).

Eventually the antichrist will *'oppose and exalt himself above all that is called God, or that is worshiped; so that he as God sits in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God'* (2Thess.2:4).

13:5,6 *'And there was given unto him a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies; and power [authority] was given unto him to continue forty and two months. And he opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme his name, and his tabernacle, and them that dwell in heaven'*

The twice mentioned *'given unto him'* here is God allowing the antichrist a period of time to speak *'great things and blasphemies'* and to continue this for *'forty and two months'* (3.5 years). This verse is identical to Daniel 7:8,25 and 11:36 in describing the *'little horn'* who will have a *'mouth speaking great things...great words against the most high, and shall wear out the saints of the most High, and think to change times and laws: and they shall be given into his hand until a time and times and the dividing of time...and he shall exalt himself, and magnify himself above every god, and shall speak marvelous things against the God of gods...'*

The *'time and times and the dividing of time'* is the same phrase found in Revelation 12:14 and also the same as the *'forty and two months'* (3.5 years - Rev.11:2; 13:5) and *'a thousand two hundred and threescore days'* (3.5 years - Rev.10:3; 12:6).

The sovereignty of God is seen here (as in Daniel) in His use of evil to bring to pass His Word (Rev.6:4; 7:2;9:5; Dan.4:17,25,32). The *'blasphemy'* is against God's *'name'*, His *'tabernacle'* and those with Him in His Heaven. The intent here is that of Satan himself whose desire is *'I will be like the most High'* (Is.14;14).

13:7 *'And it was given unto him to make war with the saints, and to overcome them: and power was given him over all kindreds, and tongues, and nations'*

This will be a slaughter of the saints as depicted in several places in this book and in Daniel (Rev.6:9-11; 7:9-17; 17:6; Dan.7:25), and including those who most likely have come to salvation through the preaching of the 144,000 during the Time of *'Jacob's Trouble'*.

things sacrificed unto idols, and to commit fornication'. This is a literal reference to real doctrines derived from real characters who did exist (Nu.22-25).

2:16 When Christ says He will *'fight against them with the sword of my mouth'*, this is obviously figurative as elsewhere we are told the *'sword of the spirit'* and the *'two edged sword'* is the *'Word of God'* (Heb.4:12; Eph.6:17 Matt.10:34; Rev.19:15).

2:17 *'...To him that overcomes will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knows saving he that receives it'*. The *'manna'* is found elsewhere in John 6:31-58 where it is clearly shown to be Jesus himself and his word giving eternal life. The *'manna'* here is probably a similar reference to the life of Christ.

2:20-24 speaks of a *'woman Jezebel'* who claimed to be a *'prophetess'* and who *'seduced my servants to commit fornication, and eat things sacrificed to idols'*. Christ threatens to put her into *'great tribulation'* and *'kill her children'*. Many believe this to be a symbol from the Jezebel of the Old Testament. Others believe it to be a certain woman given the title of old. We are not told, but it clearly was *a situation of fornication and a false 'prophetess'* within the *'church in Thyatira'* at the time.

2:26,27 *'And he that overcomes, and keeps my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations: And he shall rule them with a rod of iron; as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers: even as I received of my Father'*.

These verse are often allegorised and not taken as literal. However, the number of passages in the Old and New Testaments which speak of a reign *'on earth'* are very numerous. It is hard to see how some can allegorize all of these verses and so render this to being just figurative language. Messianic Psalms speak of a reign on the earth *'I shall give you the heathen for your inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for your possession. You shall break them with a rod of iron; you shall dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel'* (Ps.2:8,9). Isaiah 24:23 says *'the Lord of hosts shall reign in mount Zion, and in Jerusalem, and before his ancients gloriously'*. Zechariah chapters 12-14 has the Messiah in His second coming to Jerusalem and *'the Lord shall be king over all the earth...'* (14:9); Micah speaks of *'the last days...the mountain of the house of the Lord...and people shall flow unto it...many nations shall come...the law shall go forth of Zion, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. And he shall judge among many people...nation shall not lift up a sword against nation...'* (Mic.4:1-3). Revelation simply continues this thread *'And have made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth'* (Rev.5:10).

2:28 *'...and I will give him the morning star'*. Again, we are told elsewhere that this is Christ Himself: *'I Jesus...am the root and the offspring of David, and the bright and morning star'* (22:16).

Chapter 3

3:1 ***‘...the church in Sardis write; These things says he that has the seven Spirits of God, and the seven stars...’*** The *‘seven spirits’* was already mentioned in chapter 1 and are repeated in 4:5; 5:6. (See above for interpretation). As previously mentioned the literal interpretation of the figure of the *‘seven stars’* is in chapter 1: *‘The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches’* (vs.20).

3:7 The *‘key of David’* is used as a figure of power or authority (Is.22:22; 3:7; Matt.16:19:18). (See 1:18).

3:10 ***‘Because you have kept the word of my patience, I also will keep you from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth’.*** The *‘hour of temptation’* here is a reference to a short time. The Greek *‘hora’* is elsewhere translated *‘time’* or *‘season’* and denotes a short period as in 1Thessalonians 2:17 where it is translated *‘a short time’*. This *‘temptation’* is said to be for *‘all the world’* and *‘them that dwell upon the earth’*. (Some commentators do believe this *‘all the world’* is the known world at that time and restricted to the Middle East).

3:12 ***‘Him that overcomes will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out: and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, which is new Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven from my God: and I will write upon him my new name’.***

The *‘New Jerusalem’* is described in great detail in later chapters.

3:18 ***‘...buy of me gold tried in the fire, that you may be rich; and white raiment, that you may be clothed, and that the shame of your nakedness do not appear; and anoint your eyes with eye salve, that you may see’***

The *‘gold tried in fire’* is elsewhere mentioned in scripture as worship and worthiness and something precious to the Lord, as well as the testing of our faith and judgement (2Tim.2:20; 1Pet.1:7; Lk.3:17; 1Cor.3:15).

The phrase *‘anoint your eyes with eye salve’* - the *‘eye salve’* (*‘kolloúrion’*) was a coarse bread or cake, a topical remedy applied to the eyes. Here the message is to the church at Laodicea to *see* and *repent*.

3:20 ***‘Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me’.***

The *‘door’* and the *‘knock’* here are obviously figurative of Christ being outside this church and calling for repentance.

In **Part 7** (Chapter 12 - *Diakrisis* March/April 2021) - Symbols, signs and figurative language refer to Israel and the great cosmic battle between God and evil. The war in heaven becomes a war on earth against God’s elect nation and his saints. This chapter summarises a brutal and fearsome part of what is called the time of *‘Jacob’s Trouble’*.

Part 8 - Chapter 13

13:1 ***‘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’***

In the midst of the chaos and disasters on the earth, now arises the man who is called by many names, but the one name which the world has been waiting for - is the *‘antichrist’*. The world will want a leader who promises peace. Antichrists have come and gone before (1Jn.2:18; 4:3), but this *‘beast’* (*‘therion’* - a wild lower beast) will be the last. He arises *‘out of the sea’*. (The *‘sea’* here probably refers to the nations).

This *‘beast’* has *‘seven heads’* - seven empires as in chapter 17. Commentators believe these to be seven past kingdoms - Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Medo Persia, Greece, Rome, and antichrists final kingdom. Revelation 17:12 tells us the *‘ten horns’* are ten future kings. The *‘crowns’* are a symbol of royal dignity. The *‘name of blasphemy’* is a title that is against God, similar to many of the Roman Emperors who attached ungodly titles and slogans to their name.

13:2 ***‘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’***

These animals are similarly described in Daniel chapter 7 as Greece (leopard), Medo Persia (bear) and Babylon (lion). The antichrist’s final kingdom will be like all of these.

The *‘dragon’* works through, and gives *‘power, his seat and great authority’* to, the antichrist.

13:3,4 ***‘And I saw one of his heads as it were wounded to death; and his deadly wound was healed: and all the world [earth/land] wondered after the beast. And they worshiped the dragon which gave power [authority] unto the beast: and they worshiped the beast, saying, Who is like unto the beast? who is able to make war with him?’***

One of his *‘heads’* is *‘wounded to death’* but *‘healed’*. It is debated as to whether this refers to a nation or a person. Verse 12 and 14 and also chapter 17:8,11 would arguably refer to a person being the *‘beast’* himself.

Our sub-editor summarises:

‘In our day, and this generation, the once mystifying events portrayed in this book are being prepared and laid out before us. Globalist leaders are now bringing to pass exactly what is described in this incredible prophecy. It is quite obvious that the technology required to bring about a Fascist global government that can restrict buying and selling to a group of their choosing, that can detect and restrict the movement of every human on the planet, control the world’s monetary and governmental systems, is being constructed NOW.

The clamour for a Messianic political figure is growing louder and louder with each passing day and the moment that he is to be revealed cannot be too far away now?’

The great cosmic battle is underway and soon coming to a climax. The end is sure because of who God is, the omnipotent sovereign King of kings!

3:21 *‘To him that overcomes will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne’*. The ‘throne’ is the same throne that John has seen in previous verses as a place where God is enthroned and spirit beings and angels abide with him. It is a place that John ‘saw’ and was shown much detail throughout this book.

Conclusion

The Old Testament has Israel rejecting God. The New Testament has every man rejecting God (Romans ch.1-3). All are *‘without excuse’*. The Jews had a new covenant promised to them (Jer.31) and yet they rejected their own Messiah who would bring in that covenant. In this book he comes in judgement and then finally in the second coming to the Mount of Olives (further detailed in Zechariah chapters 12-14).

The above commentary (Part 1) is by no means exhaustive. The intent is to show that this book *is to be understood* at least as far as *what John saw and described*.

The Gospel of faith and repentance and God’s mercy and judgement is clearly shown in these early chapters which are working towards the ending of God’s redemptive story!

The timing and the order of events in the first three chapters are clearly presented as immediate events in John’s day with a divide in time and order at chapter 4 (see 1:19).

Jesus Christ has come once for salvation. Now ‘soon’ and ‘quickly’ he is coming again to set up a kingdom with his saints. In these three chapters Christ is described as in no other book. The purpose is to ‘unveil’ Christ, his plans, his judgements. His deity is clearly shown in being a ‘lamb’ on the throne but also a mighty and fearsome judge.

The symbols, signs and sights can be interpreted and understood by referencing other scriptures where the same figures are mentioned. Many of the figures and signs in this book are not alone but displayed in other books. What is figurative and what is more literal can be determined with study.

I urge readers to set apart the time to study prayerfully and methodically each verse from the beginning to the end of this book. It may take days, weeks and months but it is guaranteed to produce a *‘blessing’* (1:3) and may well engender a heightened sense of how precious the true redeeming Gospel is and thus of our Lord’s return for his beloved saints!

Part 2; Chapters 4,5

In Part 1,(chapter 1-4 - *Diakrisis* July/August 2019) the intent is to show that the book of Revelation *is to be understood* at least as far as *what John saw and described*. And *what is figurative and what is more literal can be determined with study and referencing to other scriptures*.

The *timing and the order of events* in the first three chapters are presented as events in John's day with a *divide in time and order at chapter 4* (see 1:19).

In the first three chapters the purpose is to 'unveil' Christ, his plans, his judgements. His deity is shown as the 'lamb' on the throne. Again, *the symbols, signs and sights can be interpreted and understood by referencing other scriptures where the same figures are mentioned*. Many of the figures and signs in this book are not found alone but displayed in other books.

The continued study of this book is guaranteed to produce a 'blessing' (1:3) and may well engender a heightened sense of how precious the true redeeming Gospel is and thus of our Lord's return for his beloved saints!

4:1-4 *'After this I looked, and, behold, a door was opened in heaven: and the first voice which I heard was as it were of a trumpet talking with me; which said, Come up here, and I will show you things which must be hereafter'* (vs.1)

'*After this*' shows clearly a chronological order here. As stated in Part 1, the timing and the order of events in the first three chapters are clearly presented as immediate events in John's day with a divide in time and order at chapter 4. In particular *chapter 1 verse 19 is a defining verse* in that it separates the *time and order* of the visions given to John: *'Write the things which you have seen, and the things which are, and the things which shall be hereafter'*.

'*After this*' now tells us that this is another vision after his vision of the glorified Christ and the message to the seven churches (ch.1-3). The scene now shifts from earth and the church on earth, *to heaven*. (The church is nowhere found on earth after chapter 4).

The 'voice' heard here was 'as it were' of a 'trumpet'. As in chapter 1:10 ('*I...heard behind me a great voice, as of a trumpet*') - heavenly voices or speaking seem unique to the heavenly places, and with sounds like 'thunder' or 'many waters'. In 1:10 the words 'as of' and 'as it were of a trumpet' show how John literally heard the voice.

The 'voice' conveys to John *'I will show you things which must be hereafter'*. After what? '*Hereafter*' is after the events of chapters 1-4 and the 'seven churches'. The '*hereafter*' arguably also adds weight to the understanding that the seven churches were indeed existing churches of that day.

12:13-17 *'And when the dragon saw that he was cast unto the earth, he persecuted the woman which brought forth the man child. And to the woman were given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness, into her place, where she is nourished for a time, and times, and half a time, from the face of the serpent. And the serpent cast out of his mouth water as a flood after the woman, that he might cause her to be carried away of the flood. And the earth helped the woman, and the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed up the flood which the dragon cast out of his mouth. And the dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ'*.

The 'dragon' persecutes the 'woman' (Israel) which 'brought forth the man child' (Christ the Messiah). But the woman is given 'two wings of a great eagle' to 'fly into the wilderness' to be supernaturally protected for 'a time, and times, and half a time'.

'Eagles wings' are mentioned in Exodus 19:4 in describing how God protected Israel from the Egyptians (see also Deut.32:9,11 and Is.40:31).

The phrase 'a time, and times, and half a time' refers to years as in Daniel 4:16,23,25,32. 'Times' is double the former 'time'; and 'half a time' is half the former 'time' - equalling 3.5 years (Dan.12:7; 13:5). This 3.5 years equals '42 months' and '1,260 days' elsewhere (Dan.12:7; Rev.11:2,3; 12:6,14; 13:5).

Some spiritualise these verses to be simply a long period of time but chapter 4 of Daniel (Nebuchadnezzar's judgement) clearly has 'times' as years. Often in scripture if it is not literal 'years' the text states this (eg. Ez.4:6; Nu.14:34; 2Pet.3:8). For the first four centuries such phrases as the '1260 days' in Revelation were usually interpreted literally, until later allegorical and even mystical interpretations changed this to years.

The 'serpent', representing the Devil, issues from his mouth a 'flood after the woman' (vs.15); but 'the earth helped the woman' (vs.16).

Anti-Semitism is nothing new. Israel in nearly every century has been persecuted and expelled from many nations. Yet there have been remnants of people who have 'helped' the Jews.

The 'dragon was wroth with the woman and...the remnant of her seed' because these 'keep the commandments' and have 'the testimony of Jesus Christ' (vs.17). The commandments here is 'entoles' (not 'nomos' - the law) and is synonymous with the Word of God (1Jn.2:3-7; 1Cor.7:19; 1Jn.3:22).

The 'testimony of Jesus' is again (as in vs.11) those who have testified to being followers of Jesus Christ and their dying to self and even to death.

This chapter summarises a brutal and fearsome part of what is called the time of 'Jacob's Trouble'. Satan pours out his venom against God's Word and his saints.

There is a 'war in heaven' between Satan's angels and God's angels led by 'Michael and his angels'. Only two holy angels are named in Scripture, Gabriel and Michael, both named in the book of Daniel. Michael is described as 'one of the chief princes', 'your prince', 'the great prince' and 'the archangel' (Dan.10:13,21; 12:1; Jude 1:9). He is the guardian of Israel (Dan.12:1) and once contested the body of Moses - (Jude 9).

When this 'war in heaven' occurred we are not told, but it occurred in the heavenlies and so is a spiritual battle of spiritual bodies of which John must have been in awe seeing the replay. Satan 'and his angels were cast out' to 'deceive the whole world' and would wreak final havoc upon the earth in fury and anger (1Pet.5:8). Satan is not the commander of Hell as some suppose, for here he is expelled from Heaven and sent to earth as its ruler (Eph.2:2; Jn.12:31; 14:30; 16:11). His entry to Hell is not till the end (Rev.20).

The 'great dragon' here is described as the 'old serpent', the 'Devil' and 'Satan'. 'Devil' ('diabolos') means 'slanderer' or 'accuser' (Rev.12:10; Rom.8:31-34); 'Satan' means 'adversary'.

12:10-12 'And I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night. And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death. Therefore rejoice, you heavens, and you that dwell in them. Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and of the sea! for the devil is come down unto you, having great wrath, because he knows that he has but a short time'.

There is an outburst of praise upon the news that the Devil who is 'the accuser of the brethren...day and night' before the throne has been 'cast down'. A 'loud voice' proclaims 'salvation...strength...the kingdom of God...the power of Christ' is come. Indeed, Christ continually intercedes for his saints (Rom.8:34)!

There is here also a wonderful description of the overcoming saint! Note the saints do not defeat and 'overcome' Satan with rites, deliverances, 'binding and loosing', rebuking, etc. They 'overcome' by 'the blood of the lamb' (1Pet.1:18,19) - Christ's sacrificial death and shed blood to satisfy God for sin; by their consistent 'testimony' based upon the Word of God; and their dying to self even to death.

All those who dwell in the heavens are urged to 'rejoice'. But an interjection of grief ('woe') is given to the inhabitants of 'the earth and of the sea' because 'the devil is come down having great wrath, because he knows he has but a short time' - the remainder of the 'Great Tribulation'.

The war in Heaven would become an increasing war on the earth.

4:2 'And immediately I was in the spirit: and, behold, a throne was set in heaven, and one sat on the throne'

John was to 'come up' and was 'immediately...in the spirit' which was necessary to see heavenly things. Other examples of people being taken out of body and 'in the spirit' are found in Ezekiel 37:1 and 2 Corinthians 12.

The 'immediate' action here is similar to the phrase 'a moment, in a twinkling of the eye' - the instant changing of the body to a spiritual body (1Cor.15:52,53).

4:3 'And he that sat was to look upon like a jasper and a sardine stone: and there was a rainbow round about the throne, in sight like unto an emerald'

A 'throne' (same Greek word translated 'seat' in vs.4 for the 24 elders) is described in Heaven. The word 'throne' is a key word in this book and mentioned more than 30 times. The scene here is similarly described elsewhere throughout the book of Revelation with the main person on this throne as He 'who lives for ever and ever' (vs.9). God has a 'throne' with Christ on it (Acts 2:30; Heb.8:1; 12:2). (Another vivid description of the throne is also found in Ezekiel 1:26-28).

The description of the precious stones and the rainbow are also found elsewhere and in the 'new Jerusalem' (Rev.21). (Sardius and Jasper were also the first and last stones in the breastplate of the high priest which represented the firstborn and last born of the tribes of Israel).

4:4 'And round about the throne were four and twenty seats: and upon the seats I saw four and twenty elders sitting, clothed in white raiment; and they had on their heads crowns of gold'.

There are twenty four 'seats' surrounding the one 'throne' of Christ. 'Twenty four elders' clothed in 'white raiments' and with 'crowns of gold' sit on these seats. The Greek literally reads 'four and twenty' and should no less be taken as literal than any other number where the original language has a cardinal number. This is literally what John 'saw'.

Who are the twenty four elders? Many symbolic and allegorical interpretations have arisen to do with these elders, too common to detail here and most lacking exegetical accuracy or reasoning. The best we can ascertain is to search what is in scripture alone. These elders are mentioned elsewhere as those who worship the one on the throne (vs.10; 5:9-14; 7:11; 11:16; 19:4); they proclaim him as Christ (5:5,6); and have the 'prayers of the saints' (5:8). The text indicates they are redeemed men from earth as they are 'clothed in white raiment', a phrase used for the imputed righteousness of the saints; and are made 'kings and priests and shall reign on the earth' (5:10). Some say

they are angels, but angels are never said to reign with Christ, are not called 'elders', and do not have 'crowns'.

Their 'crowns' are also not crowns of kings ('*diádema*') but crowns of victory ('*stéphanos*') as redeemed by Christ.

4:5,6 ***'And out of the throne proceeded lightnings and thunderings and voices: and there were seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God. And before the throne there was a sea of glass like unto crystal: and in the midst of the throne, and round about the throne, were four beasts full of eyes before and behind'*** (vs.5,6)

The sights, sounds and 'voices' of this unique place called Heaven are mentioned numerous times in this book. These are often associated with the *presence of God*. Any wonder John had to be '*in the spirit*' to withstand the shock of this distinct and holy place!

The '*seven spirits*' are mentioned in earlier chapters (1:4; 3:1) as that which emanate from Christ, the 'lamb' (see Part 1, 1:4) and arguably referenced in Zechariah 4:10. (Note also the reference to the number seven as an expression of the perfect or complete).

'*Before the throne there was a sea of glass like unto crystal*' - the words '*sea*' and '*like*' show figurative language for what John saw of the area '*before the throne*'. A similar sight was seen by Moses (Ex.24:10). Heaven is a place of brilliant, shining light refracted with magnificence of colours!

The '*four beasts full of eyes before and behind*' are not normal lower earthly beasts ('*therion*') but '*zoós*'. They resemble the creatures in the vision to Ezekiel chapter 1 and the Seraphims in Isaiah chapter 6.

4:7-11 ***'And the first beast was like a lion, and the second beast like a calf, and the third beast had a face as a man, and the fourth beast was like a flying eagle. And the four beasts had each of them six wings about him; and they were full of eyes within: and they rest not day and night, saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come'. And when those beasts give glory and honor and thanks to him that sat on the throne, who lives forever and ever, The four and twenty elders fall down before him that sat on the throne, and worship him that lives forever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying, You are worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for you have created all things, and for your pleasure they are and were created'***.

Is there significance to the four animals? Jewish literature represented these as the primary forms of life in God's creation. Some commentators believe the four faces represent the four domains of God's rule: the man represents humanity; the lion, wild animals; the ox, domestic animals; and the eagle, birds. The twelve tribes of Israel camped under the banners of these animal symbols.

'*Another wonder*' (another 'sign') appears in Heaven - '*a great red dragon having seven heads and ten horns, and seven crowns upon his heads*'. We are told the '*dragon*' is the Devil (vs.9); the heads are world empires (Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, Rome and the future antichrist empire). The 'ten horns' are kings under the antichrist (17:10; Dan.7:23-25).

'*His tail drew the third part of the stars of heaven, and did cast them to the earth*'. The '*stars*' are angels (9:1) and this speaks of when Satan rebelled against God as revealed in verse 9 (see also Is.14:12-15; Ezek.28:12-17). Since that time his abode has been in the atmosphere of the earth (Eph.2:2).

'*The dragon stood before the woman which was ready to be delivered, for to devour her child as soon as it was born*'. Satan is the mortal enemy of the '*woman*', Israel - God's elect nation through which the Messiah would come. The hatred of the Devil towards God's people is seen here in figurative language. The '*dragon*' desired to kill this '*child*', as was seen in Herod's attempt to kill infants under two years of age after hearing of the birth of the Messiah (Lk.4:28-30).

12:5,6 ***'And she brought forth a man child, who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron: and her child was caught up unto God, and to his throne. And the woman fled into the wilderness, where she hath a place prepared of God, that they should feed her there a thousand two hundred and threescore days. She brought forth a man child, who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron: and her child was caught up unto God, and to his throne'***.

The '*man child*' is Jesus born of descendency from king David of the '*woman*', Israel. In his Millennial kingdom Christ will rule '*with a rod of iron*'.

Christ was '*caught up unto God*' - the word '*caught up*' here is the Greek '*harpázo*', Latin meaning 'rapture' (see also Acts 8:39; 2Cor.12:2,4; 1Thess.4:17). Christ was 'raptured' in the ascension back to Heaven.

The '*woman*' (Israel) escapes and is protected for 3.5 years in the '*wilderness*' (vs.14; 11:2,3; 13:5). This corresponds to the last part of the Great Tribulation (Matt.24:21). A remnant left of Israel will be saved (Rom.11:26). Many scholars would have the place in the '*wilderness*' (Matt.24:15-21) as Petra in current day Jordan - it is southeast of the dead sea and a rock city exists there with a narrow gorge leading into it.

12:7-9 ***'And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels, And prevailed not; neither was their place found any more in heaven. And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceives the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him'***.

Part 6 (chapter 11 - *Diakrisis* January/February 2021) - the ‘two witnesses’ preach and the antichrist arises amidst signs and wonders the likes of which have never been seen before since the first coming of Christ.

Part 7 - Chapter 12

12:1,2 ***‘And there appeared a great wonder in heaven; a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars: And she being with child cried, travailing in birth, and pained to be delivered’.***

The word ‘wonder’ is from the Greek word ‘*semeion*’ meaning ‘sign’. This is the first of seven signs before the book of Revelation is finished. This word ‘wonder’ means the ‘woman’ cannot be taken literally as is also obvious from the phrase ‘*sun and the moon under her feet*’. This ‘woman’ is a *sign* representing Israel and reflects Joseph’s dream of Genesis chapter 37. Joseph dreams that ‘*the sun and the moon and the eleven stars bowed down to me*’ (Gen.37:9). The sun represents Jacob, the moon Rachel and the eleven stars Joseph’s brothers. The twelve sons of that family were to become the *twelve tribes of Israel*.

Further, in Revelation the ‘*child*’ (vs.2) is revealed as Jesus Christ who rules ‘*with a rod of iron*’ (Rev.2:27,19:15). Christ is born of the nation Israel (Heb.7:14). The nation Israel is very often characterised as a ‘*woman*’ (Micah 4:9,10 - ‘*a woman in travail*’, and in Is.54:5, Jer.3:8,14; 4:31; 31:32; also compare Gen.39:9 and Rev.12:1). In Revelation 12:13,14, this same ‘*woman*’ is persecuted and flees into the wilderness. Almost all commentators see this ‘*woman*’ as Israel. Indeed, Israel was in much ‘*travail*’ awaiting her Messiah to come.

The Roman Catholic religion claims to fit chapter 12 to be describing Mary. However, much scripture reveals Israel as being persecuted. Mary was never persecuted and never fled into the wilderness. Mary will also not be on earth during that time but the nation Israel will be.

Nowadays, in light of the many studies and published literature on the Book of Revelation, most Roman Catholic commentators now agree that Revelation 12 cannot be used for a Marian interpretation. However, amazingly in some Catholic Bibles, the author has read a footnote which shows the doublespeak of Catholicism: ‘*This woman is not the Blessed Virgin, for the details of the prophecy do not fit her...[but] by accommodation the church applies this verse to the Blessed Virgin*’ (*The Catholic Bible*, P.228).

12:3,4 ***‘And there appeared another wonder in heaven; and behold a great red dragon, having seven heads and ten horns, and seven crowns upon his heads. And his tail drew the third part of the stars of heaven, and did cast them to the earth: and the dragon stood before the woman which was ready to be delivered, for to devour her child as soon as it was born’.***

The ‘*worthy*’ One who is the centre of worship is described emphatically as being ‘*Holy, holy, holy Lord God almighty*’ who has eternally existed (‘*was, and is, and is to come*’ and ‘*lives forever and ever*’). He is rightfully given ‘*honour and thanks*’. The elders ‘*fall down*’ - here the literal definition of ‘worship’. They ‘*cast their crowns*’ down in an act of humiliation and submission. Our own ‘*crowns*’ of any excellence, works or achievements are insignificant before the consuming presence of the Almighty One!

‘*All things and for your pleasure they are and were created*’ - this phrase is pregnant with His sovereignty! - God does not exist for us, we exist and were created ‘*for his pleasure*’ (vs.11).

5:1-4 ***‘And I saw in the right hand of him that sat on the throne a book written within and on the backside, sealed with seven seals. And I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice, Who is worthy to open the book, and to loose the seals thereof? And no man in heaven, nor in earth, neither under the earth, was able to open the book, neither to look thereon. And I wept much, because no man was found worthy to open and to read the book, neither to look thereon’***

There are various ‘*books*’ described in the Bible. Some believe this particular ‘*book*’ was the title deed to the earth and only able to be opened by the creator. Others believe the book here is ‘*The Book of Life*’ described elsewhere and which contain the names of the ‘*overcomers...clothed in white raiment*’ who will have their names confessed before the Father (Rev.3:5) and enter the New Jerusalem (21:27). Any not found in that book will be ‘*cast into the lake of fire*’ (20:12-15).

John initially ‘*wept*’ because ‘*no man...in heaven, nor in earth, neither under the earth*’ can be found ‘*worthy to open*’ this book (vs.6,7).

(‘*Under the earth*’ is literally ‘*under down*’, considered by some to be Hades or the place of the dead as understood in the Old Testament (Is.14:9; Job.10:21,22).

5:5-7 ***‘And one of the elders said unto me, Weep not: behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has prevailed to open the book, and to loose the seven seals thereof. And I beheld, and, lo, in the midst of the throne and of the four beasts, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent forth into all the earth. And he came and took the book out of the right hand of him that sat upon the throne’***

The identity of the only one worthy to open the ‘*book*’ is described as a ‘*lion*’ descendant from the ‘*tribe of Judah, the root of David*’. This is none other than Christ, ‘*the lamb who had been slain*’. In the midst of the beast and elders He ‘*looses the seven seals*’ of the book. He has the perfection, the completeness of ‘*seven horns and seven eyes which are the seven Spirits of God sent forth*’.

The 'seven spirits' was first mentioned in chapter 1 and then again in 3:1; 4:5. Again, by collecting data we saw they are 'before the throne'; they are 'of God'; are 'seven lamps of fire burning before the throne' and the person who has these spirits is the 'lamb' (Jesus Christ) 'having seven eyes which are the seven spirits of God'. (These seven spirits are also mentioned in Zechariah 4:10 and Isaiah 11:1,2). At best we can say they are a searching ministry to the world. Again, it is what John 'saw' that is literal here.

'And he came and took the book out of the right hand of him that sat upon the throne' (vs.7). The anointed of God, the only worthy one, the lion of the tribe of Judah, the lamb slain, is the only one who can take the book from God, elsewhere called 'the ancient of days' (Dan.7).

5:8 'And when he had taken the book, the four beasts and four and twenty elders fell down before the Lamb, having every one of them harps, and golden vials full of odours [incense], which are the prayers of saints'.

The figure of 'golden vials full of odours' is here interpreted as 'the prayers of saints' which are also mentioned as an offering to God in chapter 8:3-5. The whole scene is again one of worship 'before the lamb'.

How important are our prayers to God!

5:9,10 'And they sung a new song, saying, You are worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for You were slain, and have redeemed us to God by your blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; And have made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth'

The worship continues with a 'new song', again centred on the person who is the 'worthy' one to open the book, and the work done by Him in redeeming a people to God by His own blood. These people 'redeemed to God' are those saved by God 'out of every kindred, tongue, people and nation'. They have been 'made kings and priests' (also mentioned in chapter 1:6). The redeemed are 'kings' in that they will rule and 'reign' with Christ and are 'priests' because they offer worship to God.

The phrase 'and we shall reign on the earth' is refused as literal by many today, yet many early church fathers saw it as a literal event. The word 'reign' and 'on' ('epi' - upon) are hardly ambiguous in their plain meaning. There is also much scripture throughout the Old and the New Testaments which clearly has the saints *reigning with Christ, and in Jerusalem*. If we do not take such passages in Revelation to be literal, then why would we take other prophetic books such as Zechariah to be literal, where Jesus is physically coming to the Mount of Olives (Zech.14)? This latter passage also directly correlates with the prophecy in Revelation chapter 20 - that Jesus the Messiah will reign *on the earth* for a thousand years. Similarly, there are many other

Verses 15-17 describe 'voices in heaven' declaring the coming earthly reign of Christ in which 'the kingdoms of the earth' are become 'the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ' in which he shall 'reign'. The Greek tense here (in vs.15 and 18) is peculiarly a Greek futuristic aorist - describing something as already having taken place ('are become') yet the event had not occurred yet.

Much scripture points to a literal Millennial reign of Christ upon the earth on David's throne in Jerusalem (Rev.5:10; Is.2:1-4; 9:6-7; 24:23; Zech.14:1-21; Jer.23:5-8; Mic.4:1-5). Daniel chapter 2 and 7 also look forward to this kingdom.

Note the equality of the two persons of the Trinity here ('Our Lord and his Christ') in this 'kingdom'. At this the 'twenty four elders' in thanks worship God as being eternal ('are, was and to come'). The 'twenty four elders' (mentioned in Chapter 4,5,7,11,19) worship the one on the throne (4:10; 5:9-14; 7:11; 11:16; 19:4); they proclaim him as Christ (5:5,6); and have the 'prayers of the saints' (5:8). They are most likely redeemed men from earth as they are 'clothed in white raiment', a phrase used for the imputed righteousness toward the saints; and are made 'kings and priests and shall reign on the earth' (5:10). They have crowns of victory ('stéphanos') as redeemed by Christ.

The 'anger' of the nations is matched by the 'wrath' of God. The 'dead' are 'judged'; all the believers, those who 'fear his name' are 'rewarded'; and those who 'destroy the earth' with sin and evil will be destroyed.

The temple in Heaven is opened revealing the 'ark of His Testament' in the Holy of Holies, which contains God's law and covenant and place of atonement for sin. The application here is showing a communion, a fellowship with God's people. With this comes the often mentioned 'lightnings...thunderings, an earthquake and great hail' (4:5; 8:5; 16:17,18).

The great final outpouring of God's wrath is under way in the final cosmic battle between the forces of good and evil.

'It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God' (Heb.10:31).

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11:11-14 *'And after three days and a half the Spirit of life from God entered into them, and they stood upon their feet; and great fear fell upon them which saw them. And they heard a great voice from heaven saying unto them, Come up hither. And they ascended up to heaven in a cloud; and their enemies beheld them. And the same hour was there a great earthquake, and the tenth part of the city fell, and in the earthquake were slain of men seven thousand: and the remnant were affrighted, and gave glory to the God of heaven. The second woe is past; and, behold, the third woe comes quickly'*

After 3.5 days the 'Spirit of life' (see Gen.3:7) resurrects the bodies of the two witnesses and they 'stand up'. Fear falls on all who see this. A 'voice from Heaven' raptures them up and this is seen by their 'enemies'. This ascension 'in a cloud' is similar to the Lord's ascension. The second 'woe' strikes the earth with a 'great earthquake' that causes 'one tenth' of Jerusalem to be destroyed and 7,000 killed. Those left in Jerusalem are in fear and repentance, 'giving glory to the God in heaven'. The seventh trumpet and the 'third woe' is coming 'quickly'.

These 'trumpet' judgements are not the same as the 'last trump' (1Thess.4:16; 1Cor.15:52). The former is over a period of time; the latter a 'moment'.

11:15-19 *'The seventh angel sounded; and there were great voices in heaven, saying, The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign forever and ever. And the four and twenty elders, which sat before God on their seats, fell upon their faces, and worshiped God, Saying, We give you thanks, O Lord God Almighty, which are, and was, and are to come; because you have taken to you your great power, and have reigned. And the nations were angry, and your wrath is come, and the time of the dead, that they should be judged, and that you should give reward unto your servants the prophets, and to the saints, and them that fear your name, small and great; and should destroy them which destroy the earth. And the temple of God was opened in heaven, and there was seen in his temple the ark of his testament: and there were lightnings, and voices, and thunderings, and an earthquake, and great hail'.*

Each of the series of judgements (seals, trumpets and vials or bowls) has a parenthetical pause between the 6th and 7th judgement event. Many of the events in this last pause do not occur till chapter 15 and beyond. The seventh trumpet is now preparing the way for the return of Christ, the 'Day of the Lord'.

references to the Messiah's 'reign' on 'David's throne' on earth (Is.9:6-7; Zech.14:1-21; Jer.23:5-8...).

5:11-14 *'And I beheld, and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne and the beasts and the elders: and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands; Saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing. And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in ['epi' - 'upon'] the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sits upon the throne, and unto the Lamb forever and ever. 14 And the four beasts said, Amen. And the four and twenty elders fell down and worshipped him that lives forever and ever'.*

The 'angels, beasts and elders' number 'ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands'. Is this number a literal number or figurative? The Greek has the words 'muriás muriás' which is the word for the English 'myriad' - an innumerable number. The repetition here of 'muriás' would show a large innumerable number as seen by John.

Again, the 'lamb slain' is the centre of worship here by 'every creature'. He is described with a series of adjectives - power, riches, wisdom, strength, honour, glory... This worship will go on 'forever and ever'!

Believer, are you looking forward to and ready for this unfettered and pure worship in a place where we will need to be 'in the spirit' to withstand the shock of seeing and falling down before the lamb slain, our Lord and Saviour?

'Come Lord Jesus'! (Rev.22:20)

In **Part 2** (see ‘Diakrisis’ September/October 2019) we continued with chapters 4,5 and again explored *what should be ‘literal’ or ‘figurative’ and why*; as well as the *timing and order of events*. This was done using standard methods such as finding the same *symbols, signs and wording* elsewhere (‘scripture interprets scripture’).

Part 3 - Chapters 6,7

Chapter 6 begins with what many call ‘*Jacob’s trouble*’ (Jer.30:7), the ‘*great tribulation*’ (Matt.24:21; Rev.2:22; 7:14) or the ‘*seventieth week*’ of Daniel (Dan.9). God’s judgement upon the earth begins as something *never seen before* (Matt.24:21,22). Three distinct judgements now proceed in the following chapters: the seven ‘*seals*’ (ch.6); the seven ‘*trumpets*’ (ch.8); and the seven ‘*vials*’ (bowls) of wrath (ch.16).

Each series of judgements appear to increase in intensity and severity. In the seal judgements 1/4 of the earth is affected; in the Trumpet judgements 1/3 are affected; in the bowl judgements the affliction is devastatingly widespread.

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

The ‘Lamb’ is the one described in previous verses as the only worthy one, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Lamb slain, who takes the book from God who is ‘*The Ancient of Days*’ (Dan.7). John ‘*saw*’ this ‘Lamb’ open one of the seven ‘*seals*’ to come. A ‘*seal*’ (‘*sphragis*’) was an impression upon letters or books for the sake of privacy and security (Rev.5:1,2, 5, 9; 6:1, 3, 5, 7, 9; 8:1). A seal often was used as a mark of something being genuine (Rev. 9:4).

Then John ‘*heard as it were the voice of thunder*’ when one of the ‘*four beasts*’ says ‘*come and see*’. Note the language here is one that can be understood. Many times in this book a ‘*voice*’ is heard and understood. However, sometimes it sounds like a ‘*trumpet*’ (1:10; 4:1); many times described as ‘*loud*’, ‘*great*’ or ‘*strong*’ (5:2,12; 6:10; 7:2,10; 8:13; 10:3; 11:12; 12:10; 14:7,9,15; 16:1,17; 18:2; 19:1,17:21:3), sometimes ‘*as the sound of many waters*’ (1:15).

Here in chapter 6 the voice is as ‘*a noise of thunder*’. The ‘*voice*’ of God is often said to be heard as ‘*thunder*’ (Job.40:9; Ps.77:18; 104:7). Of the 19 times ‘*thunder*’ is mentioned in the Bible, it is invariably from Heaven and at the hands of God himself (Ex.9:23; 1Sam.2:10). In Revelation 14:2 the same sound is heard when the 144,000 sing in Heaven and later for the

they are ‘*the two anointed ones, that stand by the Lord of the whole earth*’ (vs.14). In Zechariah there is a ‘*double reference*’ - the first to two witnesses Joshua and Zerubbabel, but also a future reference to the two witnesses here in Revelation. The symbols of the ‘*olive trees*’ and the ‘*candlesticks*’ most likely refer to a flow of oil from the trees to the lamps and this being Holy Spirit power (Zech.4:6).

11:5,6 ***‘And if any man will hurt them, fire proceeds out of their mouth, and devours their enemies: and if any man will hurt them, he must in this manner be killed. These have power to shut heaven, that it rain not in the days of their prophecy: and have power over waters to turn them to blood, and to smite the earth with all plagues, as often as they will’.***

Is this to be taken literally? Note the similarity to the plagues that were put upon Egypt in the time of Moses which are usually taken literally.

The purpose of miracles is to authenticate the person. Similarly to many such miracles in the Old Testament, these beings have been given great ‘*power*’ to ‘*devour their enemies*’ with ‘*fire*’, ‘*shut the heavens*’ from rain, turn ‘*water to blood*’ and to send ‘*plagues*’ on the earth in the period of 1,260 days.

11:7 ***‘And when they shall have finished their testimony, the beast that ascends out of the bottomless pit shall make war against them, and shall overcome them, and kill them’.***

When the two witnesses finish their ‘*testimony*’ for Christ after 3.5 years, the antichrist ‘*beast*’ arises to full power. This beast is energised by the Devil (he is described as the ‘*dragon*’ in Chapter 12). This here is the first mention of the beast from the ‘*pit*’ who is to be a world ruler (ch.13). He kills the two witnesses.

11:8-10 ***‘And their dead bodies shall lie in the street of the great city, which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also our Lord was crucified. And they of the people and kindreds and tongues and nations shall see their dead bodies three days and a half, and shall not suffer their dead bodies to be put in graves. And they that dwell upon the earth shall rejoice over them, and make merry, and shall send gifts one to another; because these two prophets tormented them that dwelt on the earth’.***

These literal beings from Heaven have ‘*bodies*’ that ‘*lie in the street*’ in Jerusalem (‘*where...our lord was crucified*’), called ‘*Sodom and Egypt*’ (because of the spiritual depravity). People will ‘*see*’ their bodies unburied for ‘*three and a half days*’. The technology for this is now here. The unsaved on the earth will ‘*rejoice*’ and celebrate the deaths as the ‘*torment*’ delivered by them is ended.

Part 5 (chapters 9,10 - Diakrisis November/December 2020) - The sixth trumpet judgement brings a more severe judgement - *death*. More than half the earth's population is now destroyed in divine judgements! The people left alive are unrepentant.

Part 6 Chapter 11

11:1,2 ***‘And there was given me a reed like unto a rod: and the angel stood, saying, Rise, and measure the temple of God, and the altar, and them that worship therein. But the court which is without the temple leave out, and measure it not; for it is given unto the Gentiles: and the holy city shall they tread under foot forty and two months’.***

Most believe this is the temple in the time of the great tribulation. The ‘reed’ was a measuring rod (mentioned again in Rev.21:15,16). Here it says to measure three things - *‘the temple...the altar and them that worship therein’*.

The outer ‘Gentile’ court is not to be measured, for this section and the ‘holy city’ they *‘shall tread under foot forty and two months’*. Luke 21:24 mentions a time when Jerusalem will be *‘compassed with armies’*, there will be *‘wrath upon this people’* and *‘Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled’*. The period of time when Jerusalem will be *‘trodden under foot’* is *‘forty and two months’* - three and a half years.

11:3,4 ***‘And I will give power unto my two witnesses, and they shall prophesy a thousand two hundred and threescore days, clothed in sackcloth. These are the two olive trees, and the two candlesticks standing before the God of the earth’***

The *‘two witnesses’* are literal beings (they have bodies and clothing) and are witnesses for Christ (*‘my two witnesses’*). (Two witnesses are important for a ‘testimony’ to be ‘confirmed’ - Dt.17:6; 19:15 Matt.18:16).

Many believe these two witnesses to be Enoch and Elijah who were translated and did not see death. Others believe they are Moses and Elijah because of the close similarity to the miracles of Moses. Malachi 4:5 prophesies *‘I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord’*.

The two witnesses will ‘prophesy’ for 3.5 years, the last half of the Great Tribulation. ‘Prophesy’ means to *‘speak forth the Word of God’*. They do this in *‘sackcloth’* - a Jewish symbol of mourning (Gen.37:34; Dan.9:3). This preaching will no doubt include judgements and the Gospel. These two witnesses are represented by the figures of *‘two olive trees’* and *‘two candlesticks’*. The same symbols are mentioned in Zechariah chapter 4 where

multitude of worshippers in heaven (19:6). In chapter 6 the *‘noise of thunder’* is to bring the horseman to earth.

John hears *‘one of the four beasts’* say *‘come and see’* (see the ‘four beasts’ described as heavenly creatures in chapter 4:7-11). It appears this is addressed to the rider on the white horse.

6:2 ***‘And I saw, and behold a white horse: and he that sat on him had a bow; and a crown was given unto him: and he went forth conquering, and to conquer’***

The word *‘behold’* coupled with *‘see’* is a rather strong expression pointing to the marvel of this horse and rider. Horsemen with bows were fierce instruments of war mentioned many times in the Old Testament and sometimes were angelic (2Kngs 2; Rev.9). (The imagery here is also similar to Zechariah chapter 6).

John *saw* a *‘white horse’*. It could be said from many other scriptures that white signifies the concept of purity or holiness. This is a rider with a *‘bow’* who is then given a *‘crown’*. Both the *‘bow’* and the *‘crown’* here refer to *victory*. (The word *‘bow’* is the Greek *‘nikáo’* literally referring to something victorious). The *‘crown’* is not a kingly crown (*‘diádema’*) but a crown of victory (*‘stéphanos’*). This rider is set for *‘conquering, and to conquer’*. The picture is of war and victory.

Various figurative interpretations can be derived as to what the horse and who the rider is. Some say the rider is the antichrist, others Christ. This white horse appears again in chapter 19 and there it is undoubtedly Christ. This rider in chapter 6 is given a bow but no arrows - a detail which has baffled many scholars.

The horse and rider is what John literally ‘saw’. In other places some believe John is seeing war machinery which to him looked like giant ‘locusts’, flying objects like great birds, etc. However, the main point here is that these horses are the final long awaited judgements by God upon a rebellious earth.

6:3,4 ***‘And when he had opened the second seal, I heard the second beast say, Come and see. And there went out another horse that was red: and power was given to him that sat thereon to take peace from the earth, and that [so that] they should kill one another: and there was given unto him a great sword’***

Similarly to the first beast, now a second of the four beasts uses the same language *‘come and see’*. Another horse proceeds *‘out’* of Heaven, being *‘red’* in colour (literally a flaming or ‘fiery red’) as seen by John.

‘Power’ is given to the rider *‘to take peace from the earth and that they should kill one another’*. The weapon is a *‘great sword’*. When the *‘peace’*

is *'taken from the earth'* the result is that the inhabitants in unrestraint now *'kill one another'*.

6:5,6 *'And when he had opened the third seal, I heard the third beast say, Come and see. And I beheld, and lo [behold] a black horse; and he that sat on him had a pair of balances in his hand. And I heard a voice in the midst of the four beasts say, A measure of wheat for a penny, and three measures of barley for a penny; and see you hurt not the oil and the wine'*.

'He' (the *'Lamb'* of vs.1) opens the third *'seal'*. A third beast uses the same language *'come and see'*. John then sees *'a black horse'* with a rider with a *'pair of balances in his hand'*. Another *'voice'* speaks out of the midst of the four beasts with instructions as to the quantity and price of wheat and barley. A *'measure'* was considered by some to be near equal to a *'pint'* (about a half litre) which was considered to be an average man's daily allowance. A *'penny'* (*'denáron'*) was considered an average daily wage (Lk.10:30-37). A final instruction is given to not *'hurt'* (damage) the *'oil and the wine'*.

Many believe this is referring to a world wide famine and a financial hyper inflation. With the recent global recession and the Covid 19 epidemic it is not hard to see this occurring *quickly* at any time in the future.

6:7,8 *'And when he had opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth beast say, Come and see. And I looked, and behold a pale horse: and his name that sat on him was Death, and Hell followed with him. And power was given unto them over the fourth part of the earth, to kill with sword, and with hunger, and with death, and with [by] the beasts of the earth'*.

The fourth and last beast again uses the same language *'come and see'*. John looks and sees a *'pale horse'*. The word *'pale'* (*'chlorós'*) refers to a pale green colour. The rider's name was *'Death'*. And *'Hell'* (*'Hades'*) *'followed with'* this rider. The *'power'* given to him was the authority (*'exousía'*) to *'kill with the sword'*, *'with hunger'* (famine) and *'death'* and by wild *'beasts of the earth'* to *one fourth of the earth*. This is surely a frightening judgement.

6:9-11 *'And when he had opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony of the Lamb which they held: And they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, do you not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth? And white robes were given unto every one of them; and it was said unto them, that they should rest yet for a little season, until their fellow servants also and their brethren, that should be killed as they were, should be fulfilled'*.

(Job 38:25, Ps.81:7), especially in judgement as recorded in the plagues of Egypt (Ex.9:23) and in other parts of Revelation (8:5; 11:19). Seven is the complete number of perfection as used many times in scripture and in the book of Revelation. John is about to write what is uttered when he is interrupted by *'a voice from Heaven'* and told not to write but to *'seal up those things which the seven thunders uttered'*. Similarly Daniel was also forbidden to reveal what was prophesied to him (Dan.8:6; 12:9).

The angel then points to Heaven and *'swore by him that lives forever and ever, who created heaven, and the things that therein are, and the earth, and the things that therein are, and the sea, and the things which are therein, that there should be time no longer'*. This is a description of the sovereignty and eternity of God. The reason given is that with the seventh angel and the seventh trumpet judgement *'the mystery of God should be finished'* as declared *'by the prophets'*.

John then hears the same voice from Heaven say *'take the little book'* and John takes the little book from the angel who orders him to *'eat it up'*. He is told *'it shall make your belly bitter but...your mouth sweet as honey'* which then John experiences as he eats. The obvious figurative language here is similarly used elsewhere for the Word of God: *'More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold: sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb'* (Ps.19:10); *'Your words were found, and I did eat them; and your word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart: for I am called by your name, O Lord God of hosts'* (Jer.15:16).

Finally John is told he *'must prophesy before many peoples, and nations, and kings'*.

Today we have that final closed infallible inspired Word concluded in the Book of Revelation - the unveiling of God's judgements and his coming to earth to reign with his saints.

uttered their voices, I was about to write: and I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Seal up those things which the seven thunders uttered, and write them not. And the angel which I saw stand upon the sea and upon the earth lifted up his hand to heaven, And swore by him that lives forever and ever, who created heaven, and the things that therein are, and the earth, and the things that therein are, and the sea, and the things which are therein, that there should be time no longer: But in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he shall begin to sound, the mystery of God should be finished, as he has declared to his servants the prophets. And the voice which I heard from heaven spoke unto me again, and said, Go and take the little book which is open in the hand of the angel which stands upon the sea and upon the earth. And I went unto the angel, and said unto him, Give me the little book. And he said unto me, Take it, and eat it up; and it shall make your belly bitter, but it shall be in thy mouth sweet as honey. And I took the little book out of the angel's hand, and ate it up; and it was in my mouth sweet as honey: and as soon as I had eaten it, my belly was bitter. And he said unto me, You must prophesy again before many peoples, and nations, and tongues, and kings'.

This is a parenthetical passage (a pause) between the sixth and seventh trumpet judgements.

Is this '*mighty angel*' from heaven Jesus or an angel (possibly Gabriel)? Some say the description matches the Christ of Revelation chapter 1 and Daniel chapter 10. But a comparison will show that the Revelation 1:13-18 description is clear and precise as to it being Christ, Him being '*he that lives, and was dead*' and '*out of his mouth went a sharp two-edged sword*'. When Christ is described it comes with titles such as '*the son of man*' (1:13), '*the first and the last*' (1:17) '*the Amen faithful and true*' (3:14), etc. In Revelation chapter 10 here the only description of the appearance of this angel is '*the rainbow upon his head and his face as it were the sun and his feet as pillars of fire*'. This angel also comes out of Heaven *to earth* which would make it too similar to a second coming of Christ. The use of the phrase '*another angel*' also would show that this angel is similar to the previous angels in the trumpet judgements. (The word for '*another*' here is '*allos*', not '*heteros*' which would be used if a different kind of '*angel*', as Christ would be).

What is important about this angel who *covers the whole world* with his one foot '*on the earth*' and the other '*upon the sea*' - is that he holds open a '*little book*'. This book is probably the same one mentioned in Revelation chapter 5 which was there unopened. The entire earth here is to be judged. Some see this book as the '*title deed to the earth*'.

John hears him cry out with a loud voice which is followed by '*seven thunders uttered their voices*'. The '*seven thunders*' arguably would be the voice of God since God's voice in many scriptures is described as thunder

The '*altar*' is probably the heavenly tabernacle mentioned elsewhere in scripture (Rev.15:5); or God himself as the '*tabernacle with men*' (Rev.21:3). Greek commentator Zodhiates speaks of the '*spiritual or celestial tabernacle from which the material one is said to have been copied (Heb.8:2; 9:11 [cf. 8:5; 9:23, 24]); the temple in the heavenly Jerusalem (Rev.15:5; 21:3)*'. Revelation 11:19 and 15:5 also has a '*tabernacle*' in Heaven: '*And the temple of God was opened in heaven, and there was seen in his temple the ark of his testament: and there were lightnings, and voices, and thunderings, and an earthquake, and great hail... (11:19)... And after that I looked, and, behold, the temple of the tabernacle of the testimony in heaven was opened (15:5).*

Under the altar '*the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony of the Lamb*' are told to wait for a '*little season*' so that the blood of martyrs would be '*avenged*' by God. Interestingly, there is a distinct *time* element seen and heard here by John with the saints told to wait '*a little season*' for the judgements to be '*fulfilled*'. We are also reminded that '*vengeance is the Lords*' (Rom.12:19; Heb.10:30; Dt.32:35,41,43; Jds 11:36; Ps.94:1; 149:7). As the martyrs here cry out for justice, so we should rejoice in justice being done (Ps.58:10; Jer.11:20; 20:12). This latter concept is rather strange today to those who see God as a loving God but not a God of justice. But if we have the mind of God and Christ we will rejoice in the final justice of God in his fearsome judgements upon those who afflicted the saints and the religious institutions who slaughtered millions of saints down the running centuries.

Later in chapter 20:4 there is also a mention of saints '*beheaded for the witness of Jesus*' during the '*great tribulation*' and who then '*live and reign with Christ a thousand years*'.

The '*white robes*' (vs.11) are indicative of holiness and the righteousness of the saints. This is repeated in chapter 7 where we are told that these saints with white robes are the martyrs who have come out of the '*great tribulation*' and are '*washed in the blood of the lamb*' (7:14).

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

Earthquakes are common with judgement and several are mentioned throughout the book of Revelation (8:5; 11:13,19; 16:18). Here in chapter 6 the description of the sun becoming 'black' and the moon 'as blood' is similar but not the same as that which will occur 'after the tribulation' and at the second coming of the Lord - when the sun will be 'darkened', the moon will not shine at all and stars will fall (Matt.24:29-31). The sixth seal judgement will see catastrophic events with stars falling 'unto the earth', the heavens rolling up 'as a scroll' and 'every mountain and island moved'. The people of all kinds on the earth clearly understand that this is the 'wrath of the Lamb' and they attempt to 'hide from the face of him that sits on the throne'.

The phrase 'who shall be able to stand' is a reminder that to survive the judgements of God one must be those who God will give 'white robes' to. The righteousness that is needed is a given heavenly righteousness of another - the Lamb. One must be 'washed in his blood' and have a 'testimony'. As Jesus well said - one must be 'born from above' (Jn.3). Anything not born from above is doomed to judgement with the flesh of the earth beneath.

In remarks on chapter seven Zodiates says 'It is clear from 2Thessalonians 2:10-12, 'that those who hear the gospel before the Tribulation and reject it, will be doomed to spend an eternity without Christ. The only ones who can possibly be saved during the Tribulation are those who do not hear the gospel previous to that time'.

7:1-8 ***'And after these things I saw four angels standing on the four corners of the earth, holding the four winds of the earth, that the wind should not blow on the earth, nor on the sea, nor on any tree. I saw another angel ascending from the east, having the seal of the living God: and he cried with a loud voice to the four angels, to whom it was given to hurt the earth and the sea, Saying, Hurt not the earth, neither the sea, nor the trees, till we have sealed the servants of our God in their foreheads. And I heard the number of them which were sealed: and there were sealed a hundred and forty and four thousand of all the tribes of the children of Israel. Of the tribe of Judah were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Reuben were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Gad were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Aser were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Naphtali were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Manasses were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Simeon were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Levi were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Issachar were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Zebulun were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Joseph were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Benjamin were sealed twelve thousand'***.

The force of these creatures is swift and mighty - the 'power is in their mouths and in their tails' which were 'like unto serpents' (vs.19). The 'hurt' they inflict is swift and brutal, killing *one third* of the earth's population with 'fire and brimstone'. The detail of the creatures and the 'one third' deaths shows this is an intentional judgement by a particular means rather any natural disaster.

9:20,21 ***'And the rest of the men which were not killed by these plagues yet repented not of the works of their hands, that they should not worship devils, and idols of gold, and silver, and brass, and stone, and of wood: which neither can see, nor hear, nor walk: Neither repented they of their murders, nor of their sorceries, nor of their fornication, nor of their thefts'***.

The rest of the population not killed is yet defiant of their idolatry. 'The works of their hands' is a phrase used often in the Old Testament for idols made by men and summarised in Acts 7:41.

These people left alive are unrepentant of their 'murders', 'sorceries', 'fornication', 'thefts'. All this is after some years of judgements and even the Jewish evangelists witnessing God's Gospel! It is indicative of the depraved heart of mankind now hardened even further. It does appear here that all the false worship and false religion now comes to a head.

The word 'sorceries' ('pharmakeia') literally refers to drugs, used in Greek culture for either medicinal or poisonous use. Drugs were sometimes also used to gain a higher religious ecstatic state and to commune with deities. 'Pharmakeia' is elsewhere translated 'witchcraft' and 'sorcery' (Gal.5:20; Rev.18:23). The word 'fornication' ('porneia') is any sexual activity outside of marriage.

It is not hard to see here that the world is in a terrible state of evil, sinfulness and is being afflicted with grievous judgements of increasing intensity. It is important to understand that these judgements have been 'stored' up for thousands of years by a longsuffering God (2Pet.3:7-12). Jesus often warned of the 'wrath to come' at an appointed time (Matt.3:7; Lk.3:7; 21:23; Rom.2:5; 1Thess.1:10).

At this time it is also evident that the church and also the convicting power of the Holy Spirit are noticeably absent.

10:1-11 ***'And I saw another mighty angel come down from heaven, clothed with a cloud: and a rainbow was upon his head, and his face was as it were the sun, and his feet as pillars of fire: And he had in his hand a little book open: and he set his right foot upon the sea, and his left foot on the earth, And cried with a loud voice, as when a lion roars: and when he had cried, seven thunders uttered their voices. And when the seven thunders had***

The altar is *'before God'* as the offerings thereof are offered to God only. It was located in front of the veil which separated the Holy of Holies from the Holy Place. In these chapters here the altar becomes an altar of judgement.

9:14,15 The *'voice'* coming from the altar commands the sixth angel with the trumpet to *'loose the four angels which are bound in the great river Euphrates'*. These four angels are *'bound'* which tells us they are evil angels. Holy angels are never said to be *'bound'*. The perfect tense here tells us that these angels were bound in the past and still bound, ready to be loosed to fulfil God's purposes. These angels were imprisoned at the *'river Euphrates'*, a river which was near the site where the first sin began, the first murder, and then the tower of Babel.

The definite article arguably shows these angels were specially designated for this judgement. They were *'prepared for an hour, and a day, and a month, and a year'* - an exact time as God planned.

These angels are no ordinary soldiers in any ordinary army, but are described as supernatural creatures. They are not themselves killed by the fire and brimstone. They are sent with a most deadly judgement *'to slay the third part of men'*. In chapter 6:8 the fourth *'seal'* killed *'one fourth'* of the earth. Now more than half the earth's population will be destroyed by these creatures in divine judgements!

9:16-19 The army of these horsemen is said to be *'two hundred thousand thousand'* as *'heard'* by John. This number could mean a literal number considering the cardinal number *'two'* is used, although the *'thousand thousand'* is indefinite (*'muriás muriás'* - myriads of myriads; indefinite).

A frightening description of the horsemen follows - *'having breastplates of fire...of jacinth...brimstone: and the heads of the horses as the heads of lions; and out of their mouths issued fire and smoke and brimstone'*. The *'breastplates'* are a fiery red; the *'jacinth'* is a dark transparent colour, possibly red or orange. All this comes with the sulfurous burning colour of Brimstone (Gen.19:24; Lk.17:29) and Hell (Rev.14:10; 19:20; 20:10; 21:8).

Psalms 11:6 may also be a prophecy of this event: *'Upon the wicked he shall rain snares, fire and brimstone, and a horrible tempest: this shall be the portion of their cup'*.

Some will designate all this language as figurative only, but nevertheless it is what John *'saw'* and *'heard'* in a literal vision. The fact that these creatures kill men would assume they are real demonic creatures following real commands. The fire and brimstone is as literal as the fire and brimstone is literal in the Lake of Fire.

Chapter 7 contains a parenthetical section between the sixth and seventh seal judgements. The history of the events *pauses* while John is shown another event in Heaven. In this pause angels are told to hold the *'four winds'* and any *'hurt'* upon the earth until 144,000 are *'sealed'* with the *'seal of the living God'* on their foreheads. These 144,000 *'servants'* are grouped into the twelve tribes of Israel. Some change who these people are and spiritualise them to be figurative of other entities, which does a disservice to the text. (Some cults even make the 144,000 to be themselves). The books of Revelation and Daniel have undeniable Jewishness with constant references to the Jews, Jerusalem and the *'New Jerusalem'*.

7:9-17 *'After this I beheld, and, lo [behold], a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands; And cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God which sits upon the throne, and unto the Lamb. And all the angels stood round about the throne, and about the elders and the four beasts, and fell before the throne on their faces, and worshiped God, Saying, Amen: Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honor, and power, and might, be unto our God forever and ever. Amen. And one of the elders answered, saying unto me, What are these which are arrayed in white robes? and whence came they? And I said unto him, Sir, you know. And he said to me, These are they which came out of [the] great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple: and he that sits on the throne shall dwell among them. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes'*.

Another group is now seen in Heaven - the redeemed of the Lord giving worship both to God and the lamb. They attribute their salvation to God and the Lamb. The scene is one of mass worship with *'multitudes'* as well as all the creatures of Heaven prostrating themselves before God on the throne. One of the elders asks a question as to who those with white robes are and where they came from. Although the question is *'already known'* it is answered for the glory of God *'These are they which came out of the great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb'*. They worship God *'day and night'* (vs.15), hunger and thirst no more and feel no more discomfort (vs.16). Everything is supplied by *'the Lamb in the midst of the throne'*!

8:1-5 *'And when he had opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven about the space of half an hour. 2 And I saw the seven angels which stood before God; and to them were given seven trumpets. 3 And another angel came and stood at the altar, having a golden censer; and there was given unto him much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne. 4 And the smoke of the incense, which came with the prayers of the saints, ascended up before God out of the angel's hand. 5 And the angel took the censer, and filled it with fire of the altar, and cast it into the earth: and there were voices, and thunderings, and lightnings, and an earthquake'.*

John sees and hears and experiences a time of 'silence' which in earthly terms was 'about the space of half an hour'. Just as silence pervades a courtroom when the judge is about to render a verdict in a criminal trial, so the occupants of heaven fall silent as they anticipate what the Judge of the universe is about to do with the seventh seal! The 'seven angels stood before God' awaiting orders. (Angels are literally 'messengers' ('*áγγελος*') under the orders of God who announce or perform a duty).

'Another angel' offers worship to God on the altar before the throne with incense and the 'prayers of all the saints'. In the Jewish temple, musical instruments and singing resounded during the time of the offering of the sacrifices, but at the offering of incense solemn silence was kept. These prayers ascend to God from the angels hand upon which the angel takes from the altar and throws it upon the earth. This produces an effect that is so often a part of Heaven and the throne - 'voices, thunderings, lightnings and an earthquake'.

Like birthpangs the judgements increase in intensity as God winds up the affairs of the world. As one reads through these judgements, would it not put the fear of God and a sense of awe into hearts of those who truly 'love His appearing'? (2Tim.4:8). The great judge and loving Saviour says to us 'surely I come quickly' and our response ought to be 'come Lord Jesus'! (Rev.22:20).

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In **Part 4** (chapters 8,9 - see Diakrisis September/October 2020) we saw the second set of seven judgements begin *the Trumpet Judgements* and the increasing intensity in three last graphic 'woes'. A perfect God has to have a perfect judgement!

Part 5 Chapters 9,10

9:13-21 *'And the sixth angel sounded, and I heard a [one] voice from the four horns of the golden altar which is before God, Saying to the sixth angel which had the trumpet, Loose the four angels which are bound in the great river Euphrates. And the four angels were loosed, which were prepared for an hour, and a day, and a month, and a year, for to slay the third part of men. And the number of the army of the horsemen were two hundred thousand thousand: and I heard the number of them. And thus I saw the horses in the vision, and them that sat on them, having breastplates of fire, and of jacinth, and brimstone: and the heads of the horses were as the heads of lions; and out of their mouths issued fire and smoke and brimstone. By these three was the third part of men killed, by the fire, and by the smoke, and by the brimstone, which issued out of their mouths. For their power is in their mouth, and in their tails: for their tails were like unto serpents, and had heads, and with them they do hurt. And the rest of the men which were not killed by these plagues yet repented not of the works of their hands, that they should not worship devils, and idols of gold, and silver, and brass, and stone, and of wood: which neither can see, nor hear, nor walk: Neither repented they of their murders, nor of their sorceries, nor of their fornication, nor of their thefts'.*

9:13 The sixth trumpet judgement brings a more severe judgement - death. The sixth angel sounds a trumpet and John hears 'a voice' (literally 'one voice'). This is a single voice alone 'from the four horns of the golden altar which is before God'.

The voice could be that of the 'Lamb' (Christ) or the angel who was standing at the altar in chapter 8:3.

John here is clearly *seeing* and *hearing*. The altar is clearly Jewish - the horns were the four projecting corners of the Jewish Old Testament altar (Ex.27:2). In chapter 8:3 the 'golden altar' was mentioned and there 'another angel' offers worship to God on the altar before the throne with incense and the 'prayers of all the saints'.

The 'golden altar' here is the heavenly counterpart of the one mentioned four times in the Old Testament (described in detail in the Tabernacle (Ex.30:1-10; 39:8; 40:26), in the duties of the Levites (Nu.4:11), and in Solomon's temple (2Chr.4:19).

them’, the ‘*angel of the bottomless pit*’, whose name is ‘*Abaddon*’ (Hebrew) or ‘*Apollúon*’ (Greek) meaning ‘destroyer’, they are arguably more than likely demonic creatures.

These passages are a graphic account of what is to come. God is a God of perfect judgement. His sovereignty is displayed in total control of the events to wind up the affairs of the world. A perfect God has to have a perfect judgement. Our rescue from any of this judgement is in Christ Jesus who has fully paid the judgement of our sin. He comes quickly.

In **Part 3** (see Diakrisis July/August 2020) we saw the first of three distinct judgements beginning with the seven ‘*seals*’ (ch.6), all increasing in intensity.

Part 4 - Chapters 8:6-9:11

8:6-13 ***‘And the seven angels which had the seven trumpets prepared themselves to sound. The first angel sounded and there followed hail and fire mingled with blood and they were cast upon the earth: and the third part of trees was burnt up, and all green grass was burnt up. And the second angel sounded and as it were a great mountain burning with fire was cast into the sea: and the third part of the sea became blood; And the third part of the creatures which were in the sea, and had life, died; and the third part of the ships were destroyed. And the third angel sounded and there fell a great star from heaven, burning as it were a lamp, and it fell upon the third part of the rivers and upon the fountains of waters; And the name of the star is called Wormwood: and the third part of the waters became wormwood; and many men died of the waters because they were made bitter. And the fourth angel sounded and the third part of the sun was smitten and the third part of the moon and the third part of the stars; so as the third part of them was darkened, and the day shone not for a third part of it, and the night likewise. And I beheld and heard an angel flying through the midst of heaven saying with a loud voice Woe, woe, woe to the inhabitants of the earth by reason of the other voices of the trumpet of the three angels yet to sound!’***

The second set of seven judgements begin - *the Trumpet Judgements*. The angels in turn blow a trumpet followed by a judgement upon the earth.

The first angel sounds and ‘*hail and fire mingled with blood*’ is ‘*cast upon the earth*’. All grass and one third of trees are burnt up. These are literal events no less than the plagues of Egypt were real. (This first trumpet judgement bears a similarity to Exodus 9:22-26). Many have spiritualised these events to be events that have occurred in history, but this makes the interpreter the final authority.

The second angel sounds and ‘*as it were a great mountain burning with fire was cast into the sea*’. The ‘*as it were*’ is the manner in which John saw and could only describe it. It is possible John is seeing a meteor or similar object which would cause the damage described here. The result is ‘*the third part of the sea became blood...the third part of the creatures which were in the sea, and had life, died...the third part of the ships were destroyed*’. (Again similar to one of the plagues of Egypt - Ex.9:14-21). Also note the repetition of a ‘*third part*’ which is mentioned eleven times in this passage of chapter 8 alone and often in other places associated with God’s judgements. In his mercy God does not destroy all.

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The third angel sounds and *'there fell a great star from heaven, burning as it were a lamp'*. Again, note the *'as it were'*. John is describing what he sees *'as it were a lamp'* falling upon *'a third part of the rivers and upon the fountains of waters'*. John calls this a *'star'* which makes the waters to become *'wormwood'*.

The word *'wormwood'* (*'ápsinthos'*) refers to a poisonous bitterness and is mentioned eight times in scripture and associated with judgement (Dt.29:18; Pr.5:4; Jer.9:15; 23:15; Lam.3:15,19; Amos 5:7; Rev.8:11). *'Many men'* die in this judgement because of these poisonous waters.

The fourth angel sounds and *'the third part of the sun was smitten [struck]'* as well as a *'third part of the moon...and the stars'*. All were *'darkened'* so that only a third part of the day and night had light. (Again, similar to Exodus 10:21-23).

The next event is a parenthetical clause, a pause, before the last three trumpet judgements. John *'hears'* an angel *'flying'* through the middle of Heaven. We are not told that angels have wings but we are told they appear to *'fly'* (Rev.14:6). Here the angel warns the *'inhabitants of the earth'* of the three next *'voices of the trumpet of the three angels'*. He cries with *'a loud voice'* - *'woe, woe, woe'*. The word *'woe'* (*'ouai'*) is used 36 times in the New Testament and always in the context of warning or judgement, often used against the scribes and Pharisees. Paul also used it as a warning to himself if he did *'not preach the Gospel'* (1Cor.9:16). It is here an expression of indignation and judgement. The next three judgements are called *'woes'* (9:12) *'by reason of'* what is to come - the stage being set for an increasing intensity in these last three trumpets or *'woes'*.

9:1-12 *'And the fifth angel sounded, and I saw a star fall from heaven unto the earth: and to him was given the key of the bottomless pit. And he opened the bottomless pit; and there arose a smoke out of the pit, as the smoke of a great furnace; and the sun and the air were darkened by reason of the smoke of the pit. And there came out of the smoke locusts upon the earth: and unto them was given power, as the scorpions of the earth have power. And it was commanded them that they should not hurt the grass of the earth, neither any green thing, neither any tree; but only those men which have not the seal of God in their foreheads. And to them it was given that they should not kill them, but that they should be tormented five months: and their torment was the torment of a scorpion, when he strikes a man. And in those days shall men seek death, and shall not find it; and shall desire to die, and death shall flee from them. And the shapes of the locusts were like unto horses prepared unto battle; and on their heads were as it were crowns like gold, and their faces were as the faces*

of men. And they had hair as the hair of women, and their teeth were as the teeth of lions. And they had breastplates, as it were breastplates of iron; and the sound of their wings was as the sound of chariots of many horses running to battle. And they had tails like unto scorpions, and there were stings in their tails: and their power was to hurt men five months. And they had a king over them, which is the angel of the bottomless pit, whose name in the Hebrew tongue is Abaddon, but in the Greek tongue has his name Apollyon. One woe is past; and, behold, there come two woes more hereafter'.

The fifth angel sounds and a *'star'* falls from Heaven. This *'star'* is not a literal star because we are told it refers to a being, an angel who is *given 'the key'* to the *'bottomless pit'*. Angels are referred to as *'stars'* (Rev.12:4). (The author does not see this angel as the same as the *'angel of the bottomless pit'* in vs.11).

The *'bottomless pit'* (*'ábussos'*) is mentioned at least seven times in scripture (Rev.9:1,2,11; 11:7; 17:8; 20:1,3). It refers to a very deep abode, a place where evil beings are confined (*'chained'*). This is not *'Hades'* (the *'Hell'* now), or the *'Lake of Fire'* (the final *'Hell'* - *'géenna'*). Many commentators see this *'pit'* as the *'Hell'* (*'tartaróo'*) mentioned in 2Peter 2:4 where angels are kept.

When the angel *'opens'* the pit *'there arose a smoke...as the smoke of a great furnace; and the sun and the air were darkened by reason of the smoke of the pit'*. If there is *'smoke of a great furnace'* and enough to *'darken the sun and air'*, then arguably this place has fire, as does Hades and Gehenna.

'Locusts' ascend to the earth with *'power as the scorpions of the earth'*, not to hurt vegetation but *'only those men which have not the seal in their foreheads'* (vs.4). Authority (*'exousía'*) is given to these creatures to *'torment'* for *'five months'* but *'not to kill'* men. This torment will be so severe that *'in those days shall men seek death, and shall not find it'*.

These creatures will not harm *'those'* who have *'the seal of God in their foreheads'*. (Perhaps in addition to the 144,000 Jews sealed (7:4) their converts, who turn to Christ during these trumpet judgements, may also receive a seal?)

John sees these creatures as *'like unto horses'* in battle array with *'crowns'*, *'faces of men'* with *'hair of a women'*, *'teeth of lions'*, *'breastplates of iron'* and the sound of their *'wings'* is as of many *'chariots of many horses running to battle'*. They had *'stings in their tails'*. Note the words *'like'*, *'as'*, *'as it were'* which are common when John is describing something future with what he has seen only in his own time and understanding. Many do see the above description of these creatures as strikingly similar to modern day strike aircraft. However, because pronouns are used here and they have a *'king over*