



# **A Fresh Look at Revelation**

by

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Book 2



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**In Part 9** (Chapter 14 - *Diakrisis* July/August 2021) - Chapters 12-14 are an interlude before chapter 14 returns to the judgements. A literal 144,000 Jewish evangelists from the *tribes of Israel* (7:4-8) preach a final ‘*everlasting Gospel*’ to the whole world. Their redemption then comes with worship with harps singing a ‘new song’ (vs.8,9).

Armageddon is further foreshadowed with God’s fury finally poured out in full.

## **Part 10 Chapter 15**

**15:1 ‘*And I saw another sign in heaven, great and marvelous, seven angels having the seven last plagues; for in them is filled up the wrath of God*’**

The word ‘*sign*’ (‘*semeion*’) appears seven times in Revelation, translated as ‘*sign*’ (15:1); ‘*wonder*’ (12:1,3; 13:13), ‘*miracle*’ (13:14; 16:14; 19:20). The Greek word refers to a mark or token of God’s power and here with an end purpose (‘*filled up*’) to show God’s power and ferocity with a future event. Thus the ‘*sign*’ is described as ‘*great and marvelous*’.

The ‘*seven angels*’ repeat the often cardinal number of ‘seven’ which is mentioned 54 times in this book - for ‘*churches*’, ‘*spirits*’, ‘*stars*’, ‘*seals*’, ‘*horns*’, ‘*angels*’, ‘*trumpets*’, ‘*heads*’, ‘*crowns*’, ‘*mountains*’ and here for ‘*plagues*’.

The ‘*seven plagues*’ are seven ‘blows’ or ‘strokes’ (‘*plege*’) as the Greek literally describes them. These plagues are literal as described. It is interesting to note here the inconsistency of some who would take the plagues in Exodus as being literal yet might not take these in Revelation as being so. Others although taking the plagues here to be literal, yet deny a literal interpretation for the 1,000 years in chapter 20. These are just some of the inconsistencies that occur with a non literal hermeneutics.

The phrase ‘*in them is filled up* [‘*teleo*’] *the wrath of God*’ shows the completion [‘*teleo*’] of God’s anger.

In the word ‘*wrath*’ is the strong meaning of no less than His passionate and righteous anger. Many scriptures vividly describe this ‘*wrath*’: ‘*...my determination is to gather the nations, that I may assemble the kingdoms, to pour upon them mine indignation, even all my fierce anger: for all the earth shall be devoured with the fire of my jealousy*’ (Zeph.3:8).

**15:2-4 ‘*And I saw as it were a sea of glass mingled with fire: and them that had gotten the victory over the beast, and over his image, and over his mark, and over the number of his name, stand on the sea of glass, having the harps of God. And they sing the song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, Great and marvelous are your works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are your ways, you King of saints. Who shall not fear you, O Lord, and glorify your name for you only are holy: for all nations shall come and worship before you; for your judgments are made manifest*’.**

This is parenthetical again, and refers to a heavenly scene with redeemed heavenly saints and martyrs as mentioned in previous chapters (ch.6,7,12,14). These include martyrs who had been killed during the Great Tribulation.

The phrase *'I saw as it were'* shows a literal seeing by John. The *'sea of glass mingled with fire'* is John's best way of describing heavenly objects which are far from our earthly understanding. He sees some kind of translucent platform. Similar expressions are found further in Revelation - *'a sea of glass'* (4:6); *'clear glass'* (21:18); *'transparent glass'* (21:21). Moses and others also saw similar in the signing of a covenant (Ex.24:10).

The saints here are *'them that had gotten the victory over the beast, and over his image, and over his mark, and over the number of his name'*. They are become *'victorious over'* the antichrist, his *'image'*, his *'mark'* and the *'number of his name'* (666). They will have victory over these because they firstly had real faith in the Lord and thus resisted the evil one and his methods with his *'image'* and the *'mark'* with its number 666, as detailed in chapter 13.

Each have *'the harps of God'* - they are heavenly harps belonging to God. *'Harps'* are associated with praise and rejoicing (Gen.31:27; Job.21:12; Ps.33:2; 43:4; 71:22; 81:2; 92:3; 95:8; 147:7; 149:3; 150:3; Is.5:12; 23:16), with prophesying (1Sam.10:5, 1Chr.25:3) and as refreshment (1Sam.16:16,23). Revelation 5:8 and 14:2 also refer to harps used to sing similar *'new songs'* about the Lamb - Christ and redemption by His blood.

The martyrs here *'sing the song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb'*. Following the plagues of Exodus, a similar song of triumph was sung by Moses and of Miriam (Ex.15:1-15).

These songs here in chapter 15 are about *'the Lord God almighty'* and his *'works'*, including his judgements to come, being *'great and marvellous'*. The saints sing *'just and true are his ways'* and they call him *'king of saints'*. They ask a question in the context of the fearful judgements to come and in their own now heavenly holiness and glorification: *'Who shall not fear you, O Lord, and glorify your name for you only are holy'*.

*These are the kinds of songs we should be singing in church services and in our daily walk! They are full of who Christ is, His works, His judgements and his character. His character is 'great and marvelous' because of his 'works'. He is 'almighty, just and true' ...in all his ways. He is 'Lord', 'holy' and 'king of saints' and thus follows 'who shall not fear him?'*

These saints also look to the future Millennium on earth when they state: *'all nations shall come and worship before you; for your judgments are made manifest'* (vs.4). There are numerous scriptures which refer to a Millennial reign of Christ on earth. *'And it shall come to pass, that every one that is left of all the nations which came against Jerusalem shall even go up from year to year to worship the King, the Lord of hosts, and to keep the feast of*

*tabernacles. And it shall be, that whoso will not come up of all the families of the earth unto Jerusalem to worship the King, the Lord of hosts, even upon them shall be no rain*’ (Jer.14:16,17).

**15:5-7 ‘And after that I looked, and, behold, the temple of the tabernacle of the testimony in heaven was opened: And the seven angels came out of the temple, having the seven plagues, clothed in pure and white linen, and having their breasts girded with golden girdles. And one of the four beasts gave unto the seven angels seven golden vials full of the wrath of God, who lives forever and ever’.**

‘After that’ signifies time as John saw a second vision of the temple in Heaven. John had seen a similar vision in chapter 11 where there were ‘lightnings, and voices, and thunderings, and an earthquake, and great hail’ (vs.19). The ‘*tabernacle of the testimony*’ refers to the important ‘*ark of the covenant*’, or as here and sometimes elsewhere called the ‘*tabernacle of testimony*’ (Ex.38 & Nu.1).

In the exclamation ‘*behold*’ - John in repetition describes ‘*seven angels*’ having ‘*seven plagues*’... ‘*clothed in pure and white linen, and having their breasts girded with golden girdles*’. Such clothing often suggests holiness and righteousness.

‘*One of the four beasts*’ brings the ‘*seven golden vials*’ (‘*phiale*’ - bowls with a wide mouth). (For description of the four beasts - see chapter 4 in {Book 1 part 2 page 14} and also ‘*Diakrisis*’ Sept/Oct 2019).

The first of God’s wrath is seen in the seven seals (6:1–17). The seventh seal contains the seven trumpet judgments (8:1-13; 9:1-21; 11:15-19). Then out of the seventh trumpet judgment comes the seven vials (bowls) of God’s final wrath (Chs.15 & 16).

The judgements will be devastating and will end (vs.1 ‘*filled*’ - ‘*teleo*’) the wrath of God. The judgements on mankind and the earth will end in this ‘filling up’ by the God described here as the one who ‘*lives forever and ever*’.

**15:8 ‘And the temple was filled with smoke from the glory of God, and from His power; and no man was able to enter into the temple, till the seven plagues of the seven angels were fulfilled’**

The ‘*smoke*’ signifies the ‘*glory of God*’ which the Old Testament Jews understood from the presence of God in their temple (Ex.40:34; 2Chr.5). In these times no man could enter the thick glory cloud. The glory of God also appeared in the cloud which went before the people in their travels and as a fire by night (Ex.chs.13 & 40).

John says ‘*no man was able to enter into the temple*’ until God’s wrath is satisfied when the ‘*seven plagues*’ be ‘*fulfilled*’ (‘*teléo*’ - completed, ended). The antichrist and false prophet and all unbelievers will then finally be sentenced to an eternal ‘*Lake of Fire*’ (Rev.19:20; 20:10,14,15).

Today many earthlings worry about ‘global warming’, viruses and new and popularised social issues, but what of these horrifying and fearful judgements to come when God will pour out his fury? He has poured out fury before in Adam and in Noah and the flood, and in various events with Israel, but this fury is final and the one stored up over millennia. The warnings of this are frequent in scripture - the ‘*day of the Lord*’ is frequently mentioned in many books (Joel; Amos 4; Is.13:6-9; Zeph 1:14-18...).

However, there is another ‘wrath’ poured out which enables the believing saint to escape all the fury of Revelation chapter 15. Before the foundation of the world, God and the Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, agreed on a plan to redeem a race of ‘new creatures in Christ’. That plan was to send the Son as the final Lamb to be crucified by sinful man. Christ would be the redeemer of those who would believe on Him, his death and shed blood for them as a substitutionary sacrifice to satisfy the wrath of the Father upon sin and the ‘wrath to come’, even as described in Revelation. This same Lamb and King of kings is coming quickly to take his saints to glory!

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In **Part 10** (chapter 15 - *Diakrisis* September/October 2021) we see an introduction to the final horrific ‘vial’ (bowl) judgements. The angels stand ready. The saints stand in awe and sing in worship to a majestic holy God, but a God of wrath who has warned of such judgements (Joel 2:28-32; Zech.14:1; Mal.4:1-5).

## **Part 11 Chapter 16**

Many figurative interpretations have been proposed for the judgements in this chapter - they include the history of the French revolution, the papacy...and more. Such interpretations are as plentiful as is fanciful, and history has proved the inadequacy of such spiritualising of scripture. There is no consistent hermeneutical reason why these judgements cannot be interpreted literally,, especially when several of the judgements match the plagues put upon Egypt, which strangely are usually interpreted as literal by those who would not have the same in Revelation.

**16:1 *‘And I heard a great voice out of the temple saying to the seven angels, Go your ways, and pour out the vials of the wrath of God upon the earth’.***

A ‘*great voice*’ is heard ‘*out of the temple*’. The Greek word for ‘*great*’ (‘*megas*’) occurs 18 times in Revelation, often for announcements or important events and is translated as either a ‘*great voice*’ or ‘*loud voice*’.

At the authority of God the final judgments for the wrath of God are to poured out by seven angels - upon the *earth* (vs.2), the *sea* (vs.3), *rivers and fountains of water* (vs.4), the *sun* (vs.8), the *throne of the beast* (vs.10), the *river Euphrates* (Vs.12) and upon the *atmosphere* (vs.17).

**16:2 *‘And the first went, and poured out his vial upon the earth; and there fell a noisome and grievous sore upon the men which had the mark of the beast, and upon them which worshiped his image’***

‘*Noisome*’ is translated from an old word meaning something evil, bad, offensive and intensifies the words ‘*grievous sore*’ (or ulcer). A similar judgement affected the Egyptians (Ex.9:9-11). This detestable condition is selectively put upon ‘*the men* [*‘anthropos*’ - mankind] ‘*which had the mark of the beast, and upon them which worshiped his image*’. Chapter 14:9-11 already warned of the consequences for taking this ‘*mark*’ - being eternal fire in eternal judgement.

**16:3 *‘And the second angel poured out his vial upon the sea; and it became as the blood of a dead man: and every living soul died in the sea’.***

The second of the seven angels pours out judgement ‘*upon the sea*’ which becomes ‘*as the blood of a dead man*’ - (similar to the coagulated dark blood of a corpse), and ‘*every living soul died in the sea*’.



In 1914 a ‘*red tide*’ phenomenon on the Californian coast caused a toxic putrid waste and the death of marine life. But this second bowl judgement will be the complete destruction of all sea life, (unlike the one ‘*third part*’ in Revelation 8:9).

**16:4-7 *‘And the third angel poured out his vial upon the rivers and fountains of waters; and they became blood. And I heard the angel of the waters say, you are righteous, O Lord, which are, and was, and shall be, because you have judged thus. For they have shed the blood of saints and prophets, and you have given them blood to drink; for they are worthy. And I heard another out of the altar say, Even so, Lord God Almighty, true and righteous are your judgments’.***

Now an angel renders the rivers and fountains to also become ‘*blood*’.

Here now is a parenthetical passage (vs.5-7) defending the actions of God. The angel announces God’s judgements are ‘*true and righteous*’ (vs.7) because His character is ‘*righteous*’ (vs.5). At least part of this third judgement is because ‘*they have shed the blood of saints and prophets*’ and God deems them ‘*worthy*’ (deserving) to give them ‘*blood to drink*’.

The word ‘*prophets*’ here arguably has a wide use of the word to include all those who by definition of ‘*prophesy*’ - spoke forth the word of God (1Cor.14:1,3) and were martyred (6:9-11).

There are many today who would soften the harshness of the actions of God here and attempt to reconcile his wrath. But a high view of sin and God’s hatred for such will have Him free to act in vengeance and wrath how He pleases, for ‘*...shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?*’ (Gen.18:25); and ‘*...the judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether*’ (Ps.19:9).

**16:8,9 *‘And the fourth angel poured out his vial upon the sun; and power was given unto him to scorch men with fire. And men were scorched with great heat, and blasphemed the name of God, which has power over these plagues: and they repented not to give him glory’.***

Again, many commentators do not teach these judgments as literal. One says ‘*It cannot be supposed that the sun would be literally made hotter, or that the exact nature of these calamities would be that people would be consumed by its rays*’ (Barnes). Some believed the ‘*sun*’ to be the French empire, a king, a Roman emperor or the Papacy; and the judgement the French revolution. Others have stated it is the Saviour as the ‘*sun of righteousness*’ (Mal.4:2); and the ‘*fire*’ is only a symbol of suffering. But these would seem to minimise the God who created and controls such things by his Word. Is God not capable of making the sun hotter (real ‘*global warming*’) and men to be ‘*scorched*’ and ‘*few being left*’ (Is.24:4-6)?

Despite this judgement *'men...blasphemed the name of God, which has power over these plagues: and they repented not to give him glory'*. The purpose was arguably not to produce repentance but to show and harden what is already in the heart of sinful mankind (Rev.9:21). The ultimate purpose of all these final judgements is that *God receives glory*. Unrepentant sinners cannot give God glory when they *'repented not of the works of their hands, that they should not worship devils, idols of gold, and silver, and brass, and stone, and of wood...Neither repented they of their murders, nor of their sorceries, nor of their fornication, nor of their thefts'* (Rev.9:20,21). This is in contrast to the *'remnant'* believers who in affliction do give God glory (Rev.11:13; 15:4).

***16:10,11 'And the fifth angel poured out his vial upon the seat of the beast; and his kingdom was full of darkness; and they gnawed their tongues for pain. And blasphemed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores, and repented not of their deeds'.***

The fifth judgement is poured out onto the *'seat'* (throne) of the *'beast'* - perhaps the capital of antichrists kingdom (2:13) as given by the *'dragon'* (13:2). Many today believe this to be Babylon rebuilt.

The Reformers, although they delved little into prophecy, often saw prophetic portions of scripture to be about the Papacy. Their thinking was arguably coloured by the Romanism of the times - Babylon was the Papacy; the man of sin was the Pope. The danger is that today many still follow such interpretations as being sure, without examining the texts for themselves to discern what the texts say and *do not say*. Arguably we should have more light now than what the Reformers did then.

This judgement (vs.10,11) (is strikingly similar to the plague in Exodus 10:21-29). *'They gnawed their tongues for pain'* in physical and mental anguish, perhaps made worse by the *'darkness'*. This affliction is also strikingly similar to the description of the torment of Hell (Hades Lk.16:23-25; Gehenna/Lake of Fire Mk.9:44,46,48; Rev.20:10) - *'torment'* that includes *'wailing...weeping and gnashing of teeth'* (Matt.8:12; 13:42,50; 22:13; 24:51; 25:30; Lk.13:28).

Again, the unbelieving world *'blasphemed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores, and repented not of their deeds'*.

The *'God of heaven'* here is the same God that punished Nebuchadnezzar who displayed pride against God (Dan.4). The fate of the unrepentant here is doomed, for those who take the *'mark of the beast'* shall *'drink of the wine of the wrath of God...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...'* (Rev.14:10,11).

The passage does not state that the beast loses his kingdom for that is yet to come in following chapters.

16:12-16 *'And the sixth angel poured out his vial upon the great river Euphrates; and the water thereof was dried up, that the way of the kings of the east might be prepared. And I saw three unclean spirits like frogs come out of the mouth of the dragon, and out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet. For they are the spirits of devils, working miracles, which go forth unto the kings of the earth and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty. Behold, I come as a thief. Blessed is he that watches, and keeps his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame. And he gathered them together into a place called in the Hebrew tongue Armageddon'*.

A sovereign act of God prepares the way for evil to have its climax! The Euphrates is *'dried up'* so God's enemies can come to battle. Again, many commentators make the *'Euphrates'* to be *'Turkish power'*, or the *'three spirits'* to be *'monks, knights, or clergy'* and similar...But again, is the God who created the rivers and controls the weather not able to *'dry up'* and use *'unclean spirits like frogs come out of the mouth'* of the devil, the antichrist and his false prophet, to *'work miracles'* and entice the kings of the world to come to a final battle with God? (Note the similarity to the literal plague of frogs in Exodus chapter 8).

The *'dragon'* here is Satan who *'gave him [the antichrist] his power, and his seat, and great authority'* (13:2).

There would be many who would replace Israel with the *'church'* throughout this book. But the scriptures that declare the Lord will fight against the nations and for *Israel* in a final battle are very numerous. He will *'gather all nations and will bring them down into the valley of Jehoshaphat'* (Joel 3:2). (See also Joel 2:3).

**Vs.13** here is parenthetical between the 6th and 7th final bowl judgements. Here we are told the frogs *'are the spirits of devils'*. (Note that frogs were unclean to the Jews - Lev.11:10,41). They *'work miracles'* (literally *'signs'*), and God uses them to bring the *'kings of the earth'* to battle.

Psalms 2 describes in general the ages of this *'rage'* by the *'kings of the earth... against the Lord and against his anointed'* culminating in Christ reigning *'with a rod of iron'* in the Millennial reign.

**Vs 15** has an interjection: *'behold, I come as a thief'* - that is, at a time least expected. *'Blessed is he that watches, and keeps his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame'*. We can be ready by *'watching'*, being active in the process of sanctification and the fight against sin and the lusts of the flesh, so as not to be as *'naked'* and *'shameful'* at his coming (Rev.3:18).

**Vs.16** *'He gathered them together into a place called in the Hebrew tongue Armageddon'*. This 'place' is in the plains of Esdraelon near Meggiddo, about 60 miles north of Jerusalem. Other Battles were fought here (Jdg 5:19; 2Kngs 23:29).

**16:17** *'And the seventh angel poured out his vial into the air; and there came a great voice out of the temple of heaven, from the throne, saying, It is done'*.

The final bowl judgement here is likely that described in Rev.11:19 (see {Book 1 part 6 page 36} and '*Diakrisis*' Jan/Feb/2021). The judgement of God's wrath is poured out upon the atmosphere, upon the Devil, the prince of the power of the air, and upon the unrepentant on earth.

The '*great [loud] voice out of the temple of Heaven and from the throne*' shows it is the voice of God (Rev.4:2) who says '*it is done*'. The '*done*' here, in the perfect tense, shows a completed action with ongoing results, similar to the '*it is finished*' spoken by our Lord at Calvary.

**16:18-21** *'And there were voices, and thunders, and lightnings; and there was a great earthquake, such as was not since men were upon the earth, so mighty an earthquake, and so great. And the great city was divided into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell: and great Babylon came in remembrance before God, to give unto her the cup of the wine of the fierceness of his wrath. And every island fled away, and the mountains were not found. And there fell upon men a great hail out of heaven, every stone about the weight of a talent: and men blasphemed God because of the plague of the hail; for the plague thereof was exceeding great'*.

This '*great earthquake*' is '*such as was not since men were upon the earth, so mighty an earthquake, and so great*'. Whole '*cities of the nations fell*'. The '*voices, and thunders, and lightnings*' herald this '*mighty...great earthquake*' described in Zechariah 14:2-4 where God says '*I will gather all nations against Jerusalem to battle...And his feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem on the east, and the mount of Olives shall cleave in the midst thereof toward the east and toward the west, and there shall be a very great valley; and half of the mountain shall remove toward the north, and half of it toward the south*'.

The '*fierceness*' of this wrath is devastating and widespread as '*every island fled away, and the mountains were not found*'. The '*great city*' is '*divided into three parts*' but does not completely '*fall*' like the '*cities of the nations*' (Rev.11:13 - one tenth falls). The descriptions of this '*great city*' arguably matches Jerusalem. Revelation 11:8 already described it as '*...the great city, which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also our Lord was crucified*'.

Babylon, mentioned in detail in later chapters, is destroyed. The phrase ‘*came into remembrance*’ shows God has not overlooked his wrath upon this city ‘*to give unto her the cup of the wine of the fierceness of his wrath*’. The use of the two words here ‘*fierceness*’ (‘*thumos*’) and ‘*wrath*’ (‘*orge*’) shows the intensity of a passionate, settled and mindful anger. Both are similarly used in Jeremiah 30:24 - ‘*The fierce anger of the Lord shall not return, until he have done it, and until he have performed the intents of his heart: in the latter days you shall consider it*’.

As stated previously, the Reformers believed this Babylon to be papal Rome; others today think it is the whole world system - religious, political, financial. (This author leans toward it being a literal city due to the description in ch.18).

To add to the earthquake ‘*a great hail out of heaven*’ will fall upon the earth. ‘*Every stone*’ will be ‘*the weight of a talent*’ (Attic approx. 55 lbs/25kg; Jewish 75-100lbs). Whatever measurement is adopted, this weight will be up to 50 times heavier than the heaviest hailstone recorded thus far (approx. 2lb). Many commentators simply have refused to take this literally. But again, were the plagues of Egypt literal? And why cannot God, who first made the hail and as shown throughout the scriptures controls rain and storms, make hail of this size?

Not all die in this plague as yet again ‘*men blasphemed God because of the plague of the hail; for the plague thereof was exceeding great*’. This should cause the reader to remember *signs and wonders in themselves cannot bring repentance*.

These plagues here are similar to the plagues upon Egypt (with hail, darkness, blood, insects), yet here quite final. The will of God upon the earth will be ‘*done*’ as it is done in Heaven (vs.17, Matt.6:10), and the ‘*day of the Lord*’ will come in such fashion as described in this chapter and in many other scriptures (Joel 2:2; 3:14,15; Is.2;14-17; Jer.4:23-25). The earth, its elements and all unbelieving humans are condemned. *The truth of the depravity of the heart of man is shown!*

We are warned here of the dangers of unbelief and hardness against God and his Word (Heb.4:7). We are exhorted not to be lazy and in *watching* and *waiting* for His coming, *looking* upwards for our redemption draws close (Lk.21:28)!

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In **Part 11** (chapter 16 - *Diakrisis* November/December 2021) the seven angels, by the authority of God, pour out the final vial (bowl) judgements upon the earth. God dries up the Euphrates to bring his enemies to a final battle. The will of God upon the earth will be ‘*done*’ and the truth of the depravity of the heart of man is shown in the continued lack of repentance.

## **Part 12 Chapter 17**

Chapter 17 is a fascinating parenthesis between chapter 16 and 18, pausing to look at what happens during the 7th vial (bowl) judgement. It is essentially a description of the end time world wide false religion, as a tool of the antichrist’s (the beast’s) kingdom and his master, Satan. Chapter 17 here is the spiritual nature of antichrist’s kingdom; chapter 18 is then the physical.

**17:1,2 ‘*And there came one of the seven angels which had the seven vials, and talked with me, saying unto me, Come; I will show unto you the judgment of the great whore that sits upon many waters: With whom the kings of the earth have committed fornication, and the inhabitants of the earth have been made drunk with the wine of her fornication*’.**

One of the angels of the last judgements calls John to come and view one of the results of the seven vial (bowl) judgements, concerning the ‘*whore*’ who controls many ‘*waters*’ - that is, ‘*peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues*’ (vs.15). The ‘*kings of the earth*’ have committed spiritual immorality (‘*porneia*’) with this prostitute with whom the ‘*inhabitants of the earth have been made drunk with the wine of her fornication*’, (the ‘*inhabitants if the earth*’ being a phrase used for unbelievers).

The figurative language here is obvious with the imagery of a prostitute who ‘*sits*’ on many ‘*waters*’, and unbelievers being made ‘*drunk*’ with her ‘*wine*’. The more literal interpretation is given in later verses and again in chapter 18. Jeremiah uses the same language for spiritual adultery: ‘*Babylon has been a golden cup in the Lord’s hand, that made all the earth drunken: the nations have drunken of her wine; therefore the nations are mad*’ (Jer.51:7).

Most of the Reformers and early commentators saw this description of the ‘*woman*’ as being papal Rome. ‘*What could better describe the influence of Rome on the people of the world, in making them, under these delusions, incapable of sober judgment, and in completely fascinating and controlling all their powers?*’ (Barnes). Others in more modern times see this as the apostate ecumenical church.

**17:3 ‘*So he carried me away in the spirit into the wilderness: and I saw a woman sit upon a scarlet colored beast, full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns*’.**

John is ‘*carried away*’ outside of himself (literally ‘*in spirit into the wilderness*’). He ‘*sees*’ and describes a ‘*woman*’. [See vs.7 for description of the ‘*beast*’ and ‘*seven heads and ten horns*’]

17:4 ‘***The woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet color...’***

Like a prostitute she is ‘*arrayed*’ to attract. It is difficult not to see this as a religious system rich and pompous in its own right. The scarlet color has been a predominant color of the hats, coats and dressings of the Pope and his Cardinals.

‘***and decked with gold and precious stones and pearls...***’ - If Rome is being referred to here it certainly does match with its wealth and riches well beyond any other institution on earth. The Vatican has enormous investments and shares in numerous banks and companies throughout the world. Historically it is said to be the largest financial power, wealth accumulator and property owner in existence.

‘***having a golden cup in her hand full of abominations and filthiness of her fornication***’ - like the ancient Babylon (Jer.51:7) this system is full of abominable doctrines and practices.

17:5 ‘***And upon her forehead was a name written, MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH***’

The word ‘*Mystery*’ which is an integral part of the title shows it to be interpreted in a spiritual sense. This is a ‘*mystery*’ religious system but which also has a literal city (vs.18). The author’s book ‘*To Catholics Whom I Love*’ details the connection between the modern Roman Catholic religion and the Babylonian religion of old (see ch.10 ‘*This Babylonian Religion*’). For a further in depth analysis see Alexander Hislop’s ‘*The Two Babylons*’.

Many rituals and pagan practices in the world today stem directly from this Babylonian religion. The ‘*Babylon*’ here is a spiritual (‘*mystery*’) system with roots to a Babylon which was considered the source of false religion, depicted in the title ‘*mother of harlots and abominations of the earth*’. The literal Babylon began after the flood with the tower of Babel and rebellion (Gen.11). Nimrod (Noah’s great grandson) was its leader. It became a centre of Idolatry (Jer.44:15-19) and was rebuked by Jeremiah for such which included the worship of Ishtar and the ‘*Queen of Heaven*’ (Jer.44:20-27).

Nimrod’s mother and later wife - Semiramis, (an incestuous relationship), who had a child Tammuz. In the religion that developed the mother and her son were worshipped. It is a fact that Rome took on many of these pagan characteristics from the countries she dominated. Rome’s Julius Caesar was recognised as ‘*Pontifex Maximus*’ in 63 BC. In AD 378 the Bishop of Rome, (Damasus), was elected to this position of ‘*Pontifex Maximus*’. From here

on the Roman Church further took on the mysteries of pagan origin. Pagans worshipped gods associated with days, occupations and events, and the Roman Catholic Church had the same systems adapted to ‘saints’. Scapulars, medals, holy water, fish on Friday, Lent, secret confessions and the clothing of Popes are all remnants of paganism.

Rome certainly speaks of ‘mysteries’ in its sacraments and communion (the *Eucharist*). The doctrine of the bread and wine being turned into the real body and blood of Christ (‘Transubstantiation’) is said to be a ‘mystery’, a doctrine which caused the loss of multitudes of lives of the martyrs who rejected it. The word *‘mystery’* was formerly upon the frontlet of the Pope’s mitre, but removed by Pope Julius III (1487-1555), when the Protestants made use of this passage of Scripture, and applied it to the Romish antichrist (see Gill’s commentary).

**17:6 *‘And I saw the woman drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus’***

This should prove that we are dealing here with a religious institution. No other religious organisation has martyred and killed as many saints as the Roman religion. From the Reformation to the bloody inquisitions (approx. 20 million killed), the massacres at Piedmont (10,000 slaughtered) and the Bartholomew massacre (70,000 slaughtered). Between 1540-1570 it is estimated that 900,000 were killed. Up to 50 million have been martyred by evil Popes in the last 1,500 years. (1)

**17:7 *‘And the angel said unto me, Wherefore did you marvel? I will tell you the mystery of the woman, and of the beast that carries her, which has the seven heads and ten horns’.***

The beast is obviously the antichrist (13:1-6; 14:9) who has a kingdom (16:10). In verse 3 we were told He is *‘full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns’* as also described in 13:1. The *‘blasphemy’* is something spoken against God and His name (13:6). These names, the Reformers and many other commentators believed, referred to the blasphemous doctrines of papal Rome, which included new doctrines and forms of worship such as Transubstantiation, images and idolatry, Marian devotion, indulgences, commanding celibacy, forbidding marriage to priests, not to mention the documented evil popes involved in murder, adultery, sodomy, perjury, etc.(2) This same ‘beast’ will *‘speak great words against the most High, and shall wear out the saints of the most High, and think to change times and laws: and they shall be given into his hand until a time and times and the dividing of time’* (Dan.7:25); *‘He shall exalt himself, and magnify himself above every god, and shall speak marvelous things against*

(1) Documented in the author’s book *‘To Catholics Whom I Love’*

(2) Ibid above



*the God of gods...*’ (Dan.11:36); ‘He shall *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.2:3). He is called ‘*the man of sin*’ and ‘*that wicked one*’ (2Thess.2:4,8). He will be a great leader (Dan.7:20) with political stealth and craftiness (Dan.8:25; 11:21).

Chapter 13:5 says ‘*Power [authority] was given unto him to continue forty and two months [3.5 years]. And he opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme his name, and his tabernacle, and them that dwell in heaven*’. This verse matched 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...*’.

This ‘*woman*’ and the ‘*beast*’ support each other for a time until the beast will ‘*hate*’ the woman and destroy her (vs.16).

‘***The beast...has the seven heads and ten horns***’ - this repeats the description of the same beast from 13:1. (Vs.9 below interprets the ‘*seven heads*’).

**17:8 ‘*The beast that you saw was, and is not; and shall ascend out of the bottomless pit, and go into perdition: and they that dwell on the earth shall wonder, whose names were not written in the book of life from the foundation of the world, when they behold the beast that was, and is not, and yet is*’.**

The phrase ‘*was and is not*’ probably refers to chapter 13 where the antichrist is ‘*wounded to death*’, but miraculously comes back to life (13:3) after he goes ‘*into perdition*’ (‘*apoleia*’ - referring to a temporary death or temporary destruction). It is this sign that caused many unsaved (‘*whose names were not written in the book of life from the foundation of the world*’) to ‘*wonder*’ (vs.8) and ‘*worship the dragon and the beast*’ (13:4,8) [see Book 1 Part 8 Chapter 13 page 45 and *Diakrisis* May/June/2020].

The antichrist here is described as demonically possessed, ‘*ascending out of the bottomless pit*’ (11:7) where the demonic angels are kept (9:11; 20:1).

**17:9 ‘*And here is the mind which has wisdom. The seven heads are seven mountains, on which the woman sits*’**

We are told here that the ‘*seven heads are seven mountains, on which the woman sits*’. Ancient Rome was the only city in John’s time that had the reputation of being ‘*the seven-hilled city*’, ‘*the seven headed city*’ and standing ‘*upon seven hills*’ as noticed by numerous poets and philosophers (see Gill’s commentary where the mountains are named as Capitolinus,

Palatinus, Aventinus, Esquilinus, Coelius, Viminalis and Quirinalis). Rome had a national festival called *Septimontium*, the feast of the seven-hilled city. On imperial coins, Rome was represented as a *woman seated on seven hills*.

(1) The woman ‘sits’ on these ‘mountains’.

**17:10,11 ‘And there are seven kings: five are fallen, and one is, and the other is not yet come; and when he comes, he must continue a short space. And the beast that was, and is not, even he is the eighth, and is of the seven, and goes into perdition’.**

‘Seven kings’ would imply seven kingdoms. Daniel chapter 7 details seven kingdoms or empires. Many commentators believe these to be the seven kingdoms of Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Medo Persia, Greece, Rome, and antichrist’s final kingdom as depicted in Daniel.

The ‘five are fallen’ are obviously the earlier fall of Egypt (Ezek.29:1-30:26), Assyria (Nah.3:1-19), Babylon (Dan.5; Jer.50), Persia (Dan.8:3-7; 8:20-22; 10:13; 11:2) and Greece (Dan.11:14). The ‘one is’ is obviously Rome, the dominant power at the time of John. The ‘one not yet come’ is a future antichrist’s kingdom.

‘**The beast that was, and is not**’ repeats the information in verse 8 referring to the antichrist’s seeming death and resurrection (see vs.8 above).

‘**when he comes, he must continue a short space**’ - the ‘short space’ (‘oligos’) meaning literally a ‘small’, brief amount of time.

‘**He is the eighth, and is of [‘ek’ - out of] the seven**’ - refers to the two phases of antichrist’s rule, being initially out of the seven kingdoms and then an eighth and final kingdom that opposes God.

**17:12-14 ‘And the ten horns which you saw are ten kings, which have received no kingdom as yet; but receive power as kings one hour with the beast. These have one mind, and shall give their power and strength [authority] unto the beast. These shall make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them: for he is Lord of lords, and King of kings: and they that are with him are called, and chosen, and faithful’**

These futuristic ‘ten kings’ are here distinguished from the ‘seven kings’ of verse 10. The ‘ten horns’ on the beast are ‘ten kings’ who receive power (‘exousia’ - authority) ‘one hour with the beast’. The ‘one hour’ (‘horas’) is a figure of speech for a definitive short division of time.

Some commentators, with some difficulty see these kings as past emperors. But which ten emperors did ever support the beast and ‘make war with the Lamb’?

(1) Coin of Vespasian, described by Captain Smyth in ‘Roman Coins’, P.310; Ackerman, 1, P.87.

Daniel chapter 7 speaks of these *'ten kings'* which Revelation describes here as of *'one mind'* and will give power and authority (*'excousia'*) to the beast.

The antichrist supporters will *'make war with the Lamb'* but *'the Lamb shall overcome them'*. This is a forecast of the battle of Armageddon and the final defeat of all the enemies of God (19:9). The reason why the Lamb will prevail is then given: *'for he is Lord of lords, and King of kings'*. In the title *'Lord of lords and King of kings'* is deity (compare Dt.10:17; 1Tim.6:15), and a wealth of sovereign power, authority and might. Who can prevail against the eternal creator and possessor of such power and authority (1Tim.6:15 - the *'potentate'*) who is ordaining and orchestrating all the events in this book and whose *'armies in heaven follow him'* (19:14)?

*'They that are with him are called, and chosen, and faithful'*. The believers in Jesus Christ and his sacrifice for their sins, have been *'called'* and *'chosen'* (*'eklektós'* - elected out of) and are thus *'faithful'* to the end.

**17:15 *'And he said unto me, The waters which you saw, where the whore sits, are peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues.'***

This refers back to the *'waters'* of verse 1, waters being a common symbol of many millions of people and their nations (Is.8:7; 17:13; Jer.47:2), and here they are under the control of the *'woman'* .

**17:16,17 *'And the ten horns which you saw upon the beast, these shall hate the whore, and shall make her desolate and naked, and shall eat her flesh, and burn her with fire. For God has put in their hearts to fulfill his will, and to agree, and give their kingdom unto the beast, until the words of God shall be fulfilled.'***

The *'ten horns'* (vs.12 *'ten kings'*) will *'hate'* the woman and we are told with figurative language (*'make her desolate, naked...eat her flesh, burn her with fire'*) - they will destroy her. The antichrist will finally discard the religion he used for gain. The *'burning with fire'* arguably could also be literal, since if Babylon be Rome (or a Babylon re-built), this is the description of Babylon burning in the next chapter (18:18).

***'For God has put in their hearts to fulfill his will, and to agree, and give their kingdom unto the beast, until the words of God shall be fulfilled.'***

God is here not just allowing evil to take its course but actively *'putting in their hearts'* that they would *'fulfil...the words of God'* made long before! The ten kings here are in the hand of the Lord and will judicially do His will. Indeed, in the past God has *'turned hearts to hate his people'* (Ps.105:25) and in the end times *'God shall send them strong delusion'* (2Thess.2:11,12).

**17:18 *'And the woman which you saw is that great city, which reigns over the kings of the earth.'***

This is the sway of this ‘woman’ who is that ‘great city’ on ‘seven mountains’ that she would control many peoples and ‘reign over the kings of the earth’. Her destruction is nigh.

With the above prophecies in mind we would do well to be mindful of the falseness of the world’s religions and of any such counterfeit in our own beliefs. We must study the scriptures and its prophecies and understand the times we live in as preparing the way for the antichrist ‘beast’ who will carry the Babylonian false religion.

With this in mind, Christians need to discern the developing worldly and ecumenical false religion of our day. We must discern the devices of the coming antichrist in the governments of the nations and the increasing secularisation of the modern church to be in tune with that. *‘Why do the heathen rage...The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord, and against his anointed...He that sits in the heavens shall laugh: the Lord shall have them in derision. Then shall he speak unto them in his wrath, and vex them in his sore displeasure...You shall break them with a rod of iron...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).

We have been prepared for spiritual warfare against the flesh and the wiles of the Devil so that we will not be seduced by the coming devices of the antichrist, his world system or his false religious system. The Lord knows who are His and He will have His pleasure, His will, and especially His glory in the saints!

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**In Part 12** (chapter 17 - *Diakrisis* January/February 2021) is a parenthesis between chapter 16 and 18, pausing to look at what happens during the 7th vial (bowl) judgement. It is a description of the end time world wide false religion, as a tool of the antichrist's (the beast's) kingdom and his master, Satan.

### **Part 13 Chapter 18**

Ch.6-18 describe the future seal, trumpet and bowl judgements within the Great Tribulation. Chapter 18 describes more of the 7th vial (bowl) judgement and the commercial aspect of a future city called Babylon which is destroyed. Much of what is described matches Old Testament prophecies regarding this city; they are dual prophecies both for the Babylon of old and the one described in Revelation.

**18:1 *'And after these things I saw another angel come down from heaven, having great power; and the earth was lightened with his glory'***

The phrases '*after these things*' and '*another angel*' show this is a new vision. This angel has '*great power*' ('*excousia*' - authority). The earth is lit up with this angel's luminous '*glory*'.

Some commentators have spiritualised this with various ideas including the '*glory*' here being that of the Gospel. But chapter 18 can hardly be so easily spiritualised as figurative language when much detail is used to describe this particular '*city*' (mentioned five times ) and its judgement of those within.

**18:2,3 *'And he cried mightily with a strong voice, saying, Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and is become the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird. For all nations have drunk of the wine of the wrath of her fornication, and the kings of the earth have committed fornication with her, and the merchants of the earth are waxed rich through the abundance of her delicacies'***

The words '*mighty*' and '*strong*' here describe the stature, strength and eminence of this angel.

The angel cries out '*Babylon, the great is fallen*', arguably referring here not to the mystery Babylon in the previous chapter but to a commercial Babylon which has '*become the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird*'. This description resembles that of the ancient Babylon and as prophesied by Isaiah and Jeremiah to be utterly destroyed (Is.13:21,22; Jer.50:39). Most commentators following the Reformation saw this as papal Rome represented under the image of a city and having its seat of power there. Some believed it to be pagan Rome, others Jerusalem. But could it be a Babylon built in the last days? If so, according to prophecies it seems that such a Babylon could not be built on the same site as the previously destroyed Babylon (Is.13:19-22).

*‘Devils’, ‘spirits’ and ‘birds’* here describe the utter decadence of this city. The words *‘hold’* and *‘cage’* here in verse 2 are the same Greek word (*‘phulake’*) and describe the containment of the evil in this *‘city’*.

*‘For all nations have drunk of the wine of the wrath of her fornication and the kings of the earth have committed fornication with her’* is similar language to the religious Mystery Babylon of chapter 17, yet the rest of the chapter clearly describes a commercial aspect - *‘and the merchants of the earth are waxed rich through the abundance of her delicacies [luxuries]’*. Babylon will seduce the world’s leaders (*‘kings’*) and their *‘nations’*.

It does appear to the author that the *‘mystery Babylon’* of chapter 17 and the literal *‘city’* of Babylon are of the same system. Many commentators see Rome as having made merchandise of men in the various doctrines of pardons, indulgences and masses to get people out of their mythical *‘purgatory’*, as well as the sale of crucifixes, statues and religious hardware. Certainly all religion was birthed in Babylon (see Part 12 Chapter 17 *Diakrisis* Jan/Feb 2020, P.13).

**18:4,5 *‘And I heard another voice from heaven, saying, Come out of her, my people, that you be not partakers of her sins, and that you receive not of her plagues. For her sins have reached unto heaven, and God has remembered her iniquities’***

Babylon here is typical of the world system from which scripture clearly warns Christians to be unspotted and to which they are not to be conformed (James 1:27; Rom.12:2). The command is *‘come out of her’* (vs.4). The parallel for the Old Testament Babylon is strikingly similar: *‘Remove out of the midst of Babylon, and go forth out of the land...Flee out of the midst of Babylon, deliver every man his soul: be not cut off in her iniquity; for this is the time of the Lord’s vengeance; he will render unto her a recompense’* (Jer.50:8; 51:6; see also Is.48:20; Jer.51:45).

The author distinctly remembers seeing these and other clear commands in scripture when the Lord had opened his eyes to the worldly religion of Rome in which he had been raised. At that time there were many voices who believed it best to stay in the system and try to reform and change it, but that clearly violates this imperative here to *‘come out of her’*. God is in the business of *taking us out* of unholiness - that is what *‘holiness’* and *‘sanctification’* literally mean. We are to be like Lot and *‘come out’* and not look back, unlike his wife who looked back and was turned into a pillar of salt (Gen.19).

To be *‘partakers of her sins’* literally is to *‘fellowship with’* (*‘sugkoinonéo’*), and this would incur *‘receiving her plagues’* to come. The longsuffering of God is shown in the figurative language of *‘her sins have reached unto heaven’* (cf.Jer.51:9), as well as Him being the perfect judge who *‘has remembered her iniquities’*.

Again, many commentators saw this as papal Rome and that to remain in her communion would be partaking of her sins and would incur her *‘reward’* to come.

18:6 ***‘Reward her even as she rewarded you, and double unto her double according to her works: in the cup which she has filled fill to her double’.***

The ‘double’ recompense is similar to what was seen in the Levitical law (see Ex.22). Here it is ‘according to her works’ as an overflowing of sins ‘unto heaven’, and with the imagery of the ‘cup’ (also in Revelation 14:10 and 16:19).

18:7,8 ***‘How much she has glorified herself, and lived deliciously, so much torment and sorrow give her: for she says in her heart, I sit a queen, and am no widow, and shall see no sorrow. Therefore shall her plagues come in one day, death, and mourning, and famine; and she shall be utterly burned with fire: for strong is the Lord God who judges her’.***

The pride, sensuous living, self sufficiency and arrogant sureness that would expect to ‘see no sorrow’ cause ‘her plagues to come in one day’ with ‘death, mourning and famine’ and then her final destruction, being ‘utterly burned with fire’. This is similar to the total destruction of the Old Testament Babylon (Is.13:19-22; 14:22,23; Jer.50:13,39; 51:37).

It is the ‘strong...Lord God’ who judges this city. His judgements are always ‘righteous’ and brought in ‘uprightness’ (Ps.9:7,8)

18:9-11 ***‘And the kings of the earth, who have committed fornication and lived deliciously with her, shall bewail her, and lament for her, when they shall see the smoke of her burning, Standing afar off for the fear of her torment, saying, Alas, alas that great city Babylon, that mighty city! for in one hour is your judgment come. And the merchants of the earth shall weep and mourn over her; for no man buys their merchandise any more’***

Many again have seen this as papal Rome with the figurative language of ‘fornication’, and hence see the ‘merchandise’ as people’s souls. Even so, the word ‘city’ is mentioned five times (vs.10,16,18,19,21) which would argue for a literal city of luxury and the ‘buying’ of merchandise (vs.11).

The nations rulers will ‘bewail’ and ‘lament’ as they ‘stand afar off’ in ‘fear’ at the sight of her ‘burning’ and ‘torment’. The same description is given for Hell with its ‘fire’ (Matt.5:22; 18:9; Mk.9:43,45,47; Rev.19:20; 20:14,15); and its ‘torment’ Lk.16:23; Rev.20:10).

The judgement of this system is quick, as it was with ancient Babylon in one night. Here it is in ‘one day’ (vs.8) and even then in ‘one hour’ - a term used for a quickness or suddenness, a definite or short space of time (Rev.17:10) and used three times here (vs.10,17,19). (Some believe this suddenness could be caused by a nuclear holocaust).

18:12-14 ***‘The merchandise of gold, and silver, and precious stones, and of pearls, and fine linen, and purple, and silk, and scarlet, and all thyine [a valuable citrus fragrant] wood, and all manner vessels of ivory, and all manner vessels of most precious wood, and of brass, and iron, and marble, And cinnamon, and odors, and ointments, and frankincense, and wine, and oil, and fine flour, and wheat, and beasts, and sheep, and horses, and chariots,***

***and slaves, and souls of men. And the fruits that your soul lusted after are departed from you, and all things which were dainty and goodly are departed from you, and you shall find them no more at all'***

The long list of the merchandise bought and sold here represents that which is valuable and precious. The '*slaves, and souls of men*' is literally the '*bodies and souls of men*' and arguably reminiscent of the trafficking of slaves so common in early days. Many commentators again saw this spiritualised as the papal system with its indulgences and masses performed for the souls of the living and the dead, thus making 'merchandise of men' (2Pet.2:3).

The phrase '*no more at all*' interestingly has two Greek 'double negatives' ('*oukéti ou me*' - *no more, not not*). Double negatives are also found in verses 21,22 and 23. This city will cease entirely, *never* to be resurrected.

***18:15-19 'The merchants of these things, which were made rich by her, shall stand afar off for the fear of her torment, weeping and wailing, And saying, Alas, alas that great city, that was clothed in fine linen, and purple, and scarlet, and decked with gold, and precious stones, and pearls! For in one hour so great riches is come to naught. And every shipmaster, and all the company in ships, and sailors, and as many as trade by sea, stood afar off, And cried when they saw the smoke of her burning, saying, What city is like unto this great city! And they cast dust on their heads, and cried, weeping and wailing, saying, Alas, alas, that great city, wherein were made rich all that had ships in the sea by reason of her costliness! for in one hour is she made desolate'.***

Much of this repeats verses 9-11, the repetition emphasising the shock and loss this will be to the world. The entire world money system will be devastated and come to a halt, in judgement being bankrupted by God!

The similarity to the 'Mystery Babylon' religion (17:4) is also noted with the '*purple, and scarlet, and decked with gold, and precious stones, and pearls*'. Shipmasters will stand '*afar off*' lamenting their loss and all will see the city burning. The thrice repeated cry of '*alas*' shows the intensity of the catastrophe, and the grief associated with it.

***18:20 'Rejoice over her, you heaven, and you holy apostles and prophets; for God has avenged you [literally 'judged judgement'] on her'.***

The contrast here is stark! Rather than with weeping and grieving, the Heavens with the apostles and prophets '*rejoice*'. They can do this because God has 'rewarded' her with perfect and full justice in judgement for all the long running evil and injustices put upon God's servants throughout the ages.

Vengeance is never ours but God's alone (Lk.18:7,8; Rom.12:19; 1Thess.5:15). There has been no repentance by earthlings (Rev.9:20,21; 16:9,11). The warnings to repent are now ended and destruction is imminent...



18:21-23 *'And a mighty angel took up a stone like a great millstone, and cast it into the sea, saying, Thus with violence shall that great city Babylon be thrown down, and shall be found no more at all. And the voice of harpers, and musicians, and of pipers, and trumpeters, shall be heard no more at all in you; and no craftsman, of whatsoever craft he be, shall be found any more in you; and the sound of a millstone shall be heard no more at all in you; And the light of a candle shall shine no more at all in you; and the voice of the bridegroom and of the bride shall be heard no more at all in you: for your merchants were the great men of the earth; for by your sorceries were all nations deceived'.*

Another 'mighty' angel casts a 'stone like a great millstone' into the sea. Similarly, Jeremiah cast a stone into the Euphrates as a symbol of the end of ancient Babylon (Jer.51:61-64; see also Is.13:19-22;14:22,23; Jer.50:13,39; 51:37). With a series of more 'double negatives' it is stated that Babylon will be 'found no more at all'; music shall be heard 'no more at all'; no craftsmen will be found 'any more'; light will shine 'no more at all'; and voices will be heard 'no more at all'. The very same description is stated of ancient Babylon (Jer.25:10). It is clear that the prophecies for ancient Babylon are 'dual prophecies' referring to both the ancient and the end time Babylon.

The 'merchants' were considered 'great men' by the world's standards but were only ever 'of the earth'. By their 'sorceries' ('*pharmakeia*' - occult, magic and drugs) were 'all nations deceived'.

18:24 *'And in her was found the blood of prophets, and of saints, and of all that were slain upon the earth'.*

Many commentators again see this verse and others in Chapter 17 and 18 as referring to Rome. Rome under heathen emperors and then the later Popes, issued many edicts for bloody slaughters of saints. In the first half of the 16th century fifteen million Protestants perished in the Roman 'Inquisitions'. Many other martyrs throughout the centuries could be added to this.

Matthew Henry wrote of this destruction of Babylon: '*Death, at any rate, will soon end their commerce, and all the riches of the ungodly will be exchanged, not only for the coffin and the worm, but for the fire that cannot be quenched'.*

The fall of Babylon will be an act of God's final justice within the 7th Vial (bowl) judgement. It is one of the most horrific and graphic descriptions of the judgements of God upon this earth.

Let this chapter be a warning of the things of this world which can so easily entice and bring destruction, not just to the body but to the soul. Our affections must be on things above and not on the fleeting lusts and temptations of the world below, for we have been begotten *from above*, destined to be saved from the wrath to come (Rom.5:9; 1Thess.1:10; 5:9).

***Fear God and read his Word for a blessing (Rev.1:3)!***

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**In Part 13** (Chapter 18 - *Diakrisis* March/April 2022) is a further description of the 7th vial (bowl) judgement and the commercial aspect of a future city called Babylon which is destroyed. This description matches Old Testament prophecies, dual prophecies both for the Babylon of old and the one described in Revelation.

## **Part 14 Chapter 19**

14:1-6 *'After these things I heard [as it were] a great voice of much people in heaven, saying, Alleluia; Salvation, and power and glory, and honor, unto the Lord our God: For true and righteous are his judgments: for he has judged the great whore [harlot], which did corrupt the earth with her fornication, and has avenged the blood of his servants at her hand. And again [a second time] they said, Alleluia. And her smoke rose up forever and ever. And the four and twenty elders and the four beasts [living creatures] fell down and worshiped God that sat on the throne, saying, Amen; Alleluia. And a voice came out of the throne, saying, Praise our God, all you his servants, and you that fear him, both small and great. And I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as [like] the voice of many waters, and as [like] the voice of mighty thunderings, saying, Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent [almighty] reigns'.*

Heaven is full of worship and praise to God (5:13; 7:12; 11:15; 12:10). Here the words 'great' and 'much' express the magnitude of the worship in Heaven. 'Alleluia' is an exclamation of praise for the 'power and glory, and honor' which belongs to 'the Lord our God'.

The praise here is especially for God's judgements which are all 'true and righteous' (cp.Ps.98:9). A specific example is given of this - the judgement of 'the great whore, which did corrupt the earth with her fornication'(see Rev.9:21; 14:8; 17:2-5; 18:3). God's judgements often have the idea of vengeance and here it is to 'avenge the blood of his servants at her hand'. Earlier in chapter 6 we saw the martyred saints cry out for revenge (vs.10). Those prayers (Rev.16:7) are now praises as God judges. God has not forgotten the mistreatment of his saints by commercial and religious Babylon and this must be avenged by the perfect and righteous judge (Rev.18:20,24). 'The righteous shall rejoice when he sees the vengeance: he shall wash his feet in the blood of the wicked. So that a man shall say, Verily there is a reward for the righteous: verily he is a God that judges in the earth' (Ps.58:10,11).

'And her smoke rose up forever and ever' shows the finality of the judgement, such language strikingly similar to the judgement of Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen.19), as well as the eternal judgement of the antichrist and the false prophet in Hell (19:20; 20:10,14,15). This fearful judgement and

vengeance described in Revelation 19 is also vividly described in Isaiah chapter 34: *'The indignation of the Lord is upon all nations, and his fury upon all their armies: he has utterly destroyed them, he has delivered them to the slaughter. Their slain also shall be cast out, and their stink shall come up out of their carcasses, and the mountains shall be melted with their blood...The sword of the Lord is filled with blood...For it is the day of the Lord's vengeance, and the year of recompenses for the controversy of Zion...the land thereof shall become burning pitch. It shall not be quenched night nor day; the smoke thereof shall go up forever: from generation to generation it shall lie waste; none shall pass through it forever and ever'* (vs.1-10).

Verse 3 has *'again'* the praise of the *'people in heaven'* and another *'alleluia'* reaches an ever increasing crescendo with the *'twenty four elders'* who are around the throne (Rev.4:4,10; 7:11) and *'the four beasts'*. The *'four beasts'* as we saw in chapter 6 (*'Diakrisis'* Sept/Oct/2019) resemble the creatures in the vision to Ezekiel chapter 1 and the Seraphims in Isaiah chapter 6. All fall down to *'worship God that sat on the throne, saying, Amen; Alleluia'*.

Another anonymous voice *'out of the throne'* says *'praise our God, all you his servants, and you that fear him, both small and great'*. The *'great multitude'* here to John sounds like the sound of *'many waters'* (see Is.17:12,13; Rev.1:15;14:2) and *'mighty thunderings'*, and he hears them saying of the Lamb, the Lord Jesus Christ, *'Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigns'*. The word *'omnipotent'* here is the Greek word *'pantokrátor'* (*'pás'* - *'all'* / *'krátos'* - power), in many versions and elsewhere in Revelation translated *'almighty'* (KJV has *'almighty'* in Rev.1:8;4:8; 11:17; 15:3; 16:7,14; 19:15; 21:22; and *'omnipotent'* in 19:6).

**14:7-9 *'Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honor [glory] to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife has made herself ready. And to her was granted [given] that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white [bright and pure]: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints. And he says unto me, Write, Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb. And he says unto me, These are the true sayings of God'***

The voice of the multitude continues with a call *'let us be glad and rejoice, and give honor to him'*. The reason for this is *'the marriage of the Lamb is come'*. This is the church betrothed to the Lord (2Cor.11:2; Eph.5:22-32). The consummation of this marriage is described in Revelation chapter 21. The believers making up the church *'has made herself ready'*. Upon being called to salvation, we are to actively prepare ourselves in the process of sanctification to be the glorified saints (Phil.2:12,13). We have already been

‘granted’ by God (Greek passive voice) to ‘*be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white...the fine linen is the righteousness of saints*’. Here we have the semblance of both *Justification* - God’s imputed (credited) righteousness granted by God (Rom.4; 2Cor.5:21), not of anything of us (Phil.3:9); and the work of *Sanctification* (‘*made herself ready*’).

Note the stark difference here between the holy bride and the unholy religious Babylon. One has an inner holiness, the other an outer and counterfeit splendour. One is ‘*clean*’ and ‘*bright*’ (‘*lampros*’ - bright, shining), the other is filthy in fornication and corruption; one is ‘*blessed*’, the other condemned in a furnace of fire. The true church, the bride, is ‘*invited*’ to ‘*the marriage supper of the Lamb*’.

‘*These are true sayings of God*’ now written down as the truth in written form.

**14:10 ‘*And I fell at his feet to worship him. And he said unto me, see you do it not: I am your fellow servant, and of your brethren that have the testimony of Jesus: worship God: for the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy*’.**

John was overcome with the presence of the angel and the scenes and sounds he had witnessed. He falls prostrate but is immediately warned not to do this but to ‘*worship God*’ only, as the messenger is not deity but a ‘*fellow servant, and of your brethren*’. To worship other than God is idolatry (Ex.20).

The ‘*testimony of Jesus*’ is what all true ‘*brethren have*’ - the witness of who Christ is and what He has done for our sin. This ‘*testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy*’ in that the design of prophecy is bearing witness to Jesus Christ and His salvation and judgements (Rev.12:17). Arguably the word ‘*prophecy*’ here is also used in a wide sense of the scriptures (Rom.12:6).

**14:11-16 ‘*And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he does judge and make war. His eyes were as a flame of fire, and on his head were many crowns [diadems]; and he had a name written, that no man knew, but he himself. And he was clothed with a vesture [robe] dipped in blood: and his name is called The Word of God. And the armies which were in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean. And out of his mouth goes a sharp double-edged sword, that with it he should smite the nations: and he shall rule [‘*poimanei*’ - shepherd] them with a rod of iron: and he treads the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. And he has on his vesture [robe] and on his thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS’.***

The man described here is a ‘*man of war*’ who ‘*makes war*’ (Ex.15:3; Is.42:13)! Heaven is ‘*opened*’ to let this warrior out to fulfil a final judgement upon the earth. Hollywood and many churches portray Jesus as a long haired, gentle, meek blue eyed new age sensitive man, arguably modelled after the increasingly effeminate Hollywood man. But Jesus is God and in the Old Testament God was a man of war, a *warrior*. In Joel 3:9-15 God challenges the nations to war. God said David was a ‘*man after his own heart*’ (1Sam.13:14) *because he was like God in character*. David was tender with his sheep, but tough and fierce in battle, consistent in repentance, a ‘*tender warrior*’. Similarly, the apostle Paul was beaten, stoned, whipped, shipwrecked, yet tender with his own people (2Cor.11:23-27; 2Cor.2:4; Acts 20:31). Christ himself also was ‘*meek and lowly of heart*’ (Matt.11:29), and showed tears of compassion (Heb.5:7), yet fiercely combative with the religious leaders and in driving out the money changers in the temple.

John sees this warrior seated upon ‘*a white horse*’ (Rev.6:2). White horses were sometimes used by Roman generals in victory processions following battle. The white horse here would suggest victory as well as a pureness, as does ‘*white*’ in verse 14 (‘*white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean*’) and in other parts of Revelation (1:14; 3:4,5,18; 4:4; 6:11; 7:9,13,14; 15:6; 19:8,14; 20:11).

Besides his name of ‘*Faithful and True*’ (Rev.3:14) and here ‘*Almighty God*’, the ‘*word of God*’ and ‘*King of kings*’, He has ‘*a name written that no man knew but he himself*’. His judgements in ‘*making war*’ are all done in ‘*righteousness*’. His hatred of sin and evil is shown in ‘*eyes as a flame of fire*’ (Rev.1:14) as He passes execution on an unbelieving and unrepentant world of sinners.

He wears ‘*many crowns*’ (‘*diádema*’) as symbols of royal dignity and is ‘*clothed with a vesture dipped in blood*’. Some would say this is the blood of the cross or the blood of the saints, but the context is the *blood of his enemies* as ‘*he treads the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God*’.

This chapter is full of figures and imagery, but such that John would understand as he literally ‘*saw*’ them. Isaiah 63:2-6 has the same imagery: ‘*red in your garments...trodden in the winepress...in my anger...in my fury; their blood shall be sprinkled upon my garments, and I will stain all my raiment. For the day of vengeance...I will tread down the people in mine anger...*’ (see also Ps.58:10,11; Joel 3:12-14; Rev.14:18-20).

The phrase ‘*His name is called The Word of God*’ marks this person clearly as the Lord Jesus Christ, as He is named in the Gospel of John (Jn.1:1,14).

He comes out of Heaven with *'the armies which were in heaven'*, the heavenly Hosts, including the redeemed (the 'chosen and faithful' ones - 17:14), following him *'upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean'*. The heavenly hosts here do not fight the battle, but are witnesses to what is not a drawn out battle, but rather a quick execution as God speaks *'out of his mouth'* with a *'sharp sword'* (Zech.1:18). Jesus did not war long when He rid legions of demons instantly (Mk.5:9-13). Nevertheless it will be a very bloody battle in the plains near Meggiddo, about 60 miles north of Jerusalem (Rev.16:16), 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).

(See Book 1 page 50 Part 9, ch.14 and *'Diakrisis'* July/Aug/2021).

His clothing is stained even before the battle, as victory is sure, his enemies being crushed as grapes are in a winepress. He will then *'rule'* the nations *'with a rod of iron'* (2:27; 12:5; Ps.2:9; Dan.2:35). He rules as a sovereign king for *'on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS'*.

**14:17,18 *'And I saw an angel standing in the sun; and he cried with a loud [great] voice, saying to all the fowls that fly in the midst of heaven, Come and gather yourselves together unto the supper of the great God; That you may eat the flesh of kings, and the flesh of captains, and the flesh of mighty men, and the flesh of horses, and of them that sit on them, and the flesh of all men, both free and bond, both small and great'*.**

An angel stands before the sun and calls the birds that fly in the space above the earth (as in 8:13; 14:6) to feed on the spoils of flesh. Similar imagery is seen in Isaiah chapters 18 and 56 (see also Jer.7:33; 12:9; Ezek.39; Matt.24:28).

There will be no escape for even *'kings, captains and mighty [strong] men...all men free and bond, both small and great'*

Zephaniah 1:14-18 describes this terrifying scene: *'The great day of the Lord...a day of wrath, a day of trouble and distress, a day of wasteness and desolation, a day of darkness and gloominess, a day of clouds and thick darkness...I will bring distress upon men, that they shall walk like blind men, because they have sinned against the Lord: and their blood shall be poured out as dust, and their flesh as the dung...in the day of the Lord's wrath; but the whole land shall be devoured by the fire of his jealousy...'*

In addition, Zechariah 14 details this final coming of the Lord: *'Behold, the day of the Lord comes, and your spoil shall be divided in the midst of you. For I will gather all nations against Jerusalem to battle...Then shall the Lord go forth, and fight against those nations, as when he fought in the day of battle...'* (vs.1-3).

**14:19-21 *'And I saw the beast, and the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against him that sat on the horse, and against his army. And the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet that wrought miracles before him, with which he deceived them that had received the mark of the beast, and them that worshiped his image. These both were cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone. And the remnant were slain with the sword of him that sat upon the horse, which sword proceeded out of his mouth: and all the fowls were filled with their flesh'***

The antichrist (Rev.13) with the '*kings of the earth*' (the ten kings of 17:12-14), '*and their armies*' are '*gathered*' to '*make war against him that sat on the horse, and against his army*'. The antichrist and his '*false prophet that wrought miracles before him, with which he deceived them that had received the mark of the beast, and them that worshiped his image*', both are '*cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone*' (see also 14:10).

This is the first mention of the '*Lake of Fire*', the final Hell ('*Gehenna*') which the first Hell ('*Hades*') is thrown into. The beast and false prophet are cast into this Hell to be '*tormented day and night forever and ever*' and after a 1,000 years joined by the Devil (20:10). The rest in the battle are '*slain*' by the Word of God and suffer the indignation of preying ravaging birds who are '*filled with their flesh*'.

The rejoicing in Heaven for God avenging the righteous; the marriage supper of the Lamb after the return of Christ to earth; the word of God judging the nations at the battle of Armageddon; and the antichrist and false prophet being cast into the Lake of Fire - are all necessary events and judgements before the triumphant return and reign of Christ.

This terrifying chapter should be at least a warning to unbelievers, the unrepentant. To the believer who has received Christ as Lord and Saviour, the admonition is to fear God and to worship Him in spirit and in truth!

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In **Part 14** (Chapter 19 - *Diakrisis* May/June 2022) is a most terrifying chapter with God judging the nations at the battle of Armageddon and avenging the righteous; the antichrist and false prophet are cast into the Lake of Fire, all necessary judgements with the triumphant return and reign of Christ. But it also includes the marriage supper of the Lamb and a crescendo of praise and worship in Heaven. This fearsome chapter should be a warning to the unrepentant. To the believer who has received Christ as Lord and Saviour, the admonition is to fear God and to worship Him in spirit and in truth!

## **Part 15 (Introduction)**

### **The Issue of the ‘Millennium’ - literal or figurative?**

It is in Revelation chapter 20 that much disagreement exists as to whether the ‘*thousand years*’ is to be interpreted literally, symbolically or figuratively. The ‘*thousand years*’ (millennium) is mentioned six times:

*‘...an angel come down from heaven...laid hold on...Satan, and bound him a thousand years...that he should deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years should be fulfilled...I saw the souls of them that were beheaded...they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years...the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished...they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years. And when the thousand years are expired, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison’ (vs.1-7).*

*Postmillennialists* believe this 1,000 year period is an indefinite triumphant church period before the coming of Christ to a largely christianised world. Such a view was popular during the 18th and 19th centuries when revivals and the Awakenings were frequent, but this view became less popular in the 20th century with such events as the two world wars and an increasingly secularised world.

*Amillennialists* believe we are in the millennium now, the ‘*thousand years*’ an indefinite period. At some point the Church flourishes on earth, Jesus comes back and reigns spiritually in Heaven rather than in a kingdom on earth.

Both views see Israel as the ‘church’ which is now ‘spiritual Israel’. (Some do believe in a mass conversion of Jews in the end).

Nevertheless, the scriptures speak of the *election* of Israel (Amos 3:2; Dt.7:6-8; 10:15; Ps.135:4; Is.44:1,2), and that God will never cast away His chosen elect (Rom.8:33; 11:28,29; Matt.24:24,31; Tit.1:1; 1Pet.1:2).

Both views might suffer when considering that arguably things are hardly getting better towards a ‘golden age’ of the gospel and the church?



*Pre-millennialism* sees Christ's coming to an increasingly wicked world, an apostate church (2Thess.2:3) and then the millennium of 1,000 years in which Christ will reign on earth (Rev.5:10).

The differences in the above views is primarily one of *hermeneutics* - how we *interpret* scripture. With great respect to many of our God fearing readers who may disagree, we put a case for an historical grammatical literal interpretation:

## 1. Word Meanings

The Greek for 'one thousand' in chapter 20 is the *cardinal number* 'chilioi'. In contrast a *different Greek word* is used for an *innumerable* number - 'muriás' (we get 'myriad' from this). 'Muriás' is translated 'innumerable multitude' (Lk.12:1); 'innumerable company' (Heb.12:22); 'ten thousand times ten thousand' (Rev.5:11); 'ten thousands' (Jude 1:14); 'thousand thousand' (Rev.9:16); and 'thousands' (Acts 19:19; 21:20).

When we would *not* take the word 'thousand' literally is also clear as in 1Corinthians 4:15: '...you have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet not many fathers...'; and also 1Corinthians 14:19 'Yet in the church I had rather speak five words with my understanding, that by my voice I might teach others also, than ten thousand words in an unknown tongue'. It is obvious the contexts here use *contrast* and *hyperbolic language*. But again, the word here for 'thousand' is not 'chilioi' as in Revelation 20, but 'muriós' - an indefinite number.

Where 'chilioi' is used', (as in Revelation 20), it is a *cardinal number*: 'A thousand (years)' (2Pet 3:8); 'a thousand two hundred and three score' (days) (Rev.11:3; 12:6); 'a thousand six hundred' (furlongs) (Rev.14:20); and six times in Revelation 20 as the 'thousand (years)'. The use of the cardinal 'chilioi' rather than the indefinite 'muriás' in Revelation 20 is important.

The phrase 'thousand years', used no less than *six times* in seven verses, also has four verses having the *Greek definite article* before it ('the thousand years' - vs.3,4,5,7), again suggesting this is a definite period of time.

## 2. Scripture

The Palestinian Covenant promised Israel a restoration to, and occupation of, *the land* (Dt.30:1-10). The Davidic Covenant promised Israel a king from David's line who would *reign* (2Sam.7:10-13). The scriptures for a literal reign on earth in a millennium are not just found in Revelation chapter 20 but also in numerous other scriptures, many which clearly have the saints *reigning with Christ*, and *in Jerusalem*. Isaiah 9:6-7 speaks of the Messiah reigning on David's throne, which was on earth. Zechariah 14:1-21 speaks of the Messiah ruling over the whole earth from Jerusalem. The scriptures for the same are numerous (Mic.4:1-8; Is.2:2; 11:9; Jer.3:14-18; 23:5,6; 33:14-18; Dan.2:44,45; Joel 3:18-21; Amos 9:11-15).

Revelation 5:10 states that with Christ *'we shall reign on the earth'*. The word *'reign'* and *'on'* (*'epi'* - upon) are hardly ambiguous in their meaning. If we do not take the millennial reign in Revelation 20 literally, 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)? The latter passage correlates with the prophecy in Revelation chapter 20 - that Jesus the Messiah will reign *'on the earth'*.

### 3. Consistency

The historical grammatical literal interpretation is arguably consistent when compared to the inconsistencies of the varying allegorical or figurative views. What of the *inconsistency* in taking as literal the numbering of thousands for the tribes of Israel, of 'silver and gold', the *'five thousand'* fed with *'five loaves and two fishes'*, the *'two thousand swine'* and the *'three thousand souls'* saved in the book of Acts, and yet denying a literal 1,000 years in Revelation?

Many could be named, who being against the literal view of the millennium, have freely admitted that *if one interprets prophetic scriptures (literally) the way you interpret other scriptures one will end up believing in a literal millennium*. The Genesis creation, the Egyptian plagues are taken literally yet Revelation and its *seven* plagues are not? (The earlier Irenaeus (AD130-202) stated they were the same literal plagues in both books - *'Against Heresies'* 4.30.4).

The problem is that someone invented the idea that apocalyptic scriptures cannot be interpreted literally and books like Revelation have a different 'genre' (category of literature). But even within 'apocalyptic genre' inconsistencies arise with a non literal view - the Great White Throne, the Lake of Fire and the second coming are literal, yet *'the thousand years'* are not? In Revelation chapter 7 a multiplication of 12,000 in each tribe gives 144,000; there are 7 churches in 7 literal cities, 7 seals, trumpets and vials, there are 3 unclean spirits (16:13) and 12 apostles (chapter 21) - are any of these to be counted as not being literal?

What do we do with Luke chapter 1:31-33 when the angel promises that Jesus would sit on 'David's throne' and 'reign in a kingdom'? Why do we take the Lord's ascension and the crucifixion in Psalms to be literal, yet not *'the thousand years'* in Revelation? What do we do with the obvious *apocalyptic* events in Zechariah 14 with the detailed geography and cataclysmic events?

This author freely admits there are times when figurative interpretation is needed. But for the most part they are *obvious*. By applying rules such as *context* and *scripture interpreting scripture*, difficulties can be resolved. For example, the *'seven lampstands'* (Rev.1) - are they figurative or literal? Verse 20 tells us: *'The mystery 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*'. The 'candlesticks' are figures, but then *we are told* that they are literally 'seven churches'.

Some will use strawmen argumentation for a figurative interpretation with examples such as '*the cattle on a thousand hills*' (Ps.50:10). However, this is *obviously a figurative expression*, a Hebrew, and even a modern expression for *many hills*. The *context* also is clear - God owns cattle on a lot more than 1,000 hills! Who would say that Psalm 50:10 is a literal 1,000 hills?

Another example is '*one day is with the Lord as a thousand years and a thousand years as one day*' (2Pet.3:8). The two phrases are put in contrast - '*is...as*' - but the main point here is that God does not keep time as we do, even a thousand years. In addition the context would suggest not a literal 'day' or a 'thousand', but rather that God is being '*longsuffering*'.

#### **4. Chronology**

John literally '*saw*' things (mentioned 25 times in Revelation) in a chronological *order* of events. The literal view supports the *timeline and order* in Revelation. Revelation is made up of '*the things which are, and the things which shall be hereafter*' (Rev.1:19). 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). Chapter 19 has the coming of Christ *followed by* the millennium. Chronologically Revelation clearly reads as a progression concerning Churches; then tribulation; the second coming; the Millennial kingdom; the Great White Throne judgement; and the new heaven and new earth.

#### **5. Early Church Views**

Most early church fathers were pre-millennial ('chilliasts') with a literal view of Christ's reign on earth for 1,000 years. Papias (AD 60-130 - *a student of John*), stated: '*there will be a millennium...the kingdom of Christ will be set up in material form on this earth*'. Other church fathers who were like minded were Clement of Rome (90-100); the Shepherd of Hermas (96-150); Ignatius of Antioch (98-117); Barnabas (100); The Didache (100-160); and Victorinus (Died 303).

Justin Martyr (110-165) stated: '*...there will be a...thousand years in Jerusalem, which will then be built, adorned and enlarged, as the prophets Ezekiel and Isaiah and others declare*'. Tertullian (155-220) stated: '*We do confess that a kingdom is promised to us upon the earth...for a thousand years in the divinely-built city of Jerusalem*'. Only a small number of the early church fathers rejected a literal kingdom (Clement of Alexandria, Caius, Origen and Dionysius).

However, near the end of the 2nd century church fathers began to allegorise scriptures. Commentaries increasingly suffered from mystical interpretations. *The problem with a non literal grammatical view is that what the figurative interpretation means is left largely to the mind of the human interpreter.*

The Amillennial view owes a lot to the Reformers during the Great Reformation. But it must be remembered that although the Reformers restored the Gospel, Biblical inspiration and other critical theologies, they were far less interested in eschatology when busy fighting an apostate Roman system.

Several of the Puritans who followed the Reformers were also Millennialists. Others like Jonathan Edwards and Charles Spurgeon believed in a literal return of the Jews to their land and a national conversion.(1) The later Bonar, JC Ryle and Charles Spurgeon were all literal in their interpretation of the Millennium. Charles Spurgeon in 1865 stated: *‘The day will come, when the Lord Jesus will descend from Heaven...Some think that this descent of the Lord will be post-Millennial - that is, after the thousand years of His reign. I cannot think so. I conceive that the advent will be pre-Millennial; that He will come first; and then will come the Millennium as the result of His personal reign upon earth’* (*Justification & Glory* MTP Vol.11, 1865, P.249, Rom.8:30); *‘...We expect a reigning Christ on earth; that seems to us to be very plain, and to be put so literally that we dare not spiritualise it’* (*‘Things to Come’* MTP Vol.15, 1869, P.329, 1 Cor.3:22); *‘Jesus, in a Millennial age, shall be the light and the glory of the city of the new Jerusalem’* (*‘The Lamb - the Light’* MTP Vol.10, 1864, P.439, Rev.21:23).

## **Summary**

The root of the issue here is one of *hermeneutics* - how we *interpret* scripture. The literal grammatical method is arguably more logical and consistent to scripture. The guess work of what symbols and signs mean is less dependant on the interpreter, as seen in many differing and strange interpretations by the commentators over the centuries, many proven erroneous by history.

(1) Extensive quotes from the church fathers and later divines can be found on our website in the booklet titled: *‘The Millennium - Literal or Figurative; The Early Church and Beyond’*.

## **Part 15 Chapter 20:1-4**

***20:1-3 ‘And I saw an angel come down from heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years. And cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and***

***set a seal upon him, that he should deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years should be fulfilled: and after that he must be loosed a little season [time]***’.

There is much detail in this chapter which describes the binding of Satan, the millennial reign of Christ, a short final rebellion, and the final judgement of the lost and of Satan. Note the chronological timeline continues as John ‘saw’ (tribulation ch.6-19; the second coming ch.19 and now the kingdom ch.20)...

John ‘saw’ a powerful angel (possibly Michael cp.12:7) with ‘*the key of the bottomless pit*’ to bind the one called the ‘*dragon*’ (Rev.12:3,4,7,9,13,16,17; 13:2,4,11; 16:13; 20:2), the ‘*old serpent*’ from the garden of Eden (Gen.3:1-6; 1Cor.11:3), ‘*the Devil, and Satan*’, to ‘*bind him a thousand years*’.

The ‘*key*’, as seen before (3:7; 9:1), is used as a figure of power or authority (Is.22:22; 3:7; Matt.16:19; 18:18). The ‘*bottomless pit*’ (or the ‘*abyss*’ - ‘*ábussos*’) is mentioned seven times in Revelation (Rev.9:1,2, 11; 11:7; 17:8; 20:1). It is not the same as ‘*Hell*’ but appears to be a temporary *prison* for the worst of the demons (Lk.8:31; 1Pet.3:19,20; Jude 6).

This ‘*bottomless pit*’ is opened and Satan is shut up and a ‘*seal put upon him*’ so as to prevent him from deceiving the nations ‘*till the thousand years should be fulfilled*’. He would then be ‘*loosed a little season*’ to lead a final quick rebellion (vs.7,8).

Postmillennialists and Amillennialists believe Satan was already bound at the cross. But if so then one must ask why Satan could afterwards still ‘*fill hearts to lie to the Holy Spirit*’ (Acts 5:3), ‘*get an advantage of us*’ through ‘*his devices*’ (2Cor.2:11), ‘*blind the minds of unbelievers*’ (2Cor.4:4); and why the believer is urged to defend against the ‘*wiles of the devil...spiritual wickedness in high places...the fiery darts of the wicked*’ (Eph.6:11-16), ‘*resist the devil*’ (James 4:7), and that we not ‘*turn aside after Satan*’ (1Tim.5:15). The phrase ‘*he should deceive the nations no more*’ surely shows an *ending* to his deceptions, not at the cross but during the millennial reign of Christ at the end of which Satan is ‘*loosed a little season*’ for one last insurrection, (detailed further in the chapter - vs.7-9).

***20:4 ‘And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshiped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years’.***

The ‘*thrones*’ and *judgement* here appear to be what Daniel spoke of: ‘*the thrones were cast down and the Ancient of Days did sit, whose garment was white as snow, the hair of his head like pure wool: his throne was like the fiery flame and his wheels as burning fire. A fiery stream issued and came*

*forth from before him: thousand thousands ministered to him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him: the judgment was set and the books were opened' (Dan.7:9,10).*

It does appear too that the apostles and the saints will be involved in, and present at, this judgement (Matt.19:28; 1Cor.6:2).

John 'sees' the tribulation '*souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God*'. They had not '*worshiped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark...they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years*'.

The ultimate culmination of the victory we have in Jesus and His cross is that the enemy of our souls, the father of lies, is bound, and Christ and the saints will rule. To live and reign with Christ in the millennium is surely a glorious event Christians should look forward to. The One who gave His life to give us life; the One who bore our sins and fulfilled the law we could never keep; the One who was punished by the Father for our deserved eternal punishment; the One who satisfied the Father with a propitiatory sacrificial offering when we could offer nothing; the sinless One who was raised for our justification - this is the Christ who will reign gloriously in 'the thousand years' with his beloved!

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In **Part 15** (Chapter 20:1-4 *Diakrisis* July/August 2022) we looked at the issue of the Millennium, whether a literal or figurative ‘1,000 years’. The issue is one of *hermeneutics* - how we *interpret* scripture. The *literal grammatical* method has many proofs and is arguably more logical and consistent with scripture.

There is much detail in this chapter which describes the binding of Satan, the millennial reign of Christ, a short final rebellion, and the final judgement of the lost and of Satan.

### **Part 16 Chapter 20:5-15**

20:5,6 ***‘But [and] the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is he that has part in the first resurrection: on such the second death has no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years’.***

*‘The rest of the dead lived not again’* are by context shown to be not the saints and martyrs who are reigning with Christ (vs.4), but the damned who do *‘not come to life until the thousand years is finished’*. There are two resurrections in view here - one, *‘the resurrection of life’* and the *‘resurrection of damnation’* (Jn.5:28,29), prior to the *‘second death’* in eternal Hell.

The former group (described in verse 4) is *‘the first resurrection’* for those who are called *‘blessed and holy’*. They shall serve as *‘priests of God and of Christ’* (Rev.1:6 cp.22:3) and will be as *‘kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth’* (5:10) for *‘a thousand years’* (vs.6). This will initially be a time of righteousness, peace and joy (Is.12:3,4; 32:7; 61:3,7). (Note the phrase *‘of God and of Christ’* shows the oneness and the deity of both beings).

The latter group will be judged and suffer the *‘second death’* - the Lake of Fire (vs.14,15). Both resurrections here are bodily but separated by 1,000 years.

20:7-9 ***‘And when the thousand years are expired [finished], Satan shall be loosed out of his prison, And shall go out to deceive the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth, [the] Gog and [the] Magog, to gather them together to [the] battle: the number of whom is as the sand of the sea. And they went up on the breadth of the earth, and compassed the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city: and fire came down from God out of heaven, and devoured them’.***

There are commentators over the centuries who have refused to see any ‘literal’ interpretation here. An example of this follows: *‘How can this bear any kind of literal interpretation? Satan is bound a thousand years, and the earth is in peace; righteousness flourishes, and Jesus Christ alone reigns.*

*This state of things may continue for ever if the imprisonment of Satan be continued. Satan, however, is loosed at the end of the thousand years, and goes out and deceives the nations, and peace is banished from the face of the earth, and a most dreadful war takes place, etc., etc. These can be only symbolical representations, utterly incapable of the sense generally put upon them* (Clark).

Yet 'sense' we must make of it! What is so nonsensical about the grammar of '*Satan*', '*a thousand years*', an earth of '*peace and righteousness*' under the '*reign*' of Christ? How is it that Satan cannot be literally '*loosed*' to '*deceive the nations*' in a final rebellion? The details of how this might occur we are not given, but that does not detract from the *literal sense* of a final rebellion of which the text clearly states. Satan is real, the reign of Christ is real, the battle is real, the '*beloved city*' is mentioned in other places as real, and the '*fire from God*' is real and used by God in numerous places in both the Old and New Testament. If all is to be symbolic or spiritualised then what of the inconsistency of other places where often the same expressions are taken as literal? Why discard the *literal sense* of the passage for a symbolism that relies more on the interpreter?

**'When the thousand years are expired'** [literally '*after the thousand years*'. See '*Diakrisis*' July/Aug Part 15, for apologetics for Millennialism] - shows a definite time period in which '*after*' Satan will be released ('*loosed*') from '*his prison*' ('*phularke*'), 'prison' here being by context the same as the '*pit*' (vs.1-3).

Satan will then one last time '***go out to deceive the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth, [the] Gog and [the] Magog***'.

The identities of the '*Gog*' and the '*Magog*' have been the subject of much discussion. Gog was a son of Japheth (Gen.10:2; 1Chr.1:5) and the name of a people descending from him or the country inhabited by that people and of which Gog was a king (Ezek.38:2; 39:1, 6). Magog is transliterated from the Hebrew and appears to be a *region* of Gog. Ezekiel wrote about Gog as a person and Magog as the name of the land or the people of that land (Ezek.chs.38,39). The first century historian, Josephus, stated that Magog represented the Scythians, a race that spread over what is now southern Russia. Many modern commentators see Gog and Magog as a northern kingdom including Russia.

However, although some imagery may be borrowed from Ezekial, Ezekiel chapters 38,39 and Revelation 20:8 have completely different outcomes. This author tends to link the two names Gog and Magog by context with the plural '*nations*' and the vastness of '*the four quarters of the earth*' - to be a generalisation and a figure of speech for the many, at that time, rebellious nations of the earth. This is also in view of the expressions '*the number of whom is as the sand of the sea*' (Gen.22:17; 32:12; 41:49; Josh.11:4; Jdg 7:12; 1Sam.13:5; 2Sam.17:11; 1Kngs 4:20,29; Ps.78:27; Is.10:22; Jer.33:22; Hos.1:10; Rom.9:27; Heb.11:12); and the '*breadth of the earth*' (Job 38:18).



These nations will be **'gathered together'** for one last **'battle'** which will culminate in them **'compassing the camp of the saints, and the beloved city'**. The **'beloved city'** here is no doubt Jerusalem (Rev.3:12; Heb.12:22; Is.24:23; Mic.4:7; Zech.14:9-11). God sends **'fire...out of heaven'** which **'devours'** (**'katestheo'**- 'eats up') the rebels.

This final rebellion should not surprise the reader when one considers the Pharaoh of old who even after seeing the hand of God directly in signs and wonders, still persisted in a final act of rebellion. Added to this it must be remembered that those who go into the millennium will still possess sinful natures and are thus still capable of resistance against God.

20:10 **'And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever'**.

The Devil now joins the **'beast and the false prophet'** who have already been in the Lake of Fire for a *thousand years* (19:20). Arguably this time period adds to the evidence that this final Hell is a lasting eternal non extinguishable fire of sorts (for further proofs see **'Diakrisis'** Sept/Oct 2016, **'Hades, Sheol, Lake of Fire, the Abyss and 'Soul Sleep'**, P.7-12). Indeed, the text continues describing a state of being **'tormented day and night for ever and ever'**.

20:11-15 **'And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works. And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire'**.

The person sitting on this **'great white throne'** is Jesus Christ, the same who sits upon a white cloud and rides a white horse (14:14; 19:11). Although both God and Jesus share the throne, all judgement has been delivered to Christ (Jn.5:22; Acts 10:42).

The figurative description (see similar in 12:6; 16:20) of **'the earth and the heaven fled away'** shows the grandeur, the majesty and the fearsome solemnity of standing before a holy and righteous God in judgement. This judgement is pictured also in Daniel chapter 7 with the **'Ancient of Days'** vividly described and **'the books opened'** (vs.9-11).

The **'dead, small and great, stand before God'** as well as the *dead in the sea*, alone as individuals with no barrister or defence or appeal in the sight of a God that has conquered all sin, all enemies and sees all.

***‘The books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life’.*** The ‘books’ here appear to be that which contain the names of all living or dead (Dan.7:10) and mentioned in several places as containing a history of conscience and works (Ps.56:8; 139:16). The ‘book of life’ appears to contain the names of the elect who have been given eternal life (Rev.3:5; Phil.4:3; Dan.12:1) and synonymous with ‘*the Lambs book of life*’ (Rev.13:8; 21:27).

From these books ***‘the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books’.*** This judgement will be ***‘according to works’***, some greater, some lesser (Lk.12:47,48), but all works which can never achieve salvation (Rom.4:1-6; Eph.2:8,9). Ultimately God shall judge by Jesus Christ according to the Gospel (Rom.2:16). Those who do not ***‘know Jesus Christ’*** and ***‘obey the Gospel...shall be punished with everlasting destruction...’*** (2Thess.1:8,9).

***‘Death and hell [Hades] were cast into the Lake of fire. This is the second death’.*** ‘Death’, the ‘*last enemy*’ (1Cor.15:26) and ‘Hell’ (‘Hades’) are here personified and deliver up all. There has been a ‘thousand years’ reign of Christ, and Satan was bound between two resurrections. The unsaved here are judged in a ‘*second death*’, being the ‘*Lake of Fire*’. This is one of the most frightening judgements in scripture. The descriptions of this eternal fiery place are numerous and graphic. This ‘Hell’ (the ‘*Lake of Fire*’ is synonymous with the ‘*gehenna*’ Hell) is a place where the ‘*fire is never quenched*’ and ‘*the worm dies not*’ (Mk.9:43,45,47). On the day of judgement bodies of unbelievers are united with their souls and ‘*cast into*’ this place. Here there is punishment, not a place where sin is paid for; sin can only be paid for by Jesus Christ on the cross (Heb.9:26-28).

The Lake of Fire will exist to demonstrate God’s wrath and for the glory of God (Rom.9:22,23). Some say that because it is out of time or space that the ‘*fire*’ would not be literal, but nevertheless, it will be a ‘*fire*’ of sorts and that with *torment*. It is a place of separation from God with no respite. The lie of Satan ‘*you shall not surely die*’ will be forever judged and justice done.

The only way to escape this judgement is to be found in the ‘*book of life*’ of which God has promised to ‘*not blot out*’ (Rev.3:5) - when we receive the true Gospel, to believe and confess Jesus Christ as Lord of all, and that God has sent Christ to satisfy His justice with a finished sacrifice as a substitute for our sins.

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In **Part 16** (Chapter 20:5-15 *Diakrisis* Sept/October 2022) details two resurrections separated by ‘*a thousand years*’ - ‘*the resurrection of life*’ and the ‘*resurrection of damnation*’ (Jn.5:28,29). The latter is at the fearsome great white throne judgement, which ends in the ‘*second death*’ in eternal Hell, where the antichrist and false prophet are and into which ‘Hades’ and ‘the last enemy - death’ are thrown. This Lake of Fire will demonstrate God’s wrath and his glory (Rom.9:22,23)

The only way to escape the latter judgement is to be found in the ‘*book of life*’. God has promised to ‘*not blot out*’ (Rev.3:5) the names of those who receive the Gospel, who believe and confess Jesus Christ as Lord of all, and that God has sent Christ to satisfy His justice with a finished sacrifice as a substitute for our sins.

### **Part 17 Chapters 21:1-22:5**

**21:1 ‘*And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea*’.**

One of the most fascinating passages of scripture to this author is Revelation chapters 21 and 22, which is a culmination of hundreds of passages about Heaven.

The Bible consistently describes Heaven as a *place*. This ‘*new heaven and new earth*’ will be eternally and qualitatively ‘*new*’ (‘*kainós*’, not a temporary ‘*néos*’). The old ‘*first earth*’ with its distinguishing feature of ‘*sea*’ separating nations, will have ‘*passed away*’.

**21:2-4 ‘*And I John saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men [mankind], and he will dwell [tabernacle] with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away*’.**

John ‘*saw*’ the ‘*New Jerusalem*’, coming ‘*down from God*’ which had already been (perfect tense) ‘*prepared*’ and ‘*adorned for her husband*’. The figure of the ‘*bride*’ and ‘*husband*’ are common in scripture (Is.49:18; 61:10; 62:5; Rev.19:7,8; 21:9), as is a city to be a ‘*woman*’ (Rev.12:1-17; 17:3-18).

The imagery here is from a Jewish wedding which has a betrothal, a feast, a presentation of the bride, a supper, and a final consummation. Indeed God has in eternity past betrothed to His Son a redeemed people; there is a marriage supper of the Lamb, and a consummation in Heaven. The ‘*bride*’, being the city, includes all the redeemed ones who have their names written in ‘*the Lamb’s Book of Life before the foundation of the world*’ (Rev.13:8; 17:8; 21:27).

A 'great voice out of heaven' (likely an angel) now declares that God will 'tabernacle' ('skenem' - tent, dwelling) with his people like never before, not as in spirit but *in person as 'Immanuel'* ('God with us'). This fellowship and worship will be face to face with no restrictions of body, temple, or curtains to hide and protect the people from death by facing God in all His glory!

As in Isaiah 25:8 and Revelation 7:17, God declares that in this new city there are no more *tears* because there is no more *death*, mental *sorrow*, *pain* - these things have all '*passed away*' (vs.1). (This is not the millennium in which there was still death - Is.65:20; Rev.20:14).

**21:5-8 '*And he that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new. And he said unto me, Write: for these words are true and faithful. And he said unto me, It is done. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely. He that overcomes shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son. But the fearful, and unbelieving, and abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone: which is the second death*'.**

God upon his throne (Rev.4:2; 5:13) declares again that '*all things*' are now '*new*' (prophesied in Is.65:17; 66:22;). and tells John again (see 19:9) to '*write*', because '*these words are true and faithful*'. John then writes what God declares - that the end has come - '*it is done*' - and that He is the '*Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end*', as declared to John in chapter 1 (vs.8,11). He promises '*life*' to flow from his throne as a '*fountain of water*' to all believers, the same life that was given in the Holy Spirit whilst in fleshly bodies on earth (Jn.4:14; 7:37-39). These believers are those who have '*overcome*' and have been adopted by Him (vs.7 as '*sons*'). Indeed all who are '*athirst*' (Matt.5:6; Ps.42:1,2) and '*overcome*' (1Jn.4:4; 2:13,14) the war with sin are the true believers and will not suffer '*the second death*' of eternal destruction (2Thess.1:9; Mk.9:44-48). On the contrary, He commits all the unbelievers who are '*fearful...abominable, murderers, whoremongers* ('*pórnos*' - a fornicator - 1Cor.5:9-11; 6:9), *sorcerers* ('*pharmakeía*' - occult, sorcery, witchcraft - Gal.5:20; Rev.9:21; 18:23), *idolaters, liars*' (see 1Tim.4:1,2) - to the '*lake which burns with fire and brimstone which is the second death*'. (See also Rom.1:26-29; Gal.5:19-21).

21:9-23 '*And there came unto me one of the seven angels which had the seven vials [bowls] full of the seven last plagues, and talked with me, saying, Come, I will show you the wife, the bride of the Lamb. And he carried me away in the spirit onto a great and high mountain, and showed he me that city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God,*

*having the glory of God: and her light [radiance] was like unto a stone most precious, like a jasper stone, clear as crystal; And had a wall great and high, and had twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels, and names written thereon, which are the names of the twelve tribes of the children [sons] of Israel: On the east three gates; on the north three gates; on the south three gates; and on the west three gates. And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and in [on] them the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb. And he that talked with me had a golden reed to measure the city, and the gates thereof, and the wall thereof. And the city lies foursquare, and the length is as large as the breadth: and he measured the city with the reed, twelve thousand furlongs. The length and the breadth and the height of it are equal. And the wall thereof, a hundred and forty and four cubits, according to the measure of a man, that is, of the angel. And the building of the wall of it was of jasper: and the city was pure gold, like unto clear [pure] glass. And the foundations of the wall of the city were garnished [adorned] with all manner of precious stones. The first foundation was jasper; the second, sapphire; the third, a chalcedony; the fourth, an emerald; The fifth, sardonyx; the sixth, sardius; the seventh, chrysolite; the eighth, beryl; the ninth, a topaz; the tenth, a chrysoprasus; the eleventh, a jacinth; the twelfth, an amethyst. And the twelve gates were twelve pearls; every gate was of one pearl: and the street of the city was pure gold, as it were transparent glass. And I saw no temple therein: for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it. And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light [lamp] thereof.*

As with much of Revelation, many commentators refuse to allow any literal interpretation here. An example of many follows: *'The idea of a city literally descending from heaven, and being set upon the earth with such proportions - three hundred and seventy miles high (vs.16), made of gold, and with single pearls for gates, and single gems for the foundations - is absurd. No man can suppose that this is literally true, and hence this must be regarded as a figurative or emblematic description...'* (Barnes). Heavenly matter is not as earthly materials, and is it so impossible that God could not make such a 'city', one which John 'saw' and was 'shown' in detail (vs.1,2,10,22; 22:1,8)? Did John mean it to be figurative only? Was the 'angel' not an angel; the 'city' not a city; the names of the apostles not really names; the Shekinah glory not really from the Lamb on the throne? Do we not take the similar description in Ezekial 48:30-35 as real? Why did the angel not give an interpretation if all was symbolic only, as the angel did in chapter 17 for the harlot woman? Why would the *extensive detailed description* of such a city be left to the interpreter to decide the meanings of the details, which today has invariably lead to a multitude of differing speculative opinions! John is accurately describing what he 'saw'.

The same angels who delivered the plagues now transport John *'in the spirit'* (similar in Rev.1:10; Exek.40:2; 2Cor.12:2-4) to view the city of the New Jerusalem which is called the *'wife, the bride of the Lamb'*. (Note the contrast between the 'bride' here and the 'harlot' of chapter 17).

John sees the city *'descending out of Heaven'*, the 'heavenly Jerusalem' as described in Hebrews 2:22. The city has a *radiance* ('light') all of its own, the source being the glory of God.

John described the *'light'* he sees as *'like a Jasper stone, clear as crystal'*. The wall is *'great and high'* and on its 12 foundations are the names of the 12 apostles of the Lamb (cp. the foundation of the 'church' - Eph.2:20). On the 12 gates are the names of the twelve tribes of Israel, 3 on each side, with an angel at each one. The description does not stop there, with an angel *'measuring'* the city as 12 thousand furlongs, the shape being a cube (vs.16), (approximately 2,220 kilometres long - approximately the flight distance from Cairns to Melbourne in Australia - a huge area of which there will be *'many mansions'* (Jn.14:2).

The walls are further described as like *'jasper'* stone (translucent diamond like), the city itself like *'pure gold like unto clear glass'*. The walls are adorned with *'precious stones'* each foundation with first *'jasper'*, (Rev.4:3. Sardius and Jasper were the first and last stones in the breastplate of the high priest which represented the firstborn and last born of the tribes of Israel); then sapphire (bright blue), then Chalcedony (sky blue with coloured stripes), then Emerald (bright green), then Sardonyx (red and white striped), then Sardius (shades of red), then chrysolite (transparent or translucent yellow or gold), then Beryl (green, yellow or blue), then Topaz (yellow or green), then chrysoprasus (gold tinted green), then Jacinth (blue or violet), and lastly *'twelfth, an amethyst'* (Purple) - all amounting to a breathtaking beauty!

Each gate is a gigantic *'pearl'* and the streets are like translucent *'pure gold'*. Again, many commentators refuse to believe that what John saw was what he saw: *'This must be merely figurative, for it is out of all the order of nature to produce a pearl large enough to make a gate to such an immense city'* (Clark); *'This shows that this account cannot be taken literally, but mystically, for no such pearl was ever known, large enough to make a gate of'* (Gill). But this is not an *earthly* city, but a heavenly city. Are we to believe that things in Heaven are not what they are described as, such as the cherubims, the seraphims (Is.6), etc?

Missing from this city is any *'temple'*, the reason given is that God and Christ *'are the temple of it'* who have come to finally tabernacle with believers. There is *'no sun or moon'* needed for light (Is.60:19) as the light comes from God Himself, His Christ being the uncreated *'light [lamp] thereof'*, a light similar to the Shekinah glory (Ex.40:34) from which in the

Old Testament Israel needed protecting, but now believers will have by it security and safety. We can only view this light in a future spiritual body. Our worship then will be truly *'in spirit and in truth'* (Jn.4:23). This spiritual body will not be limited by space or time.

**21: 24-27 *'And the nations of them which are saved shall walk in the light of it: and the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honour into it. And the gates of it shall not be shut at all by day: for there shall be no night there. And they shall bring the glory and honour of the nations into it. And there shall by no means enter into it any [common] thing that defiles, neither whatsoever works abomination, or makes a lie: but they which are [have been] written in the Lamb's book of life'*.**

*'The nations of them which are saved'* arguably does not refer to the millennium due to the chronological progression to the *new heaven* in this chapter. However, there will be believers living at the end of the Millennium who shall *'walk in the light of'* this new city and bring their worship into it. Isaiah 60 appears to refer to gentiles (nations) which *'shall come to your light...'* (Is.60:3).

The *'gates of'* this city will not be shut, being guarded by angels at each (vs.12), and there being *'no night there'*. No common (*'koinos'*) unsanctified thing or person will enter the city (vs.27). This is written with a Greek *'double negative'* (*'ou me'* - no, not at all; no never) to stress the impossibility of anything unholy entering (see also Is.52:1; Ez.44:9). Only those who have been (Greek perfect passive - were written by God and remain written) - *'written in the Lamb's book of life'* (Rev.3:5) will inhabit the city. These are the ones who have believed in Christ and His sacrifice and have been imputed with the righteousness of God by Christ and thus sanctified by His Spirit.

## **Chapter 22**

**22:1-5 *'And he showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb. In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, was there the tree of life, which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. And there shall be no more curse: but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it; and his servants shall serve him: And they shall see his face; and his name shall be in their foreheads. And there shall be no night there; and they need no candle, neither light of the sun; for the Lord God give them light: and they shall reign forever and ever'*.**

Vs.1-3 John is *shown* and *sees* what he describes as a '**pure river of water of life**' which is '**clear** [bright/brilliant] **as crystal**' (see Rev.4:6). The radiance emanates from the One who is on '**the throne**' and also '**of the Lamb**'. Note the unity here and two persons (see Heb.1:3).

It appears that a '**street**' runs through the city and a '**river**' with a '**tree of life**' either side which bears 12 '**fruits**' each and '**every month...for the healing of the nations**'. The '**tree of life**' is now the preservation of the saved and the nourishment of the nations, in contrast to Adam and Eve being banned from eating it (Gen.3:22,23), for had they eaten mankind would have lived with consequences of sin forever.

The trees for healing will not be to heal sicknesses for their will '**be no more curse**'. The presence of God on the throne means there will be no more curse from the first man and woman with all its suffering and death. The devil, the world and the flesh will have no more influence.

'**His servants** [bondslaves] **will serve him**' as they '**see his face**' (Matt.5:8; Rev.7:15) in all His glory. The joy and happiness of this unrestricted worship would be impossible to describe in earthly terms. God will possess His people with '**his name in their foreheads**' (see 3:12; 7:3).

'**And there shall be no night there; and they need no candle, neither light of the sun; for the Lord God give them light**'- this repeats chapter 21 verse 3 and adds '**and they shall reign forever and ever** [ages unto ages]'.

How much do we really want to go to Heaven and be with the Lord, to serve Him and worship Him as described in these passages? Or do the things of this world which '*is passing away*', hold more interest (1Jn.2:15-17)? Where is our treasure to keep (Matt.19:21)? Can we say with Paul '*for to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain*' (Phil.1:21)?

In the light of the eternity of this Heaven as described, '*what is your life? It is even a vapour, that appears for a little time, and then vanishes away*' (James 4:14). Are the descriptions in these last two chapters not worth meditating on for the comfort and the pleasure of the believer with the mind of Christ?

Our inheritance is in Heaven '*an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fades not away, reserved in heaven for you*' (1Pet.1:4)'.

Jesus said '*Let not your heart be troubled: you believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there you may be also*' (Jn.14:1-3).

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In **Part 17** (chapter 21:1-22:5 - *Diakrisis* November/December 2022) the final city of the ‘New Jerusalem’ is described, a culmination of hundreds of passages about Heaven in the Bible. Its breathtaking beauty are described with its dimensions, the materials, the inhabitants and the glory within. It is a resting place of love, joy, peace and holiness for the saints face to face with the Godhead.

### **Part 18 (Chapter 22:6-21)**

**22: 6** *‘And he said unto me, These sayings are faithful and true: and the Lord God of the holy prophets sent his angel to show unto his servants the things which must shortly be done’.*

This is a repetition of Revelation 3:14; 19:11; 21:5 and ascribed to the One whose ‘**sayings**’ (‘*lógos*’) are ‘**faithful and true**’. This book is not just writings of John but a testimony from the Lord Jesus Christ Himself and through ‘**his angel**’.

**22: 7** *‘Behold, I come quickly: blessed is he that keeps the saying of the prophecy of this book’.*

The *imminency* expressed in ‘**I come quickly**’ is repeated often in scripture, in this book (2:5,16; 3:11), and three times in this chapter alone (vs.7,12,20).

The word ‘**quickly**’ (‘*tachú*’) has the idea of swiftness, suddenness, rather than indicating any time frame; hence the result is imminency, since no one knows the exact time. The early church understood that the coming of the Lord could be ‘*at hand*’ (1Pet.4:7) and ‘*draws nigh*’ (James 5:8), and that the current church age is ‘*the last days*’ (Heb.1:1,2). The idea of imminency also abounds in the early church fathers writings (Clement of Rome, Ignatius of Antioch, The Didache, Epistle of Barnabas, The Shepherd of Hermas).

In the last days there will be ‘*scoffers*’ to which Peter replies by preaching the sureness of our Lord coming for his ‘*beloved*’ (2Pet.3). Imminency is a doctrine in itself and is important for the motivation of believers to live godly holy lives (1Jn.3:3; Rom.13:11-14). We are to *watch* and keep *looking* for His coming (Matt.25:13; Phil.3:20).

The person who ‘**keeps**’ (or guards) the ‘**prophecy of this book**’ will be ‘**blessed**’. It is a book that Christians should read not infrequently, especially if one can see that many end time signs have no doubt increased and intensified. ‘*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).

22: 8,9 *'And I John saw these things, and heard them. And when I had heard and seen, I fell down to worship before the feet of the angel which showed me these things. Then said he unto me, See you do it not: for I am your fellow servant, and of your brethren the prophets, and of them which keep the sayings of this book: worship God'*.

John now states that he *'saw'* and *'heard'* the things he has reported, following which he falls down at the feet of the angel in the position of worship. As in Chapter 19, John was likely overcome with the scenes and sounds he had witnessed. The angel responds sharply *'see that you do it not'* (*'horáo me'*) before explaining that he is a *'fellow servant'* (Heb.1:14) of John and his *'brethren the prophets'* and all who *'keep the sayings of this book'*. The angel rightly instructs him to only *'worship God'* (Ex.34:14; Matt.4:10).

22: 10 *'And he said unto me, seal not the sayings of the prophecy of this book: for the time is at hand'*.

Unlike other books where the writer was told to *'shut up the vision'* (Dan.8:26), and *'shut up the words, seal the book, even to the time of the end'* (12:4-10), John is told not to seal the *'prophecy of this book'* because *'the time is at hand'*. This book is to be read, studied and understood as best we can.

22: 11,12 *'He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still: and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still'. And, behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be'*.

Verse 11 is difficult for some but if taken in context with verse 12 it appears to be referring to the future judgement when the condition of the soul would be set for eternity. What state a man dies in, so will be his soul in eternity. Considering the time till death or the coming of the Lord could be short, this is a fearsome statement. The *'righteousness'* referred to here must be the righteousness of God imputed upon belief in Christ and his substitutionary sacrifice (Rom.4).

Believers will be judged on service (1Cor.3:8-15; 2Cor.5:10). Unbelievers will be judged at the *'great white throne'* judgement (Rev.20:11-15) according to works outside of salvation (Rom.4:1-6; Eph.2:8,9), then punished with everlasting destruction (2Thess.1:8,9).

The only way to escape this judgement is to be found in the *'book of life'* of which God has promised to *'not blot out'* (Rev.3:5) - when we receive the true Gospel, to believe and confess Jesus Christ as Lord of all, and that God has sent Christ to satisfy His justice with a finished sacrifice as a substitute for our sins.

Again we are told the Lord comes '*quickly*' and with his '*reward for every man according to his work*', (the latter words probably taken from Isaiah 40:10).

22:13 '*I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last*'

With this first and last letter in the Greek alphabet, both Testaments have both God and Christ as the '*Alpha and Omega*' (Is.41:4; 44:6; 48:12; Rev.1:7; 2:8; 22:13). Christ here clearly states his deity. In His absolute sovereignty He started the plan of the events described in Revelation and He will end it. Indeed He is the '*author and the finisher of our faith*' (Heb.12:2).

22:14,15 '*Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right [authority] to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city. For without are dogs, and sorcerers, and whoremongers [fornicators], and murderers, and idolaters, and whosoever [all who] loves and makes a lie*'.

The '*commandments*' here is '*entoles*' (not '*nomos*' - law) and is synonymous with the Word of God (1Jn.2:3-7; 1Cor.7:19; 1Jn.3:22). This is more than the 10 commandments, it would include all the teachings of God, Jesus and the moral law (Rev.12:17). 'Doing' these commandments cannot be done perfectly by man, but rather by the perfect substitution of Christ in faith under the influence and fruit of the Spirit, against which there is no law that condemns (Gal.5:23).

The followers of Christ and His commandments have the '*right*' ('*exousia*' - authority) to the '*tree of life*' which nourishes the nations (Rev.22:1,2).

Outside of the city of God will be all those who are without Christ and His righteousness. '*Dogs*' was a cultural term used for Gentiles; those of low character (Phil.3:2); or homosexuals (Dt.23:18). '*Sorcerers*' ('*pharmakeia*') were those involved in occult, sorcery, witchcraft (Gal.5:20; Rev.9:21; 18:23; 21:8). '*Whoremongers*' [fornicators - '*pórnos*'] were those practising sex outside of marriage between a man and a woman (Matt.15:19; 19:4-6). '*Pórnos*' is mentioned 10 times in the New Testament (1Cor.5:9,10,11; 6:9; Eph.5:5; 1Tim.1:10; Heb.12:16; 13:4; Rev.21:8; 22:15). '*Murderers*' were those who took the lives of others. '*Idolaters*' are those who worship anything other than the creator God. '*Whosoever*' ['*pás*' - '*all*'] '*loves and makes a lie*' ['*pseúdos*'] are all those who 'make' falsehoods and do not have the truth of God and His Word. All are '*without the city*' of the New Jerusalem and will be in the eternal Lake of Fire (Rev.21:8).

22: 16,17 *'I Jesus have sent mine angel to testify unto you these things in the churches. I am the root and the offspring of David, and the bright and morning star. And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that hears say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will [the willing one], let him take the water of life freely'*.

'Jesus' himself here speaks of His '*angel*' sent to '*testify...these things to the churches*', originally the seven churches of Revelation (chapter 2). Christ is the '*root and the offspring of David*' in that He was a Jew of the line of David in the tribe of Judah as prophesied (2Sam.7:12-16; Is.11:1; Ps.132:11; Mk.12:35; Rev.5:5). He is the '*bright and morning star*' (Rev.2:28), the '*day star*' (2Pet.1:19), a metaphor from the planet Venus which the Greeks called the day or morning star that ushered in the light of day.

Both the Holy '*Spirit*' and the '*bride*' (the church) give a general invitation here to '*come*' to those who will '*hear*' and are '*athirst*'. The Spirit's ministry is to point to Christ (Jn.15:26; 16:8,14). Some misapply this verse to an invitation addressing the 'free will' of all to choose Christ. However, the context of this passage is to '*testify unto you these things in the churches*' (vs.16). Verse 17 continues with '*the spirit and the bride*'. The verse refers to the New Jerusalem and to God's '*servants*' (vs.6) taking '*the waters of life freely*' (cp.Is.55:1). The sovereign choosing of God (Eph.1:4,5; Jn.6:44) and the liberty of the offering of the Gospel with human responsibility is here revealed (vs.17), a divine antinomy.

22:18,19 *'For I testify unto every man that hears the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book'*. [The KJV (from the 'Textus Receptus') has '*the book of life*'; the majority of manuscripts have '*the tree of life*']

The warning of '*if any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues...written in this book*' is a most serious one echoed in other verses for the entire word of God (Dt.4:2; Pr.30:5,6). The '*plagues*' are those in chapters 9,11,15,16,18,21.

22:20,21 *'He which testifies these things says, Surely I come quickly. Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen'*.

Again, the veracity of the prophecy and the sureness of the coming of the Lord are stated. The desire of the writer is '*come, Lord Jesus*'.

The benediction of the '*grace of our Lord Jesus Christ*' (Rom.16:20) follows with a closing statement of truth - '*Amen*'.

This last chapter closes with promises as well as warnings. The promises are that we will be blessed if we '*keep the sayings of this book*' (22:7), similar to a promise in the first chapter that whoever '*reads*' it will be blessed (1:3). The book is not to be 'sealed' but read, studied, understood and kept. Why? - because of imminency of Christ's return, indeed '*the time is at hand*'.

But only the followers of Christ will have the fruit of such blessing and be in the New Jerusalem, a place of unspeakable beauty, peace, joy and comfort, beholding the king Himself. Our desire should be that of the Spirit, the angel, the apostle and bride - '*come, Lord Jesus*'!

### **Conclusion** (Editor):

I confess this commentary series on Revelation has been a most difficult undertaking - a task the Lord laid on my heart nearly 4 years ago. I started this too because I felt inadequate in knowledge of this book, and one way to challenge that shortfall was to commit to completing the whole book. I am indebted to our sub-editor, Mike Claydon, for help with many verses I found difficult.

The warnings of verses 18 and 19 in the last chapter have arguably prevented me from expanding on many of my own thoughts and impressions of some verses. If I have written any error, may the Lord forgive me.

Sadly today many ignore the book as being too difficult. Yet it is a message *to churches* (1:4). Others allegorise it with a confusing variety of interpretations. However the book is not an allegory but an *eye witness account* of what John 'saw' and 'heard' - a summary of the ages and what is to come.

This book must surely exhort one to worship, considering that is one of the themes of the book, but also to fear God and to holy living, in preparation for his coming and judgement. In that may the reader be exhorted and the Lord be honoured and glorified.

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## About the Author and the Ministry

Terry Arnold holds a Doctorate in Theology (Dth), a Masters degree (MABS) and several diplomas. He was founder and president of *South Pacific Bible Institute*, a Bible college training and equipping people for ministry. In addition he was the founder of Hervey Bay Bible Church in Queensland, Australia. He has for 25 years served as an elder and then pastor.

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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.