



The Book of Revelation

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Course Schedule

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Course Overview:

In modern times, commentators have produced a bewildering variety of opinions about the meaning of this book. G. K Chesterton quipped that although "Though St. John the Evangelist saw many strange monsters in his vision, he saw no creature so wild as one of his own commentators." (*Orthodoxy*, p. 10). We will discuss modern errors about this book such as the 'rapture theory' and 'millenarianism' (CCC 676). Although Revelation may seem like a bewildering narrative of visions and dramatic images, following the brief prologue (1:1-3), the book is organized around successive images of Jesus Christ: the revealer in Rev. 1-3, the Lamb in Rev. 4-11, the messianic warrior King in Rev. 12-22. These divisions correspond to the trifold office of Christ as Prophet, Priest and King in which whole People of God participates through their baptism (CCC 783).

Course Objectives:

1. To better understand Heaven, Hell, Death and Judgment as we see them reflected in Sacred Scripture as a means of motivating moral action from relationship and excellence rather than mere duty and legalism.
2. To understand the key concepts of the last things and to correct the thinking of modern errors such as the 'rapture theory' and 'millenarianism' (CCC 676).
3. To deepen the student's knowledge of the Catholic approach to Sacred Scripture and show how it applies to the Book of Revelation.
4. To connect the teachings of Revelation with our own personal growth in holiness.

COURSE SCHEDULE

Session	Video Min.	Topic
INTRO		—Introduction
1		--How to Understand this book?
2		--Who is the Author?
3		--Place and Date of Composition
4		--What kind of book is Revelation?
5		—Prologue Revelation 1:1-8
6		—Letters to the Seven Churches (Revelation 1:9-3:22) --The Churches of Ephesus and Smyrna
7		--The Churches of Pergamum and Thyatira
8		--The Churches of Sardis, Philadelphia and Laodicea
Reading: Revelation 1:1-3:22		
9		—Worship of the Lamb (Revelation 4:1-5:15)
10		—Seven seal-openings (Revelation 5:16-8:1)
Reading: Revelation 4:1-8:1		
11		— Revelation 8:2-11:19--Trumpets The Seven Trumpets (Revelation 8-9)
12		The Angel with the Small Scroll (Revelation 10)
13		The Two Witnesses (Revelation 11:1-14)
14		The Seventh Trumpet (Revelation 11:15-19)
15		—Revelation 11-14--Signs The Woman and the Dragon (Revelation 12)

16		The Two Beasts (Revelation 13)
17		Angels and Companions (Revelation 14)
Reading: Revelation 8:2-14:20		
18		—Revelation 15-16--Bowls --Seven Last Plagues (Revelation 15)
19		--The Seven Bowls (Revelation 16)
20		—Revelation 17-22 Babylon and Her Fall (Revelation 17-19:10)
21		The Victory of the King (Revelation 19:11-20)
22		The New Heaven and New Earth (21-22)
Reading: Revelation 15:1-22:21-		

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Introductionⁱ

This Course will explore the *Book of Revelation*. Among the early Christians, the book was highly acclaimed by St. Melito Bishop of Sardis, St. Clement of Alexandria, Tertullian, and St. Irenaeus. The use of Revelation by the second century heretic Montanus led others to question this early enthusiasm for the book. Some early interpreters developed an overly literal interpretation of the ‘millennium’ or thousand-year reign of Christ on earth found in Revelation 20.

The church corrected these views and enthusiasm for Revelation again dwindled. St. Augustine, in his *City of God*, Book XX, rejects these views stating that we are presently in the final thousand years, which is a figure of speech and that the millennium stands for all the years of the present age (XX.7). In the same era St. Jerome emphatically rejects what he calls “a certain fable of a thousand years” (*Letter* 120.2). He writes, “Away, then, with the fable about a millennium!” (*Commentary on Daniel* 8). As the Catechism reminds us, “The Church has rejected even modified forms of this falsification of the kingdom to come under the name of millenarianism” (CCC 676).

With a fragmented view of the canon of Scripture, early Protestant writers were even more put off by Revelation. Martin Luther treated Revelation as theologically inadequate, Ulrich Zwingli refused to base any doctrine on it, and John Calvin wrote commentaries on every book of the New Testament except Revelation.

In more modern times, commentators have recovered from this prejudice, but they have produced a bewildering variety of opinions about the meaning of this book. G. K. Chesterton quipped that although “St. John the Evangelist saw many strange monsters in his vision, he saw no creature so wild as one of his own commentators” (*Orthodoxy*, p. 10).

The popularity of futurist millenarian views among Protestants increased greatly in the early 20th century under the influence of the *Scofield Reference Bible* (1909), and more recently by such Protestant authors as Hal Lindsey, *The Late Great Planet Earth*, and Tim LaHaye, *Left Behind*. This book was just released as a movie, *Left Behind: The End Begins*, starring Nicholas Cage (October 2014).

Richard Landes has suggested that there are obvious patterns to these apocalyptic movements. He humorously characterizes this as a conflict between roosters and owls.

Roosters crow about the imminent dawn. Apocalyptic prophets, messianic pretenders, chronologists calculating an imminent doomsday—they all want to rouse the courtyard, stir the other animals into action, shatter the quiet complacency of a sleeping

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community. Owls are night-animals; they dislike both noise and light; they want to hush the roosters, insisting that it is still night, that the dawn is far away, that the roosters are not only incorrect, but dangerous—the foxes are still about and the master asleep.

The Catholic world has not been immune to similar movements by alleged visionaries and mystics, but Hal Lindsey is perhaps the ultimate example of a ‘rooster.’ He treats Revelation like a code book for the end times, and as a countdown to an immanent Armageddon. His highly specific predictions about newsworthy world events have proven false and required him to keep revising his forecasts. Over time the ‘owls’ prevail.

How then should we properly understand the Book of Revelation? The Catechism reminds us that all of Sacred Scripture must be interpreted both with a focus on the meaning of the human author’s intention which implies taking “into account the conditions of their time and culture, the literary genres in use at that time, and the modes of feeling, speaking and narrating then current” (CCC 110) and with attention to the role of the inspiration of the Holy Spirit (2 Timothy 3:16). In light of this, the Fathers of Second Vatican Council offered three criteria for interpreting Scripture. First one needs to be “especially attentive to the content and unity of the whole Scripture” (CCC 112). Secondly Scripture must be read within “the living Tradition of the whole Church” (CCC 113). Finally, one must be “attentive to the analogy of faith” or the coherence of the truths of faith among themselves and within the whole plan of

God’s of entire revelation (CCC 114). The Church also recognizes the spiritual senses of Scripture which allegorically identifies the significance of Christ in the words and events of Scripture (Galatians 4:24), understands the deeper moral sense of Scripture and its role in leading us to Heaven (CCC 117).

There are four typical approaches to the Revelation. The first view, the *Idealist*, sees Revelation as describing timeless spiritual truths about God and the afterlife and allegorically about the relationship between the Church and the world.

A rival type of interpretation which has been popular in modern Evangelical Protestant circles is the *Futurist* interpretation which sees Revelation as a kind of code book for the future which must be cracked by the interpreter to reveal predictions of the imminent last times and the advent of the millennial age.

A third view called the *Church historical* view sees Revelation as a description of the Church in events throughout history. The final view, which is most popular among modern commentators is the *Contemporary Historical* or ‘*Preterist*’ view which sees Revelation as describing events primarily in the first century AD. Some recent commentators have preferred to blend these approaches.

Although Revelation may seem like a bewildering narrative of visions and dramatic images, following the brief prologue (1:1-3), the book is organized around successive images of Jesus Christ: the revealer in Rev. 1-3, the Lamb in Rev. 4-11, the messianic warrior King in Rev. 12-22.

These divisions correspond to the trifold office of Christ as Prophet, Priest and King in which whole People of God participates through their baptism (CCC 783).

Background

Author and Canonicity

Although the author simply calls himself, John, the unanimous testimony of the second century was that the author is St. John the Apostle, the beloved disciple. An alternate proposal from both ancient and modern times is that the author is a different John, perhaps John the Presbyter, or less likely another well known apostle who is not one of the Twelve.

External Testimony

St. Justin Martyr, converted to Christianity in 135 AD in Ephesus. In his *Dialogue with Trypho* he comments on Isaiah 65:17-25, and Psalm 89:4 which he connects to Revelation 20:4-6.ⁱⁱ He notes, “a man among us named John, one of Christ’s Apostles, received a revelation and foretold that the followers of Christ would dwell in Jerusalem for a thousand years.”ⁱⁱⁱ St. Justin interprets the thousand years as “symbolic language” and notes to Trypho, the Jew he is dialoguing with, that “even to this day the gifts of prophecy exist among Christians, you should realize that the gifts which had resided among your people have now been transferred to us.”^{iv}

The fact that Justin’s testimony comes from Ephesus is important, as the city of Ephesus is likely the center of the Apostle John’s ministry (see the next section on the importance of Ephesus).

During the early second century St. Melito, Bishop of Sardis wrote a commentary on Revelation,^v and other writers such as Papias, bishop of Heirapolis,^{vi} and St. Irenaeus of Lyon^{vii} frequently quote *Revelation* and consider it

among the sacred books as did the Muratorian Fragment. The ecclesiastical writer Tertullian^{viii} and later in the third century Origen^{ix} of Alexandria likewise agree with this testimony. Origen clearly thinks that the Gospel of John and Revelation are from the same author.

Against this consensus was the opinion of Dionysius of Alexandria who, because of later false understandings about the millennium (Rev. 20) denied that Revelation was part of Sacred Scripture. Following Dionysius, the School of Antioch, including St. Cyril of Jerusalem, St John Chrysostom, and Theodoret would not use Revelation, though St. Athanasius, St. Basil and St. Gregory of Nyssa did.^x These doubts in the Eastern Church were gradually overcome.

Internal Testimony

The differences in language and style between Revelation and the Gospel of John are obvious. They were pointed out in ancient times by Dionysius of Alexandria and in modern times it has become customary to cite the work of R. H. Charles in the 1920’s who highlighted these differences. Recent commentators have questioned this evidence, noting that it may not have bearing on the question of authorship.^{xi}

Revelation is steeped in the language of the Old Testament in what appear to be allusions to the Greek, and Old Greek translations of the text and occasionally to the original Hebrew of these books.

G. K. Beale notes that John alludes to a wide range of Old Testament passages including the “Pentateuch, Judges, 1-2 Samuel, 1-2 Kings, Psalms, Proverbs, Song of Solomon, Job, and the major and the minor prophets” Beale observes that, “roughly more than half the references are from the Psalms, Isaiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel, and in proportion to its length Daniel yields the most^{xii} Though Beale admits that in terms of influence “There is more agreement that Ezekiel exerts greater influence in Revelation than Daniel”^{xiii}

The following chart comparing Revelation to Ezekiel is adapted from David Chilton.^{xiv}

Chart 1: Revelation and Ezekiel Parallels

Revelation and Ezekiel Parallels

1. The Throne-vision (Revelation 4/Ezekiel 1)
2. The Book (Revelation 5/Ezekiel 2-3)
3. The Four Plagues (Revelation 6:1-8/Ezekiel 5)
4. The Slain under the Altar (Revelation 6:9-11 /Ezekiel 6)
5. The Wrath of God (Revelation 6:12-17 /Ezekiel 7)
6. The Seal on the Saint's Foreheads (Revelation 7 /Ezekiel 9)
7. The Coals from the Altar (Revelation 8/Ezekiel 10)
8. No More Delay (Revelation 10:1-7/Ezekiel 12)
9. The Eating of the Book (Revelation 10:8-11/Ezekiel 2)
10. The Measuring of the Temple (Revelation 11:1-2/Ezekiel 40-43)
11. Jerusalem and Sodom (Revelation 11:8/Ezekiel 16)
12. The Cup of Wrath (Revelation 14/Ezekiel 23)
13. The Vine of the Land (Revelation 14:18-20/Ezekiel 15)
14. The Great Harlot (Revelation 17-18/Ezekiel 16, 23)
15. The Lament over the City (Revelation 18/Ezekiel 27)
16. The Scavengers' Feast (Revelation 19 /Ezekiel 39)
17. The First Resurrection (Revelation 20:4-6 /Ezekiel 37)
18. The Battle with Gog and Magog (Revelation 20:7-9/Ezekiel 38-39)
19. The New Jerusalem (Revelation 21 /Ezekiel 40-48)
20. The River of Life (Revelation 22/Ezekiel 47)

It is possible that the Prophet Ezekiel and other passages such as Daniel 2 and 7 significantly affect the structure of Revelation.

In terms of the alleged grammatical difficulties, Beale notes, “a significant number of these irregularities occur in the midst of OT allusions” He notes, “A number of expressions appear irregular because John is carrying over the exact grammatical forms of the allusions, often from the various versions of the Greek OT and sometimes from the Hebrew”^{xv} Richard Bauckham makes a similar comment, “Unusual and difficult phrases in Revelation frequently turn out to be Old Testament allusions”^{xvi}

Changes in style can also be attributed to the differences in genre between the two books and possibly to the fact that John is actively writing as a Christian prophet in Revelation.

The overwhelming testimony of early Fathers and the modern evaluation of linguistic evidence make the traditional assertion that the author is the Apostle John, the son of Zebedee highly likely, in spite of disagreement by some modern scholars.

The Importance of Ephesus to the Early Church

The City of Ephesus was the capital of the province of Asia during the Roman occupation. In ancient times Ephesus was a prosperous city known for banking and commerce due to its strategic location on the mouth of the Cayster River, near modern Selçuk on the western coast of Turkey. Ephesus became an important center in the missionary growth of the earliest Christian communities. St. Luke gives us a glimpse of the

importance of Ephesus for the early Church in Acts 18-20.

St. Paul began his missionary work in Ephesus in the synagogue among the Jews (Acts 18:19). After a lengthy visit to Corinth, he returned to Ephesus for three years of ministry but then later after experiencing resistance from some, he withdrew and held daily meetings in the lecture hall of Tyrannus (19:9) for two additional years of ministry (Acts 19:8-10; cf. 20:31).^{xvii}

Ephesus became a base for the Apostle Paul’s evangelizing mission to “all the inhabitants of Asia” both Jews and Greeks (19:10). Eventually this missionary expansion reached out to many of the centers in the province of Asia, including those cities in the Lycus Valley. The book of Revelation mentions seven churches in this region and many of St. Paul’s letters are written during a time period that overlaps with his stay in Ephesus.

Later the Apostle Paul’s letters to the Ephesians and Colossians and this Pastoral Epistles of 1 and 2 Timothy will all center on the community of Ephesus and its surrounding regions. Gilman points out that “according to later tradition preserved by Eusebius, Timothy, the disciple of Paul, was the first bishop of Ephesus (*Hist. Eccl.* 3. 4).”^{xviii}

Sacred Scripture also attests to Ephesus traditions which place the Apostle John in that region in the final years of his ministry (Revelation 1:9). In later traditions preserved by the Church Fathers, the Apostle John is said to have travelled to live in Ephesus with the Blessed Virgin Mary.^{xix}

The *Anchor Bible Dictionary* notes; “It was during these later years of his life that he was exiled to Patmos, wrote the Fourth Gospel, Johannine Epistles, and the Revelation, and combated gnostic heretics such as Cerinthus.”^{xx}

Genre

The word genre might be described a particular category or type of literature. Once while I was shopping I noticed a headline which read, “Life found on Mars.” At the time I was aware of several Mars rover missions and I wondered if one of these had perhaps found microbes in the soil of Mars. Yet my interpretation of this headline depends a lot on which publication it appeared on.

If the magazine was *Scientific America* I would be likely to believe this report. Unfortunately, the magazine was the *National Inquirer* and it was a spoof about the town of Mars, Pennsylvania. The fact that we know how to shift gears between *Scientific America* and the *National Inquirer* shows our awareness of the differing literary categories these works follow.

Scholars generally agree that the Book of Revelation contains three different literary genres. Revelation has some of the elements of a *letter* including an opening salutation (1:4-6) and a letter closing: “The grace of the Lord Jesus be with the saints. Amen.” It also contains letters to the seven churches of the ancient Roman province of Asia. John also frequently describes his work as “*prophecy*” (1:3; 22:7, 10, 18, 19; 22:9) and the work is literally steeped in allusions to the Old Testament, especially the Psalms, Isaiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel as we have already noted. Finally, the work has some significant elements of the genre of *apocalyptic*.

The Greek word *apokalypsis* means “revelation” or “uncovering.” The first piece of literature to actually be named as an apocalypse is the Revelation of John in the New Testament, which begins by naming itself “The Apocalypse of Jesus Christ . . .” Rev. 1:1. Working backward with this book as the exemplar or model biblical scholars have labeled other works as “apocalyptic.” The book of Revelation contains a revelation given by God through an otherworldly mediator to a

human seer disclosing future events which form an admonition to the hearer. After analyzing all texts classified as apocalypses between 250 B.C. and 250 A.D., a group of scholars headed by J. J. Collins, has given the following definition:

“‘Apocalypse’ is a genre of revelatory literature with a narrative framework, in which a revelation is mediated by an other-worldly being to a human recipient, disclosing a transcendent reality which is both temporal, insofar as it envisages eschatological salvation, and spatial, insofar as it involves another, supernatural world”^{xxi}

Clearly Revelation does contain elements of the apocalyptic genre but many scholars think it has more in common with apocalyptic parts of the Old Testament such as Ezekiel 38-39; Isaiah 24-27 and 56-66; Zechariah 9-14; and the prophet Daniel. One scholar has suggested calling it apocalyptic-prophecy.

The Senses of Scripture

The proper interpretation of Scripture is not always a simple reading of the “plain sense” of the text. In addition to the primary *literal sense*, the Church has discerned a secondary *spiritual sense* of Scripture (there are also always personal meanings of the text that discerned by individuals who seek God’s guidance of their lives through the Scriptures).

The literal sense

The *literal sense* of Scripture is the sacred authors’ original meaning, taking into account his cultural milieu and the literary form employed. It is the basis for all spiritual senses. The literal sense is not a *literalist* understanding of Scripture which purposely ignores the epoch and culture of the original author and sometimes even the

genre in an attempt to extract a “pure” reading of the text from the words alone. “The *literal sense* is the meaning conveyed by the words of Scripture and discovered by exegesis, following the rules of sound interpretation” (CCC 116).

Because Scripture is the Word of God, and thus a mystery, the inspired text is not limited to the literal sense. The words and deeds of Scripture point to other realities within the unity of God’s plan of salvation, both prefiguring them and illuminating them. “As a general rule *we can define the spiritual sense...as the meaning expressed by the biblical texts when read, under the influence of the Holy Spirit, in the context of the paschal mystery of Christ*” (*On the Interpretation of the Bible*).

The allegorical sense

The first spiritual sense is the *allegorical sense* by which “we can acquire a more profound understanding of events by recognizing their significance in Christ” (CCC 117). The allegorical sense sees the prophecies and events of the Old Testament as prefiguring in a hidden way the coming Messiah and brought to light by the Paschal Mystery. This sense, brought out in beautiful ways by the Fathers of the Church, not only demonstrates the unity of the Old and New Testaments but also manifests Christ as the heart of the Sacred Scriptures.

The moral sense

The second spiritual sense is the *moral sense*. In the moral sense “the events

reported in Scripture ought to lead us to act justly” (CCC 117). The Scriptures teach directly by way of commands what the human person is expected to do and avoid. It also teaches indirectly by way of example what life as a child of God and a disciple of Jesus Christ entails. The moral teachings of the Old Testament, while never abrogated and perpetually binding, are fulfilled and perfected by Christ. The Gospel “far from abolishing or devaluing the moral prescriptions of the Old Law, releases their hidden potential and has new demands arise from them” (CCC 1962). Jesus’ teaching and example of holiness manifests the perfection of the moral law to man.

The anagogical sense

The third of spiritual sense is the *anagogical sense*. In the anagogical sense “we can view realities and events in terms of their eternal significance, leading us toward our true homeland” (CCC 117). In other words, we view all of the events of salvation history, from creation on, in the light of their final end. Thus, Scripture teaches man the fullest meaning of creation, human existence, and salvation. At times the anagogical sense is the plain sense of the text, when the purpose of the text is prophecy or explanation of the last things. At other times, the anagogical sense can be extracted from the image or event which speaks to man about the eternal spiritual purpose of all things.

Technique of Recapitulation

The early Fathers of the Church often used the idea of “recapitulation” to explain how Scripture “sums up all things” (Ephesians 1:10) and thus fulfills the previous revelation. The work of the first Adam is summed up or fulfilled and superseded by the New Adam, Jesus Christ (Romans 5). According the Apostle Paul the first Adam “is the type of the one to come” that is Jesus (Romans 5:14).

As a literary technique, scholars often refer to “recapitulation” as a method of narration

which functions like a video replay on football game. Instead of giving a literal step-by-step sequence, parts of the narrative repeat from different points of view and time sequences. This technique is particularly important in evaluating the sequence of the seven seals, seven trumpets and seven bowls in the central part of Revelation chapters 6-16. Are these three separate series of sequential events, or do they recapitulate and repeat the same events from different angles all ending with the same final judgment?

Chart 2: Sequential Events

Sequential Events							
Seals	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Trumpets	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Bowls	X	X	X	X	X	X	X

Chart 3: Events Recapitulating

Events Recapitulating and Ending with the Same Final Judgment																	
Seals	X	X	X	X	X	X											X
Trumpets							X	X	X	X	X	X					X
Bowls													X	X	X	X	X

John narrates the first six seals and then introduces an interlude in Rev. 7, before the seventh seal (8:1). He introduces six trumpets and another interlude before the seventh trumpet finally in Rev. 11:15. The six bowls are introduced in Rev. 16, and they conclude immediately with the penultimate judgment of the seven bowl in 16:17. The three sequences of judgments are very

similar but they seem to intensify. The judgments of the seal-openings affect one-quarter of the earth (6:8), while those of the trumpets affect one third of the earth (8:7-12; 9:18). Finally, those of the bowls affect the entire earth. Each of the sets of seven conclude with the same final judgment. These judgments do not appear to follow each other neatly, one set after the other in time (Chart 1). Instead, there

they form three sets of progressive judgments. They appear to overlap and repeat while at the same time are progressing in time and intensifying so that the judgments become more severe. One might compare this to the replays of a touchdown in a televised football game. Different camera angles all watch the same final play but each gives a different point of view.

One possible view illustrated in Chart 2 above, is that the first six seals, are followed by the first six trumpets, followed by the bowls but seventh member of each set aligns to form one final judgment. It is also possible to see a slightly earlier overlapping of the sets of judgments aligning with the seventh seal.

A literary device used by John to link each of these sets of judgments together has made a number of scholars favor the recapitulation view (Chart 2). John's vision of the heavenly throne in Revelation 4, describes "flashes of lightning, rumblings, and peals of thunder" (4:5) coming from the throne. This language appears to echo of the manifestation which accompanied the appearance of God at Mount Sinai (Exodus 19:16; 20:18).

Revelation: Stars and Lampstands^{xxii}

The book of Revelation begins with the words that give the book its title, "The *revelation* of Jesus Christ." The first word of this book in Greek is *apokalypsis* or 'apocalypse.' In the New Testament this word means "to cause something to be fully

This language is used by John to link each of the following judgments as they are introduced by similar language with 'peals of thunder, rumblings, flashes of lightning.' This language also intensifies. In Revelation 8:5 John adds 'and an earthquake' and then at 11:19 'an earthquake, and a violent hailstorm' and finally 16:18-21: 'such a violent earthquake that there has never been one like it since the human race began on earth'. This intensification and progression would suggest that John is using the technique of recapitulation.

Those who wish to see these as merely preliminary judgments in a sequence (Chart 1) must reconcile this view with the final intensity of the imagery which evokes a kind of 'un-creation' and the mention of the time of judgment for the dead already in Revelation 11:18 which is only the seventh trumpet. In the sequence of judgment metaphors, this would seem too early to see the world as we know it come unglued and reach its end unless the sequence is repeating and intensifying throughout the metaphors.

known" or 'to reveal.'" The author of the book of Revelation simply refers to himself as 'John' (Revelation 1:4, 9) and tradition has remembered him as the youngest of Jesus' disciples, the Apostle John.

Although scholars have noted the similarity between the book of Revelation and other first century Jewish literature involving heavenly messengers and angels, the similarities do not allow John's work to be classified with these works. Instead John speaks as a Christian prophet in continuity with the prophetic tradition of the Old Testament. John calls his book a 'prophetic message' (Rev. 1:3), which he received while "caught up in the Spirit" (1:10). Revelation 1.10-20 and 10.8-11 are prophetic commission scenes similar to those found in Isaiah 6 or Ezekiel 1.

Revelation has more quotations and allusions to the Old Testament than any other book of the New Testament. There are some 500 allusions to the Old Testament in the 404 verses of Revelation. The vast majority of these allusions are from the prophets Ezekiel, Isaiah, and Daniel. This fact has prompted one commentator to remark that no one has the right to read Revelation who has not read the previous 72 books of the Bible.

As we begin to read Revelation John tells us that his prophetic message was sent to "show his servants what must happen *soon*" (1:1) since "the appointed *time is near*" (1:3). These references to time help us to understand that the message was originally intended to comfort those who lived during John's time and are not predictive future prophesies which make Revelation into a code book for our age. Clearly the book of Revelation was written to encourage Christians in the midst of persecutions, but modern scholars are divided over whether these persecutions occurred under the Emperor Nero or a little later under the

Emperor Domitian. John also tells us that, far from being something fearful, those who read the words of this message aloud and listen to it will be 'blessed.' The theme of blessedness or beatitude occurs seven times in Revelation (1:3, 14:13, 16:15; 19:9, 20:6, 22:7, 22:14). John sees great significance in the number seven which he refers to fifty-four times. The number seven signifies completeness or perfection.

John opens his book with a typical greeting of 'grace and peace' to seven churches in Asia (found today in modern Turkey). The choice to address a representative seven churches is symbolic. Ancient commentators often saw the use of *seven* churches as a symbol of the universal church. John shares a vision of the heavenly Jesus Christ who is identified with Lord God as 'the first and the last' and described in the imagery of the heavenly vision of Daniel 10. Jesus stands in the midst of "seven gold lampstands" as *the son of man* (Daniel 7:13) and holds seven stars in his right hand. John describes the risen Christ as having a "sharp two-edged sword" coming out of his mouth, and who has a face which "shone like the sun at its brightest" (Revelation 1:16). John interprets, as the seven stars as "the angels of the seven churches" and the seven lampstands areas "the seven churches" (1:20).

Each of the seven letters which follow are addressed to the 'angel' of the church in that location. John uses the term 'angel' seventy-seven times in Revelation. He relays a series of letters or prophetic oracles to the seven churches. Each speech follows a stock pattern.

John is commanded to write what the risen Lord has revealed, this is followed by a narrative which gives a diagnosis of the positive and negative behavior of each congregation.

Letters to the Seven Churches^{xxiii}

The Church in Ephesus

The first speech is addressed to the angel of the church in Ephesus. This city was one of the largest commercial centers in the region and a bitter rival of Smyrna. It was a port city and an important center of Christianity and frequently mentioned in the New Testament. The risen Christ praises the Ephesians' works, labor, and endurance, particularly their discernment of truth and perseverance in suffering.

Yet He hold this against them, they have lost the love they had at first and need to repent. Each of us must remember that our spiritual progress occurs on an inclined plane, where our cooperation with God's graces is necessary. If we fail to cooperate, we slide back and need to repent and begin again.

The Church in Smyrna

In the second speech to the church in Smyrna the risen Christ praises their endurance in tribulation and poverty, telling them that in spite of this they 'are rich' (1:8). Apparently, there are hostilities between some Jew's who do not accept the Christian faith and the Christians in this community. This resulted in demonic inspired slander and imprisonment for some

Then a command is given, often with a demand for repentance, followed by a call to pay attention to the message.

Christians and even the possibility of martyrdom.

The church in Smyrna is admonished, "Remain faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life" (2:10). The overall theme of Revelation is the encouragement of the faithful in the midst of earthly persecution. We must keep our eyes on Christ and the heavenly realities to understand the suffering we are experiencing.

"Behold, I stand at the door and knock"

In our continuing study of Revelation, we catch a glimpse of the life of the early church reflected in John's letters to the seven churches of Asia. In this section we encounter some of the most quoted words in the book of Revelation.

The Church in Pergamum

In his letter to Pergamum (2:12-17) John notes that these Christians "live where Satan's throne is." Pergamum was the center of Roman government and the first city in Asia Minor to build a temple to a Roman ruler (Augustus). It also had a conical hill behind it which was the site of many pagan temples to such gods as Zeus, Athena, Demeter, and Dionysus. The temple of Zeus even had a prominent throne-like altar.

The Christians at Pergamum are complimented for holding fast and for not denying their faith even in the face of martyrdom. But some of them have tolerated the Nicolaitans who teach others “to eat food sacrificed to idols and to play the harlot” (2:14).

The Church in Thyatira

John compliments the church in Thyatira (2:18-29) for her “works, love, faith, service, and endurance.” This language again is a reference to perseverance in the midst of persecution. Yet they also have tolerated a false prophetess whom John calls Jezebel. Her name is a reference to the pagan wife of the Israelite King Ahab, who encouraged the Israelites to worship Baal (1 Kings 16:31; 21:25).

Thyatira’s economy was based on a system of trade guilds. These guilds all had patron deities (Acts 19:23-25) and engaged in immoral pagan worship. Perhaps the Christians in Thyatira were tempted to compromise and engage in these pagan activities for financial security.

John will later highlight the heavenly dangers of the satanic false prophet who is yet to come (Revelation 13:11; 16:13; 19:20).

The Church in Sardis

Clearly things are not going well for the church in Sardis (3:1-6). John has nothing good say about them. Although these Christians have “the reputation of being alive,” they are in fact “dead.” (3:1). These Christians apparently began well, but they have become lethargic about the radical countercultural demands of the Christian

faith in the midst of a pagan world. Some commentators have seen the source of this spiritual malady as their unwillingness to witness to their faith before hostile pagan culture. They are called to repent and wake up.

The Church in Philadelphia

The church in Philadelphia (3:7-13) has also faced persecution. The Philadelphians are complimented for keeping Christ’s word and have not denying His name (3:8).

Apparently, this church was being persecuted by some Jews in the local synagogue in Philadelphia. Because of their endurance the church in Philadelphia is promised that Christ will keep them safe “in the time of trial that is going to come to the whole world to test the inhabitants of the earth.” (3:10).

The Church in Laodicea

John’s letter to the church in Laodicea (3:14-22) unquestionably contains the most familiar Scripture verses of the seven letters. This church was likely founded by the apostle Paul on his third missionary journey (Acts 19:10). Although Paul never visited this church, he later wrote them a letter (Colossians 4:16) which is now lost and not part of the canon of Scripture. In contrast to Christ as the “faithful and true witness” John writes;

“I know your works; I know that you are neither cold nor hot. I wish you were either cold or hot. So, because you are lukewarm, neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of my mouth. (3:15-16).

Traditionally this metaphor was interpreted as a call to be spiritually ‘hot’ rather than

uncommitted or 'lukewarm.' The metaphor actually commends both 'hot' and 'cold,' and it would seem odd to suggest God wants someone to be 'cold' in their faith.

More recent interpretations have focused on the unique geographic setting of Laodicea. It was a wealthy fortress city built at the convergence of three major roads. The one thing it lacked was a plentiful clean water supply. By comparison, the neighboring city of Hierapolis had medicinal hot springs, while the city of Colossae had pure drinkable cold water. In order to obtain water, Laodicea created a series of clay pipes to transport water to the city and the water that arrived there was completely tepid, and undrinkable. It was neither suited to heal nor to refresh. In fact, the water at Laodicea was said to induce vomiting.

The Christians at Laodicea appear unwilling to identify with Christ, and as a result Christ will not acknowledge them at the judgment but will "spew them out" (Matthew 25:41). In a recent sermon, Pope Francis warned that 'lukewarm' Christians do great harm to the Church "because their Christian witness is a witness which ultimately disseminates confusion, disseminates a negative witness" (Vatican City, Oct 27, 2014).

John reproves them in the Spirit;

For you say, 'I am rich and affluent and have no need of anything,' and yet do not realize that you are wretched, pitiable, poor, blind, and naked. (3:17)

Economically Laodicea was a very wealthy city and commentators believe members of this church were active participants in the affluent society. Apparently Laodicea had the reputation as the best dressed citizens of the province of Asia. Laodicea was also famous for a healing eye salve which was manufactured there. In contrast to the self-sufficiency of the visible reality these Christians are "wretched, pitiable, poor, blind, and naked" (3:17). Christ calls them to repent,

I advise you to buy from me gold refined by fire so that you may be rich, and white garments to put on so that your shameful nakedness may not be exposed, and buy ointment to smear on your eyes so that you may see. (3:18)

These 'lukewarm' Christians needed to be re-evangelized. Christ calls to them inviting them to be restored into his communion;

"Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, [then] I will enter his house and dine with him, and he with me" (3:20).

"Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God almighty"^{xxiv}

Revelation 4-5

As mentioned previously the book of Revelation can be organized around successive images of Jesus Christ: as Prophet (Rev. 1-3), Priest (Rev. 4-11), and King (Rev. 12-22). These divisions correspond to the trifold office of Christ, in which whole People of God participates through their baptism (CCC 783). John's letters to the seven churches all anticipate the final coming of the kingdom or the rule of the messianic King. To each of the churches the Spirit addresses future promises in the midst of their persecution, "to the victor. . ." God will give the heavenly prize (2:7, 11, 17, 26; 3:5, 12, 21). John's earlier vision of the risen Lord in 1:9-20 is now followed by a second vision. John recounts;

After this I had a vision of an open door to heaven, and I heard the trumpet like voice that had spoken to me before, saying, "Come up here and I will show you what must happen afterwards." At once I was caught up in spirit." (Revelation 4:1-2a)

The earlier image of Jesus possessing the key of David (3:7) and knocking at the door (3:20) is now answered with the door to heaven opening. The Greek actually suggest that the door is standing open permanently perhaps emphasizing the result of Jesus' death and resurrection. John is told to "Come up here" and is "caught up in the spirit" and is taken in a vision into the heavenly throne room.

Although this second vision takes place in the presence of the one seated on the throne, John avoids any direct description of

God. Chapters 4 and 5 deliberately parallel each other. In Chapter 4, we read a description of the glory of God (4:2b-8a) and worship of God (4:8b-11) and this is followed by two hymns to God (4:8-11). This is paralleled in chapter 5 by the Lamb's glory (5:5-7) and the worship of the Lamb (5:8-12) and two hymns to the Lamb (5:9-12). Some commentators have pointed out that the heavenly throne vision may be deliberately contrasting the kingship of Jesus as the Lamb with the false worship of the emperor as a god. John's vision echoes the imagery found in the prophets Daniel and Ezekiel. The stones of "jasper and carnelian" are mentioned as precious stones found in the garden of Eden (Ezekiel 28: 13) and "jasper and carnelian" are listed as the stones worn by the high priest on his breastplate (Exodus 28:17-20).

The thunder and lightning are reminiscent of the appearance of God at Sinai where Moses is told that the Israelites will be a kingdom of priests, and a holy nation (Exodus 19:6, 1 Peter 2:9). Anticipating the New Covenant Moses will later say, "If only all the people of the LORD were prophets! If only the LORD would bestow his spirit on them!" (Numbers 11:29, Acts 2).

In fact John has entered into a scene of heavenly worship. He witnesses the four living creatures who "day and night" do not stop exclaiming:

"Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God almighty, who was, and who is, and who is to come." (4:8, Isaiah 6:3)

He also witnesses the twenty-four presbyters who fall down before the one who sits on the throne and worship him exclaiming,

“Worthy are you, Lord our God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things; because of your will they came to be and were created.” (4:11).

Cardinal Ratzinger, calls the book of Revelation “the book of the heavenly Liturgy, which is presented to the Church as the standard for her own Liturgy (*Spirit of the Liturgy*).

Following intuitions from Sacred Scripture, the fathers of Second Vatican Council remind us,

In the earthly liturgy we take part in a foretaste of that heavenly liturgy which is celebrated in the holy city of Jerusalem toward which we journey as pilgrims, where Christ is sitting at the right hand of God, a minister of the holies and of the true tabernacle [22]; we sing a hymn to the Lord’s glory with all the warriors of the heavenly army; venerating the memory of the saints. . . SC 8

Many commentators have seen the heavenly liturgy of John’s vision as a pattern for the earthly liturgy in the early Church. John is caught up in the spirit on “the Lord’s

day,” or Sunday (Revelation 1:10). John sees candles (1:12); bread or manna (2:17), priests dressed in robes (4:4) incense (5:8); and later an altar (8:3); and bowls or chalices of blood (16). John sees saints and angels engaged in heavenly worship. These worshipers sing hymns which are now familiar parts of the Mass. They sing “Holy, Holy, Holy” (4:8), and a hymn glorifying God in His mighty works (15:3) and shouting “alleluia” (19:1, 3, 6) and saying “Amen” (5:14). Some have even seen the entire structure of the book of Revelation as a Mass beginning with a penitential rite and readings Scripture (Revelation 2-3), and ending with the “wedding feast of the Lamb”(19:9).

As the vision continues, John sees a scroll with writing on both sides with seven seals (5:1). No one is found worthy to open the scroll except the Davidic Lion of the tribe of Judah (5:5). The one “standing in the midst of the throne” is not described a lion but as “a Lamb that seemed to have been slain (5:6). The powerful image of a kingly a lion unexpectedly becomes that of a lamb. It is the Lamb who triumphs through sacrifice. “Worthy is the Lamb who was slain” (5:12). The Lamb now shares in God’s glory, “To the one who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be blessing and honor, glory and might, forever and ever” (5:13) and the heavenly hosts reply “Amen” (5:14).

The Seven Seals of Divine Judgment^{xxv}

Revelation 6-7

As we have already seen, Revelation was primarily written for the encouragement and consolation of those experiencing

One can also see a secondary theme. John's letters to the seven churches are representative of all the situations of the early Christians. These letters described affluent Christians who were not necessarily persecuted but were living double lives by their religious participation with the oppressive Roman system.

In this case the theme of judgment becomes a warning and a call to repentance. The judgments which become the prominent theme of the rest of the book, are both encouragements for those suffering persecution and warnings to repent for those living compromised lives.

Richard Bauckham notes that "Revelation provides a set of Christian prophetic counter-images which impress on its readers

In the words of the twenty-four presbyters, "We give thanks to you, Lord God almighty,

suffering and persecutions. In relation to this theme the book also highlights the final vindication of those who are suffering and describes the heavenly judgment of their oppressors.

a different vision of the world." This radical counter-cultural vision is centered on heaven. In John's heavenly vision we see that the divine reality includes a Trinitarian vision of God. Christ shares with God the Father (Revelation 1:8; 21:6) the title 'Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end' (Revelation 1:17; 22:13).

In contrast with the false pretensions of the Romans emperor, Christ is the Almighty God, and the one who sits on the throne. In this section of Revelation divine holiness is seen in judgment. This is none other than the coming of the kingdom as the reign or rule of God called for in the first three petitions of the Lord's prayer; "Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come" (Matthew 6:9-10).

who are and who were. For you have assumed your great power and have established your reign" (Revelation 11:17).

Chart 4: Progressive Judgments

Exodus 19:16	On the morning of the third day there were peals of thunder and lightning, and a heavy cloud over the mountain, and a very loud blast of the shofar, so that all the people in the camp trembled.
Revelation 4:5	From the throne came flashes of lightning, rumblings, and peals of thunder. Seven flaming torches burned in front of the throne, which are the seven spirits of God.

Revelation 8:5	Then the angel took the censer, filled it with burning coals from the altar, and hurled it down to the earth. There were peals of thunder, rumblings, flashes of lightning, and an earthquake.
Revelation 11:19	Then God's temple in heaven was opened, and the ark of his covenant could be seen in the temple. There were flashes of lightning, rumblings, and peals of thunder, an earthquake, and a violent hailstorm
Revelation 16:18-21	Then there were lightning flashes, rumblings, and peals of thunder, and a great earthquake. It was such a violent earthquake that there has never been one like it since the human race began on earth. ¹⁹ The great city was split into three parts, and the gentile cities fell. But God remembered great Babylon, giving it the cup filled with the wine of his fury and wrath. ²⁰ Every island fled, and mountains disappeared. ²¹ Large hailstones like huge weights came down from the sky on people, and they blasphemed God for the plague of hail because this plague was so severe.

There is a series of three sets of progressive judgments; the seven seal-openings (6:1-17; 8:1, 3-5); the seven trumpets (8:2, 6-21; 11:14-19) and the seven bowls (15:1, 5-21). Yet these judgments do not appear to follow each other neatly, one set after the other in time.

They appear to overlap and repeat while at the same time are progressing in time and intensifying so that the judgments become more severe. One might compare this to the replays of a touchdown in a televised football game. Different camera angles all watch the same final play, but each gives a different point of view. The judgments of the seal-openings affect one quarter of the earth (6:8), while those of the trumpets affect one third of the earth (8:7-12; 9:18).

Finally, those of the bowls affect the entire earth. Each of the sets of seven conclude with the same final judgment. One possible view is that the first six seals, are followed

by the first six trumpets, followed by the bowls but seventh member of each set aligns to form one final judgment. It is also possible to see a slightly earlier overlapping of the sets of judgments aligning with the seventh seal.

John uses a literary device to link each of these sets of judgments together. In the throne vision of Revelation 4, John tells the reader that from the throne "came flashes of lightning, rumblings, and peals of thunder" (4:5). This language is an echo of the self-manifestation of God at Mount Sinai (Exodus 19:16; 20:18). Each of the following judgments is introduced by similar language with 'peals of thunder, rumblings, flashes of lightning,' but Revelation 8:5 adds 'and an earthquake' and then at 11:19 'an earthquake, and a violent hailstorm' and finally 16:18-21: 'such a violent earthquake that there has never been one like it since the human race began on earth'. One can

easily see the progression and intensification.

Those who wish to see these as merely preliminary judgments must reckon with the final intensity of the imagery which evokes a kind of 'un-creation' and the mention of the time of judgment for the dead already in Revelation 11:18.

The first of the sets of judgments involves the Lamb breaking open a series of the seals. As the Lamb breaks the first seal the first living creature thunders, "Come forward!" and a white horse whose rider had a bow rides forth "victorious to further his victories" (6:2). This could represent the fear of an invasion from the east by mounted Parthian archers.

The second living creature calls forth a rider on a red horse with a huge sword who was given power to take peace away from the earth (6:4). The Romans were very proud of the *Pax Romana* or peace that their empire provided for its citizens.

The third living creature calls forth a black horse who carries a scale symbolizing the rationing of food during a famine (6:5). The fourth rider is on a pale green horse. The rider's name is Death and Hades (6:8).

We appear to have four figures of judgment who are echoing those found in with slightly different imagery in Zechariah 1:8-17, and 6:1-8. The riders are "given authority over a quarter of the earth, to kill with sword, famine, and plague, and by means of the beasts of the earth" (6:8).

The imagery shifts with the fifth seal. From underneath the altar "the souls of those who had been slaughtered because of the witness they bore to the word of God" cried out, "How long will it be . . . before you sit in judgment and avenge our blood?" (6:9-10). Finally with the breaking of the sixth seal there is a great earthquake, the sun and moon are darkened and stars fall from the sky (6:12-13). This sequence ends with a question. Who can withstand the great day of the wrath of the Lamb? This question is answered in the next chapter of Revelation.

The Seven Trumpets^{xxvi}

Revelation 7-9

In the central section of Revelation there is an extended narrative involving a parallel series of three sets of progressive judgments; the seven seal-openings (6:1-17; 8:1, 3-5); the seven trumpets (8:2, 6-21; 11:14-19) and finally seven bowls of God's fury (15:1, 5-21). The judgments which accompany the opening of the first six seals

leads to a question in chapter 6: Who can withstand the great day of the wrath of the Lamb?

The scene in chapter 7 opens with four angels standing at the four corners of the earth holding back the four winds so that these winds could not damage the earth until another angel seals 144,000 servants

with a mark on their forehead (7:2). Like all the numbers in Revelation, 144,000 “from every tribe of Israelites” (7:4) is clearly symbolic. 12 X 12 X 10 X 10 means the whole or complete people of God.

It seems very doubtful that the 144,000 represent Israel as opposed to the Church, as the list of specific tribes which follow in Revelation 7:5-8 did not exist at the time of Jesus since the tribes of the Northern Kingdom never returned from their exile. John has already included the Church in the kingdom, priesthood and heavenly New Jerusalem (1:6; 3:12; 5:9; 21:14) terms which would normally be reserved for Israel. In the New Jerusalem all God’s servants worship Him and bear His name on their foreheads” (22:4).

Echoing the description of marking believers with an X on their foreheads in Ezekiel 9, the seal on the foreheads of the 144,000 most likely refers to the sacrament of Baptism. St. Paul calls Baptism a ‘seal’ (2 Corinthians 1:22; Ephesians 1:13-14). This language is evident in the early fathers such as *the Shepherd of Hermas* and continues to be used by the Church today (CCC 1121). We should not be put off by the fact that an angel marks these servants with a seal. The theme of Baptism often included the involvement of angels in the early church fathers.

St. John Chrysostom admonished Catechumens to pray for the assistance of the angel of peace as they approached their Baptism. The ancient pre-Gregorian *Sacramentary of Gelasius*, prayed for the catechumens that God might

“vouchsafe to send His holy angel . . . and bring them to the grace of His Baptism” in the same manner as the angel in the Passover.

Broadening his vision of whole or complete people of God, John now sees a great multitude which no one could count (7:9) who stood before the throne from every nation, race, people and tongue. The language of 7:9-12 echoes that of the earlier throne scene in 5:9-12.

Finally the seventh seal is broken. Instead of the expected immediate escalation of divine judgment and wrath, we are told; “When [the Lamb] broke open the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven for about half an hour” (8:1). This silence was the normal procedure for the incense offering in the Jerusalem Temple. It was a time of waiting for God to listen to the prayers and to answer. The angel’s incense offering is made “along with the prayers of the holy ones” (8:3). There is silence in heaven while, “The smoke of the incense along with the prayers of the holy ones went up before God from the hand of the angel” (8:4). Finally, in response to the prayers of the saints, the angel took burning coals from the altar and hurled them down to the earth. The throne vision in Revelation 4:5 is echoed again with “peals of thunder, rumblings, flashes of lightning” and now an earthquake (8:5).

Now seven angels with seven trumpets step forward. Trumpets in the Old Testament were warning instruments in a time of war and by implication could be seen as announcing a coming judgment. These

trumpet judgments are organized in a series of four + three. The first four judgments affect the Church but are not directed towards her. The last three judgments are demonic and do not affect the Church.

The first trumpet blast corresponds to the seventh plague in Egypt (Exodus 9:23ff) except that now the hail is mixed with blood. As a result, “A third of the land was burned up, along with a third of the trees and all green grass” (8:7b). Perhaps paralleling the eruption of the volcano Vesuvius in A.D. 79, with the second trumpet “something like a large burning mountain was hurled into the sea” (8:1). As a result the sea is turned to blood and one-third of its creatures die and one-third of the ships are wrecked.

With the third trumpet a great burning star falls from the sky and one-third of the rivers and springs of water are made bitter like wormwood. With the fourth trumpet one-third of the earth’s sources of light are cut off. It is not one-third dimmer, but one-third more of the day ends up in darkness.

Finally, there is a vision of an eagle flying high overhead crying out in a loud voice, “Woe! Woe! Woe!” to those who will experience the final three trumpets” (8:13).

With the blowing of the fifth trumpet a star falls from the sky, but this is actually a fallen angel who is given a key to the abyss. He releases demonic locusts who had the power to torment people but not kill them. They are led by the angelic king of the abyss whose name is Abaddon. With the blowing of the sixth trumpet, four angels who are bound to the banks of the Euphrates are released to kill a third of the human race with cavalry troops numbering two hundred million.

The point of all of these judgments was to provoke people to repent of their worship of demons and idols, and other evil practices such as murder, the use of magic, unchastity, and robbery (9:21). A second interlude with new visions follows, before the seventh trumpet is blown.

Mary the New Ark of the Covenant^{xxvii}

Revelation 10-11

As we continue our study of Revelation, we have observed a series of three sets of progressive judgments involving seven seal-openings, seven trumpets and finally seven bowls of God’s wrath. The judgments appear to repeat and overlap, building to one final judgment. The seventh seal was

opened in chapter 8. Chapter 10 and 11 is a build up to the seventh trumpet (11:15).

In the interlude before the seventh trumpet, a mighty angel descends from heaven who is “wrapped in a cloud, with a halo around his head; his face was like the sun and his feet were like pillars of fire” (10:1). The

imagery is reminiscent of the figure in Daniel 12:5-7.

The cloud represents the glory of God while the halo or circle of light around his head may be a rainbow which signifies mercy. The fact that his face was 'shining like the sun' and that his 'feet were like pillars of fire' (10:1) demonstrates that the angel reflects the exaltation of Christ perhaps as the New Moses. The term 'mighty angel' may reflect the angel's name, for Gabriel means 'strong man of God.' It is interesting that this section builds towards the vision of a 'women clothed with the sun' (12:1) as it is the Archangel Gabriel who announces the Virgin Mary's divine mission in Luke's Gospel (Luke 1:26-38).

This angel is the central revelatory messenger in the book of Revelation. The 'mighty angel' connects Revelation 1:1 where God sends "his angel to his servant John," to the message here in chapter 10, and finally to the concluding vision in Revelation 22:16. The mighty angel in Revelation 10 holds a small scroll which is already open. This symbolizes the fact that this is not a new prophecy but a reminder of the mysterious plan of God which has already been revealed to 'his servants the prophets' (10:7). Like the Prophet Ezekiel (Ezekiel 2:9-10), John is told to eat the scroll and then to "prophesy again about many peoples, nations, tongues, and kings" (10:11).

Again in chapter 11 John is given a task similar to the Prophet Ezekiel (Ezekiel 40-48). He is asked to measure the Temple. This measuring symbolized preservation

from harm, but in the context of Revelation it is clear that spiritual harm is in view as we have seen many martyrs. The word used in the Greek for Temple is *naos* which normally refers to the inner sanctum of the Temple and not to its outer courts, which John is commanded explicitly not to measure (11:2).

Given the connection to Ezekiel this seems to refer to the heavenly Temple and not the earthly one, yet the text moves on to refer to the trampling of the holy city for forty-two months or 1206 days (11:2). The Temple is symbolic of God's people bearing witness and undergoing a time of tribulation. The time interval of forty-two months is taken from Daniel 7:25, and represents three and half years or half of seven years. This number symbolizes an imperfect or incomplete time.

Next, two witnesses are commissioned by God to give testimony to the earth (11:3-6). They appear to represent types of Moses and Elijah who literally give fire breathing testimony to the Word of God and bring plagues upon the earth. Although the imagery is subject to various interpretations, it is likely that these figures represent the church which is given to the nations to be trampled underfoot and who through these two representative figures bears witness during the time of tribulation. Either the whole church is seen to give prophetic witness or perhaps two representative churches are in view. The two figures are called "two lampstands which stand before the Lord of the earth" (11:4) and this is reminiscent of the seven golden lampstands of the seven Churches in Revelation 2-3.

The witnesses are martyred and then resurrected and taken up into heaven. At the very moment they are taken up into heaven in a cloud, there is a great devastating earthquake (11:13).

After this interlude John's vision returns to heaven, where the seventh angel blows his trumpet. After this, there is a heavenly announcement, "The kingdom of the world now belongs to our Lord and to his Anointed, and he will reign forever and ever" (11:15) and the twenty-four elders prostrate themselves and worship God in a hymn (11:16-18).

Then the heavenly Temple is opened and the Ark of the Covenant is seen in the Temple (11:19). In the Old Testament, the Ark of the Covenant was the place where God was seen to be invisibly enthroned in the earthly Tabernacle/Temple (2 Samuel 6:2; Isaiah 37:16). To the first-century Jewish reader the image of the Ark would be remarkable since the original Ark of the Covenant had been lost during the Babylonian exile (2 Maccabees 2:4-8). The reference is most likely to the heavenly Ark which served as the prototype of the earthly Ark (cf. Exodus 25:9, 40; 26:30; 27:8; Hebrews 8:1-5; 9:24).

Even more astounding is the connection that follows. After another round of lightning and thunder, the next chapter opens with the words, "A great sign appeared in the sky, a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars" (12:1). Some commentators have argued that the

last verse of this chapter (11:19) is both the end of a section and the beginning of chapter 12.

If this is the case, then there is a connection between the Ark of the Covenant and the women who follows.

It is likely that the image of the women (12:1) has multiple layers of meaning but one obvious layer is that the woman is the Virgin Mary who is seen as a type of the Ark of the Covenant. The Gospel of Luke seems to draw a similar parallel in Luke 1. The Angel Gabriel says to Mary, "The holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. Therefore, the child to be born will be called holy, the Son of God." (Luke 1:35).

This parallels the description of the cloud of glory which covered the Tabernacle and the Ark (Exodus 40:34-35; Numbers 9:15). Upon learning of the pregnancy of Elizabeth, Mary spends three months in the house of Zechariah and Elizabeth (Luke 1:26, 40). This parallels 2 Samuel where the Ark spent three months in the house of Obededom the Gittite (2 Samuel 6:11).

Elizabeth greets Mary, asking her "And how does this happen to me that the mother of my Lord should come to me?" (Luke 1:43). In 2 Samuel King David asks: "How can the ark of the Lord come to me?" (2 Samuel 6:9). Luke tells us that John the Baptist leaped for joy in the womb of Elizabeth when he heard Mary's greeting (Luke 1:44). This parallels David who leaped and danced before the Lord when the Ark arrived in Jerusalem (2 Samuel 6:14-16). In at least

one layer of meaning, the woman clothed with the sun (12:1) is Mary the New Ark of

the Covenant who bears the Word of God within her.

The War in Heaven and the Beast^{xxviii}

Revelation 12-13

As we come to the end of the series of judgments concluding with the seven bowls of God's fury in Revelation 16, we notice another transition that occurs beginning with Chapter 12 of Revelation. The overall flow of the book of Revelation moves through successive images of Jesus Christ as prophet (Rev. 1-3), priest (Rev. 4-11), and messianic warrior King (Rev. 12-22).

This new section beginning in chapter 12, introduces a 'great sign' in the sky who is described as "a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars." This chapter also uses imagery that would have reminded its first century readers of various ancient combat myths involving a dragon and a war in heaven. St. John borrows this imagery to depict the primordial angelic war in heaven between the Archangel Michael and the good angels, and the dragon, Satan, and the rebellious angels. The dragon and the rebellious angels are defeated and cast down from heaven (12:9). There is also a conflict between the dragon and the woman.

Using apocalyptic imagery, John notes that the woman is about to give birth to a son

who is "destined to rule all the nations with an iron rod" (12:5) and that "the dragon stood before the woman . . . to devour her child when she gave birth" (12:4) but the child is "caught up to God and his throne" (12: 5). The dragon then pursues the woman who is rescued by God and taken into the desert in a type of New Exodus (12:14). Finally the dragon becomes angry with the woman and goes off "to wage war against the rest of her offspring, those who keep God's commandments and bear witness to Jesus" (12:17).

The first part of this imagery, with a son destined to rule the nations, sounds like the woman is the Virgin Mary. The final imagery with mention of the woman's offspring, "who keep God's commandments and bear witness to Jesus" sounds like a reference to the Church. Catholic commentators have consistently argued that both meanings are true at the same time.

The Old Testament background to the 'woman' is the image of Israel as the 'Daughter of Zion' particularly in the book of Isaiah. In Isaiah 66 the prophet describes the nation of Zion through the metaphor of a woman about to give birth, "Before she is in labor, gives birth; Before her pangs come

upon her, she delivers a male child" (Isaiah 66:7).

The Old Testament imagery of the "Daughter of Zion" has three themes. The daughter of Zion is the spouse of Yahweh and by that title she becomes also the "Mother" of the people of God ("Mother-Zion") and yet she is equally the "Virgin Israel." While the entire nation can be seen as the daughter or spouse of Zion. Isaiah also makes a special promise in 7:14. St. Matthew quotes the Greek translation of this verse. "Behold, the virgin [Gk. *parthenos*] shall be with child and bear a son, and they shall name him Emmanuel" (Matthew 1:23). Mary is the messianic personification of the whole people of Israel as she becomes the new "Daughter of Zion." She is both a type of Israel, the literal mother of the Messiah and a type of the Church. The woman of Revelation 12 is both the Virgin Mary and Mary as a type of the Church.

The reference to her having a "crown of twelve stars on her head" (12:10) is also interesting. In our western understanding of royalty it is usually the wife of the king who is the queen. In the Old Testament it was the mother of the King as the Queen Mother who has importance as the *giberah* or Great Lady (1 Kings 2).

Elizabeth's greeting to Mary at the visitation, "And how does this happen to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?" (Luke 1:43) may have implied this relationship. The description of Jesus as the one "destined to rule all the nations with an iron rod" (Revelation 12:5) is an

echo of Psalm 2 which is a messianic kingship psalm.

In chapter 13 of Revelation, the heavenly battle takes on earthly implications as John contrasts the worship of Christ with the worship of the Beast. The Lamb of God shares the throne of God (5:6, 12, 13) and now the Beast as an antichrist figure shares the worship, authority (13:4) and throne of Satan (13:2).

The imagery for this section is an echo of the Prophet Daniel in the Old Testament. Revelation 13:1-2 parallels the progressive 'beasts' described in Daniel 7:4-7.

There are two successive beasts in Revelation 13. The background from Daniel suggests the first beast is the nation Rome, but more specifically the beast is most commonly interpreted to be the Emperor Nero as a type of Rome's evil power. The first beast "whose mortal wound had been healed" (13:12) matches the widely known stories of Nero's death by his own sword and then many contemporary legends of the-return-of-Nero in both Jewish and Pagan circles.

During the reign of Domitian, a number of imposters arose in the East claiming to be Nero. The second beast is likely Domitian who was considered a second Nero by the Romans.

The most talked about verse in Revelation is surely Revelation 13:18 which invites the reader to "calculate the number of the beast" as "six hundred and sixty-six." Although John has used numbers

symbolically throughout Revelation, he is using a different technique here involving a mathematical use of the alphabet to spell a name. This was an extremely common practice both for the Jews and for the Greco-Roman world. Among the graffiti found at Pompeii, was one which read, “I love the girl whose number is 545.”

The sum of the letters in the name Nero Caesar in Hebrew letters is 666. It is also true that it is the sum of the Greek letters for the word ‘beast’ (*therion*). Some

scholars have protested that there were several schemas for numbering in Hebrew and that Hebrew is an obscure language to the original readers of Revelation. It is possible that John merely meant “beast” but that other associations in this chapter (13:12) lead to the specific identification with Nero as the ultimate type of the ‘beast.’ Once again, the overall theme of Revelation is the encouragement of the faithful in the midst of earthly persecution. We are called to oppose the worship of the beast in every age.

The Bible and Typology in Revelation 12

One common difference between our modern notion of Bible interpretation and the ancient one we see in the Bible itself, is the very modern idea that a passage has only one possible correct interpretation. In fact, the New Testament has many examples of Jesus, and his apostles using methods of Scripture interpretation which acknowledge multiple layers of meaning. This involves firstly the literal meaning from the original context, but it is possible to see other spiritual meanings in the text. The earliest disciples of the apostles also consistently refer to the spiritual meaning of Scripture.

In Mathew’s Gospel Jesus replies to the crowd;

“An evil and unfaithful generation seeks a sign, but no sign will be given it except the sign of Jonah the prophet.

Just as Jonah was in the belly of the whale three days and three nights, so will the Son of Man be in the heart of the earth three days and three nights (Matthew 12:39-40).

Jesus sees the literal events of Jonah as a sign or predictive prophecy about His own death. More striking is Jesus comments in the Gospel of John. Jesus tells the crowd; No one has gone up to heaven except the one who has come down from heaven, the Son of Man. And just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the desert, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, so that “everyone who believes in him may have eternal life” (John 3:13-15).

Although the events in Moses time have a meaning in and of themselves, they are also a ‘sign’ which points to the death that Jesus would suffer. When the Son of Man (Jesus) is lifted up, those who gaze upon him will receive eternal life (cf. Mark 15:39).

Although in the context of John's gospel Jesus is revealed as the manna or *true bread from heaven* (John 6:32; 6:51) which is rejected by some (John 6:66) because they deny the significance of Jesus words (compare 1 Corinthians 11:29-30).

In his letter to the Corinthians, St Paul notes,

I do not want you to be unaware, brothers, that our ancestors were all under the cloud and all passed through the sea, and all of them were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea. All ate the same spiritual food, and all drank the same spiritual drink, for they drank from a spiritual rock that followed them, and the rock was the Christ. Yet God was not pleased with most of them, for they were struck down in the desert. (1 Corinthians 10:1-5).

Without denying the literal events, Paul sees these events as anticipating Christian Baptism and the celebration of the Eucharist/Lord's Supper in the Corinthian Church.

The Apostle Paul writes to the Romans,

Therefore, just as through one person sin entered the world, and through sin, death, and thus death came to all, inasmuch as all sinned—for up to the time of the law, sin was in the world, though sin is not accounted when there is no law. But death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those who did not sin after the pattern of the trespass of Adam, who is the type of the one who was to come. (Romans 5:12-14)

Paul uses the Greek word '*tupos*.' This Greek word means; "A model or example which anticipates or precedes a later realization." Adam is a 'type' of Jesus who becomes the New Adam. This pattern is often call a *recapitulation*. The first Adam is remade as the New Adam, while the first creation is superseded by the New Creation in Christ (2 Corinthians 5:17). This transformation occurs in baptism, "For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ" (Galatians 3:27) as Baptism "forgives our sins" (Acts 2:38).

In his letter to the Galatians the Apostle Paul refers to Abraham and his two sons and notes,

Now this is an allegory. These women represent two covenants. One was from Mount Sinai, bearing children for slavery; this is Hagar. Hagar represents Sinai, a mountain in Arabia; it corresponds to the present Jerusalem, for she is in slavery along with her children. But the Jerusalem above is freeborn, and she is our mother. (Galatians 4:21-26)

Paul is quite clear here, "this is an allegory". The Greek word used here is *allēgoreō* which means, "to employ an analogy or likeness in communication" or "to speak allegorically." Clearly Paul is not denying that Abraham did literally have two sons, but he is also able to use this as an allegory of two covenants pointing to the recapitulation of the first earthly Jerusalem in the new heavenly Jerusalem

Later the apostle Peter writes;

... God patiently waited in the days of Noah during the building of the ark, in which a few persons, eight in all, were saved through water. This prefigured baptism, which saves you now. It is not a removal of dirt from the body but an appeal to God for a clear conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, with angels, authorities, and powers subject to him. (1 Peter 3:18-21)

The word used for “prefigured” is the Greek –*antitupos* which means “pertaining to that which corresponds in form and structure to something else, either as an anticipation of a later reality or as a fulfillment of a prior type.”

As readers, we must be aware of the possibility of a secondary spiritual sense which may reveal types, or allegories. The idea of “recapitulation” was often used by the early Fathers to explain how Scripture “sums up all things” (Ephesians 1:10) and thus fulfills the previous revelation. As a literary technique, scholars often refer to “recapitulation” as a method of narration which functions like a video replay on football game. Instead of giving a literal step-by-step sequence, parts of the narrative repeat from different points of view and time sequences.

For example in Revelation 12 you have a mysterious “sign” of a woman who gives birth (12:2) to the messiah (12:5) but interspersed in this narrative we hear about

the primordial war in heaven between the Archangel Michael and Satan (12:7) and learn that one third of the angels who rebelled, are cast down from heaven at Satan’s instigation (12:4, 9). This war took place before the creation of Adam and Eve. Jumping forward in time again, the dragon pursues the woman, and later goes off to wage war against her offspring (12:17).

If all of this was to add up in a literal step-by-step sequence, then we could not say that the first woman was Mary the mother of Jesus the Messiah. If on the other hand the passage is read using the ancient technique of “recapitulation” and typology. Then the time sequences are not step-by-step and Mary could later be a type of the Church who certainly does have offspring. The Catholic Church has consistently maintained that Revelation 12 refers to both Mary and the Church.

A Final Call to Repentance

Revelation 14-16

Chapter 14 of Revelation opens as a counter point to the worship of the beast described in Chapter 13. As we have already noted *the beast* is the Roman emperor who demands worship of himself as a god. Many merchants and well-to-do citizens of the Roman province of Asia were grateful for the peace and prosperity which Rome had given to the region. Previously there had been numerous local wars and piracy at sea, now with the imposition of the *Pax Romana*, this resource rich province was able to experience new levels of prosperity. Out of gratitude, a cult to Roma and Augustus was established at Pergamum and then later in Smyrna. Pergamum even created a choral association which existed to sing hymns to Augustus as a god within his temple. It is very possible that the sound of harps and the singing of a new hymn before the throne in Chapter 14 stands in direct contrast to the worship of the emperor. The early Christians are called to live their lives purely for the Lamb and not to compromise.

Christians who rejected the worship of the emperor as a god, would be engaging in both a political and a religious act. The Lamb's 144,000 previously mentioned in Chapter 7, now reappear and they have the Father's name written on their foreheads as a counter point to the mark of the beast in Chapter 13. This number is symbolic representing the whole people of God, perhaps meaning the twelve tribes of Israel times the twelve apostles times 1000. The 144,000 are described as virgins who have been ransomed as the first-fruits of the

human race (14:4). The word translated *virgins* is masculine and refers to male virgins. This usage is rare in Greek. This could refer to those who are living the evangelical counsels of perfection in a celibate life following Jesus example.

Three angels appear who make a universal proclamation of the good news. This is done as a final warning before the judgment. The emperor's city *Babylon* had made the nations drink her licentious passion (14:8). The judgment on Rome is described as "the wine of God's fury, poured full strength into the cup of his wrath" (14:10). Those who compromise with the emperor will suffer torment with burning sulfur (14:10). Drinking God's wrath is a common Old Testament image of judgment (Psalm 60:3; 75:8; Isaiah 51:17, 21–23; 63:6; Jeremiah 25:15–18).

Jesus appears now with a golden crown as the final judge. The description of judge as "one like a son of man sitting on the cloud," is a clear allusion to Dan. 7:13 (cf. Matt. 24:30). The tradition of the coming Son of man's is connected with both redemption and judgment. The Son of Man has a sickle for harvest and he is joined by angels from the Temple and altar in heaven to harvest the earth like grapes to be thrown into the great wine press of God's fury.

The scene shifts in Chapter 15 to another sign in heaven which will involve seven angels with the seven last plagues. Before this begins there is another interlude where before "a sea of glass mingled with fire" John sees "those who had won the victory" (15:2). The fire is likely a symbol of God's wrath. These saints were holding God's

harps and they sang the song of Moses and the song of the Lamb (15:3). It is difficult to know if the reference to *the song of Moses* is an echo of Deuteronomy 32 or Exodus 15. Ultimately the witness of these conquerors is not intended to be vindictive, but to present a final call to salvation.

Directly paralleling the opening of the Temple in Revelation 11:19a, John says, “The temple that is the heavenly tent of testimony opened” (15:5). This parallelism makes it clear that the series of seven bowls which will begin in chapter 16, are a continuation of the narrative which began earlier in chapter 12. The seven bowls of God’s fury are a fuller version of the seventh trumpet (11:15).

Beale notes,

Both trumpets and bowls present the plagues in the same order: plagues striking (1) the earth, (2) the sea, (3) rivers, (4) the sun, (5) the realm of the wicked with darkness, (6) the Euphrates (together with influencing the wicked by demons), and (7) the world with the final judgment (with the same imagery of “lightning, sounds, thunders, and earthquake” and “great hail”).

Although there is not an exact one-to-one correspondence between the seven trumpets and the seven bowls, they both follow a similar pattern based on the Exodus plagues (Exodus 7-9). (See chart on next page) Seven angels execute the seven plagues in each series. In both series, each woe with the exception of the sixth trumpet, alludes to an Exodus plague. Keeping in mind the contemporary historical

perspective, the first six trumpets and the first five bowls cover the time between Christ’s resurrection and the second coming, while the last trumpet and the last *two* bowls narrate the events leading to the last or final judgment.

Seven angels pour out judgment. The first brings festering and ugly sores upon the earth (16:2). The second angel turns the sea “to blood like that from a corpse” killing everything in the sea (16:3). The third angel turns the rivers and springs of water to blood (16:4). The fourth angel causes the sun to burn people with fire (16:8). The fifth angel attacks the throne of the beast (16:10). The sixth angel causes demonic frog spirits to come from the mouth of the dragon and the false prophet. These spirits cause the kings to assemble at Armageddon (16:16) to make war against the Lamb. The seventh angel pours out his bowl into the air and “a loud voice came out of the temple from the throne, saying, “It is done” (16:17). The expression “it is done” (Greek *gegonen*) is a single word in Greek.^{xxix} We are reminded that this is not a conflict among equals. God ends this conflict with a single word (cf. 1:16; and 16:17).

The narrative concludes with a cataclysmic final judgment upon the earth and the destruction of the great Babylon. Sadly there are still some who remain unrepentant, and who blaspheme God (16:21).^{xxx}

Chart 5: Trumpets and Bowls Compared

Trumpet 1: Hail, fire, and blood fall on the *earth*, one third of which is burned up.

Bowl 1: A bowl is poured on the *earth*. Malignant sores come on those who have the mark of the beast and who worship his image.

... corresponding to Exod. 9:22ff. (trumpet), 8ff. (bowl)

Trumpet 2: A blazing mountain falls into the *sea*. One third of the sea becomes *blood*, a third of *sea creatures die*, and a third of all ships are destroyed.

Bowl 2: A bowl is poured on the *seas*, which become *blood*, and *every living thing in them dies*.

... corresponding to Exod. 7:17ff.

Trumpet 3: A blazing star (Wormwood) falls on a third of *rivers and fountains*; their waters are poisoned and many die.

Bowl 3: A bowl is poured on *rivers and fountains*, and they become blood.

... corresponding to Exod. 7:17ff.

Trumpet 4: A third of *sun, moon, and stars* are struck. Darkness results for a third of a night and day.

Bowl 4: A bowl is poured on the *sun*, which scorches people with fire.

... corresponding to Exod. 10:21ff. (trumpet); 9:22ff. (bowl)

p 810 Trumpet 5: The shaft of the pit is opened. Sun and air are *darkened* with smoke from which locusts emerge to *torment* people without the seal of God.

Bowl 5: A bowl is poured on the throne of the beast. His kingdom is *darkened* and people are in *anguish*.

... corresponding to Exod. 10:4ff. (trumpet), 21ff. (trumpet and bowl)

Trumpet 6: Four angels bound at *the Euphrates* are released, with their cavalry of two hundred million, which kills a third of humanity.

Bowl 6: A bowl is poured on *the Euphrates*, which dries up for kings from the east. Demonic frogs deceive the kings of the world to assemble for battle at Armageddon.

... corresponding to Exod. 8:2ff. (bowl)

Trumpet 7: *Loud voices in heaven* announce the coming of the kingdom of God and of Christ. *Lightning, thunder, earthquake, and hail* occur.

Bowl 7: A bowl is poured into the air, and a *loud voice from God's throne* announces "It is done." *Lightning, thunder, and an unprecedented earthquake* occur, and terrible *hail* falls.

... corresponding to Exod. 9:22ff. and the Sinai theophany (19:16–19)¹

¹ Beale, G. K. (1999). *The book of Revelation: a commentary on the Greek text* (pp. 809–810). Grand Rapids, MI; Carlisle, Cumbria: W.B. Eerdmans; Paternoster Press, p. 809-810. Beale notes, "Adapted from Beasley-Murray, *Revelation*, 238–39, with changes."

Rome or Jerusalem Revisited

In his commentary Michael Barber^{xxx} argues throughout his work for the dating of Revelation prior to the 70 AD destruction of Jerusalem. He notes,

Today, most [scholars] hold that the book was written in the 90's during the reign of the Emperor Domitian, who ruled from AD 81 to 96.¹⁰ A growing number of scholars, however, have come to the conclusion that it was written decades earlier, sometime before the destruction of the Jerusalem Temple in 70 AD.

Barber's first claim has a footnote which asks the reader not to trust St. Irenaeus of Lyon who was a native of Smyrna and listened to Polycarp as a boy.^{xxxii} Barber's treatment of Irenaeus seems rash and out of keeping with the credibility given to Irenaeus by other Church historians and specialists. Barber's second claim is that a growing number of scholars now favors the earlier date and this claim is not footnoted.

It is true that at least three separate journal articles, and a full length work have appeared which have attempted to overturn the consensus of the Domitian date but it does not appear these articles have persuaded many scholars.^{xxxiii} Standard introductions by Werner Kümmel (1973 17th ed.),^{xxxiv} Ralph P. Martin (1978),^{xxxv} and Donald Guthrie (1990),^{xxxvi} Luke Timothy Johnson (1999),^{xxxvii} Raymond Brown (1997),^{xxxviii} R. G. Beasley-Murray (1997)^{xxxix} and Achtemeier, Green, Thompson (2001)^{xl} still date the work later under Domitian.

Nuances in the more recent works talk about limited harassment and persecutions which still line up with other ancient authorities from Asia Minor. Osborne observes that although there is a certain stability to the church situations described in Revelation, there is still a fair

amount of persecution (1:9; 2:2-3, 9-10, 13; 3:8,10) which appears related to hostilities between Christians and Jews (2:9) and which even included the martyrdom of Antipas (2:13).^{xli} Osborne observes "The perspective of the book is that most of the oppression is yet to come (6:9-11; 12:11; 13:7, 10, 15; 16:6; 17:6; 18:24; 19:2, 20:4)^{xlii}

I also surveyed a number of modern commentators who all still appear to favor the later Domitian date, André Feuillet (1963)^{xliii}; G. B. Caird (1966),^{xliv} Robert Mounce (1977),^{xlv} Daniel Harrington (1999),^{xlvi} R. Beasley-Murray (1981),^{xlvii} Pierre Prigent (1981)^{xlviii} Eugene Boring (1989),^{xlix} Richard Bauckham (1993),^l G. K. Beale (1999),^{li} Craig R. Koester (2001),^{lii} Mitchell G. Reddish (2001),^{liii} Ben Witherington III (2003)^{liv}; The Navarre Bible: Readers Edition (2006)^{lv} and Grant Osborne (2008).^{lvi}

Beale notes, "The consensus among twentieth-century scholars is that the Apocalypse was written during the reign of Domitian around 95 A.D. A minority of commentators have dated it immediately prior to the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D." He also notes, "There are no single arguments that point clearly to the early or the late date. The early date could be right, but the cumulative weight of evidence points to the late date."^{lvii}

To be fair many scholars admit that both views are possible but few are willing to depict the situation as a mere "coin toss" with either date equally possible. Barber cannot say a small minority is *a growing number of scholars*. Scholars favoring the Neroian view include J. M Ford (1975)^{lviii} C. Rowland, (1982)^{lix} and a distinctive group of 'Preterist' commentators, David Chilton (1987);^{lx} Kenneth Gentry (1989).^{lxi}

In another category are those who try to answer both Nero and Domitian to the question by asserting that Revelation was written in stages perhaps first during Nero then during Domitian

or Trajan. Martin Hengel has speculate that Revelation may have originally been composed immediately after the Neronian persecution and then possibly reworked later in the early part of Trajan's reign.^{lxii} A recent very extensive three volume commentary by David Aune (1998)^{lxiii} likewise suggests that parts of Revelation were written earlier under the reign of Nero and then re-worked during Domitian's reign (or even during Trajan's reign). David Barr also sees Revelation as a series of visions "composed over the course of decades, perhaps beginning in on shortly after the time of Nero and achieving their final form near the end of the first century"^{lxiv}

The Ignatius Bible defends the minority position in the introduction to Revelation noting; "All things considered, a date around A.D. 68 may be said to bring the greatest amount of clarity to the otherwise bewildering visions of the book."^{lxv}

The *Ignatius Study Bible* lists the following evidence in support of the two positions:

The interpretation of Babylon as Rome draws support from external and internal evidence.

(1) *The most ancient tradition that survives from the early Church, that of St. Irenaeus, appears to say that John received the visions of Revelation near the end of the reign of Domitian (ca. a.d. 96).*

If this was a neutral balanced assessment of the two possible views then why would one say "St. Irenaeus, appears to say. . ." Irenaeus, writing about A.D. 180 *plainly* says that John wrote in the time of Domitian (Adv. haer. 5.30.3, the Greek version of which is preserved in two different passages in Eusebius Hist. eccl. 3.18.3; 5.30.3):

But if it had been necessary to announce his name plainly at the present time, it would have been spoken by him who saw the 'apocalypse.

For [he or it] was not seen long ago but almost in our own time, at the end of the reign of Domitian.

There have been critical scholars who have proposed that the Greek text and its parallel Latin text are corrupt and that this was meant to imply when John *lived* rather than when he *wrote* during the time of Domitian, but this is all based on unfounded and undocumented speculation aimed at undermining the plain sense of the original Greek and Latin texts.^{lxvi} Even Gentry, who favors the earlier date admits, "there are no crucial questions regarding the integrity of the text of Irenaeus's statement."^{lxvii}

The Ignatius Bible also notes;

(2) *Rome is several times called "Babylon" in Jewish apocalyptic texts that date back to the early second century (e.g., 4 Ezra 3:1; 2 Baruch 2:1). The logic behind this description is precisely the fact that Rome, like Babylon of old, conquered and destroyed the city of Jerusalem. Peter also appears to use Babylon as a code name for the city of Rome (1 Pet 5:13). Conversely, no contemporary text outside the NT uses the name Babylon for Jerusalem.*

Commenting on 16:19, Aune notes; "Babylon, a symbolic name for Rome, occurs here as the first of six occurrences in Revelation (see Rev 16:19; 17:6; 18:2, 10, 21). Babylon and Rome are comparable because both were centers for world empires and both captured Jerusalem and destroyed the temple."^{lxviii}

He also notes,

As a cipher for Rome, the term "Babylon" occurs occasionally in Jewish apocalyptic literature, though the fact that all the references occur in literature that postdates A.D. 70, the year when Jerusalem fell to Titus, has suggested to many scholars that the equation Babylon = Rome was not made until after that date and suggests that Revelation must have been written after that

date (Yarbro Collins, *Crisis and Catharsis*, 57-58).^{lxix}

The *Ignatius Study Bible* also notes;

(3) *The harlot city of Babylon is seated on seven hills—a traditional description of the imperial city of Rome. One rabbinic tradition makes this same assertion about Jerusalem, but it dates to a time well after the NT period (see note on Rev 17:9).*

The *Ignatius Study Bible* commentary at 17:9 reads,

17:9 seven hills: *A representation of Rome, the city that sprawls over seven hills, according to the writers of classical antiquity (e.g., Virgil, Aeneid 6, 783; Cicero, To Atticus 6, 5; Martial, Epigrams 4, 64). Many interpreters, ancient and modern alike, identify the harlot city with Rome on the basis of this tradition, though some see a reference to Jerusalem, noting that it, too, was said to rest on seven hills according to one rabbinic tradition (Pirque de Rabbi Eleazar 10) (p. 513).*

The alleged first century Jewish tradition concerning *Jerusalem resting on seven hills* seems to be very questionable. The Rabbinic document *Pirque de Rabbi Eleazar* was authored at the earliest as an expanding set of traditions in the first to third centuries after Christ. It is very difficult to know if this later rabbinic tradition represents Palestinian Judaism at the time of Jesus. Lewis Barth also notes;

Pirqué R. El. is preserved in eighteen manuscripts that are “complete” or nearly complete; these are dated from the fourteenth or fifteenth centuries through the nineteenth century.(13) There are thirty-one partial manuscripts dating from the end of the thirteenth through the nineteenth centuries. The rest of the material is comprised of fragments.(14)^{lxx}

Barth notes that the entire corpus of *Pirque de Rabbi Eleazar* manuscripts contains approximately 50,000 words of text.

A further problem is pointed out by Chaim Milikowsky who notes, that “. . . some traditions of Jewish scribal activity did not hesitate to ‘correct’ the text by emending it and by adding to it, thereby causing the text to receive the shape it—to the scribes’ mind—should have had originally. This would create recensional variation, but by no means should we call this a new redaction of the text, which had already received its fixed form centuries earlier.”^{lxxi}

We do not possess a critical text of these manuscripts to compare and date these traditions. In the English translation consulted here, the word “hills” was missing from the original manuscript. “Jerusalem stands upon seven (hills’)—with a note that the word for ‘hills’ is missing in the manuscript and some other word was inserted and then erased, although it is found in another manuscript.”^{lxxii} The combination of late dating and manuscript uncertainties make this a very insecure background to compare with John’s Revelation.

Since Rome is the widely acknowledged standard for *seven hills* perhaps later Jewish scribes wanted to compare Jerusalem to Rome in *Pirque de Rabbi Eleazar*. As evidence that John meant Jerusalem in reference to the seven hill of Revelation 17:9 this background fails utterly!

Aune notes the more obvious solution,

The phrase “seven hills” or “seven mountains” was widely used during the late first century B.C. (after Varro) and the first century A.D. and would be instantly recognizable as a metaphor for Rome. The phrase “seven hills” as a symbol for Rome occurs frequently in writers following the mid-first century B.C.^{lxxiii} “

The *Ignatius Study Bible* also notes;

(4) *The harlot city is drunk with the blood of Christian martyrs and saints (Rev 17:6). This, too, is an apt description of Rome, for at least two emperors unleashed a bloody persecution against the Church in the first century, Nero and Domitian.*

(5) *Babylon is said to exercise dominion over many kings (Rev 17:18; 18:3) and peoples (17:15) and is pictured at the center of a vast trading empire that enriched many nations (18:11–19). Interpreted literally, these statements are easily applicable to the Roman Empire of the first century. It is less clear how these verses could be said to describe Jerusalem.*

(6) *Occasionally, the book describes the harlot city with the help of OT passages that refer to God’s judgment on pagan cities of the past, such as Tyre (see notes on Rev 17:1–6; 18:9–19) and ancient Babylon itself (see notes on Rev 14:8; 17:1; 18:1–24). Again, Rome quite easily fits the profile of a pagan metropolis that is destined to face the wrath of the Almighty.*

The above list fails to report other important external evidence. Beale notes, “Eusebius, *H.E.* 3.17, 20 (citing Hegesippus and Tertullian); 4.26 (citing Melito of Sardis), and Tertullian, *Apologia* 5, mention a major persecution during Domitian’s reign.^{lxxiv} Evidence from St. Polycarp (traditionally c. 69–c. 155), Bishop of Smyrna^{lxxv} (Philippians 11) and Epiphanius (c. 315–403), Bishop of Salamis^{lxxvi} (Heresies 51.33.1) are thought indicate that the churches in Smyrna and Thyatira were not founded until after the first century. Finally many scholars have seen the allusions to persecutions in 1 Clement (composed in 96 AD)^{lxxvii} as referring to ongoing persecution after Nero.^{lxxviii}

As mentioned above this does not require that there was widespread empire wide persecutions. Even the Neronian view has a

similar problem since the persecution under Nero was limited to Rome and John is referring at least in part to Christians in Asia Minor, and then to Palestine.

The *Ignatius Study Bible* moves on to discuss the evidence for Jerusalem;

(1) *The Book of Revelation tells us that the “great city” is the city where Jesus was crucified (11:8). Since this is the first use of the expression in the book, there is reason to think that Jerusalem is the identification intended throughout. At least, John gives no indication that more than one “great city” is in view as the book unfolds.*

John refers to the ‘holy city’ (11:2) and the “great city” (11:8). The fact that it says the city ‘where indeed their Lord was crucified’ does bring Jerusalem to mind, but is this intended to be a literal connection or is it a metaphor or word picture. Does the fact that it is the ‘first use of the word’ require us to think literally? That is not a normal interpretive rule for Scripture.

Beale notes,

Here, for example, though “the holy city” (ἡ πόλις ἁγία) [hē polis hagia] is used in the OT and elsewhere in the NT of the literal Jerusalem, the use of πόλις [polis] in Revelation must be determinative. In 21:2, 10 and 3:12 πόλις [polis] is used of the future heavenly city of God inhabited by faithful Gentiles and Jews. “The holy city” in 11:2 likely refers to some aspect of the heavenly Jerusalem, since the other occurrences in Revelation of the phrase (21:2, 10; 22:19) refer to the heavenly Jerusalem. 11:2 must refer to the initial form of the heavenly city, part of which is identified with believers living on earth. 20:9 includes the period of the church age and speaks of “the beloved city,”

H.E. Historia Ecclesiastica

referring thereby to the earthly expression of the heavenly community of faith. The reference to the heavenly city in Hebrews also has the same “already-and-not-yet” character (11:10; 12:22; 13:14).^{lxxix}

More evidence will be presented below on the meaning of Chapter 11.

The *Ignatius Study Bible* continues;

(2) *The streets of the harlot city run red, not only with the blood of Christian martyrs and saints (17:6), but also with the blood of “prophets” (18:24). This, too, sounds like a reference to Jerusalem, a city that spilled the blood of the earliest martyrs (11:7–8; Acts 7:58; 12:2; 26:10) and had a long history of murdering God’s prophets (Mt 23:37; Lk 13:33), including the Messiah (Mt 27:25–26).*

The blood of martyrs was spilled in many places, but most especially in Rome, and the reference to prophets could be to contemporary Christian prophets rather than the Old Testament prophets.^{lxxx}

The *Ignatius Study Bible* continues;

(3) *Babylon is portrayed as a “harlot” who seduces other nations (17:1–6). This could apply to a city such as Rome, for the OT uses this imagery for Gentile cities such as Tyre and Nineveh. However, the image of the harlot city is extensively developed in the OT with reference to Jerusalem. . . .*

(4) *A voice from heaven summons the faithful to flee from sinful Babylon (18:4), lest they be destroyed by the “plagues” and “fire” that are soon to ravage the city (18:8). It is difficult to see how this fits the historical situation in Rome, a city that has maintained an uninterrupted Christian presence extending to the present day. However, in the case of Jerusalem, we know that Jesus urged his disciples to flee the city before its demise (Lk 21:20–21), and history confirms that*

they heeded his warning in time (Eusebius, Ecclesiastical History 3, 5).

(5) *The harlot city is destined for a fiery destruction (17:16; 18:8, 18). This is one of many things in the book expected to take place “soon” (1:1, 3; 22:6, 7, 10, 12). Now, supposing it possible that John wrote the book in the late 60s, the burning of Jerusalem in a.d. 70 would fit the prophetic time frame perfectly (Mt 22:7). However, Rome was not set ablaze and trampled into obscurity until the city was overrun by Visigoth barbarians in a.d. 410, . . .*

(6) *The destruction of the harlot city (chaps. 17–18) is followed by visions of a heavenly city (chaps. 21–22). Clearly these cities are portrayed as the spiritual antithesis of one another, as several contrasting parallels show (see note on Rev 21:2). The most natural interpretation views the new Jerusalem, which comes down from heaven, as the successor to the old Jerusalem, which was built on earth, as elsewhere in the NT (Gal 4:24–27). Of course, it is not impossible that the new Jerusalem could be taken as the counterimage of Rome, as many scholars hold, but the fit is less perfect. . . .*

All-in-all these are not very conclusive reasons for proposing Jerusalem as locus of John’s prophecy. These are actually interpretations of Revelation 11, and 17-18 which depend on a prior earlier dating. Let us consider these chapters more closely.

Measuring the Temple

Revelation 11 (revisited)

John describes the measuring of the Temple;

Then I was given a measuring rod like a staff and I was told, “Come and measure the temple of God and the altar, and count those who are worshiping in it.”² But exclude the outer court of the temple; do not measure it, for it has been

handed over to the Gentiles, who will trample the holy city for forty-two months (11:1-2).

At first glance the measuring of the temple in 11:1-2 appears to refer literally to the earthly temple in Jerusalem. If we add this to the description of the two witnesses which follows, “Their corpses will lie in the main street of the great city, which has the symbolic names “Sodom” and “Egypt,” where indeed their Lord was crucified” (11:8), it would seem to imply that John is literary talking about Jerusalem. This *the place where our Lord was crucified* and is *the holy city* where the temple is located. Should this be read in a straight forward literal sense? Does this require the reader to assume that the temple is still standing in Jerusalem?

This question is not treated as straightforward by commentators. (See Chart 6 below). It is tied to a number of other questions. The first is the dating of Revelation which has already been discussed.

There are a huge variety of interpretations for the measuring of the Temple. (See the chart below). Beale points out that the “measuring” was used in the Old Testament as “a metaphor for a decree of protection (e.g., 2 Sam. 8:2; Isa. 28:16–17; Jer. 31:38–40; Ezek. 29:6 LXX; Zech. 1:16) or of judgment (e.g., 2 Sam. 8:2; 2 Kgs. 21:13; Lam. 2:8; Amos 7:7–9)”.^{lxxxix} Both this text (11:1-2) and the measuring of the heavenly city in Revelation 21:15–17 are dependent on Ezekiel 40-48. This material refers to a new future ‘end times’ or eschatological temple. It does not refer to the Herodian or Solomonic temples. It is emphasized

especially in Ezekiel 43:1–12; 37:26–28 that God promises that his presence will be reestablished forever.^{lxxxii} The fact that this temple is future, and that is a “sanctuary among them forever” as a sign of an everlasting covenant (Ezekiel 37:26) makes it highly unlikely that the destruction of Jerusalem is in view.

The Navarre Bible notes,

God is going to preserve part of the Holy city from the destructive power of the Gentiles. This part stands for the Church, the community of those who worship God in spirit and in truth (cf. John 4:23). Jerusalem was trampled under foot by the gentiles in the time of Antiochus Epiphanies, who profaned the temple and installed a statue of Zeus Olympus (cf. 1 Maccabees 1:54); worse destruction was done by the Romans, who destroyed both temple and city, leaving not a stone upon a stone (Matthew 24:21; Mark 13:14-23; Luke 21:20-24). Taking his cue from these events, St. John prophesies that that the Church will never suffer the same fate, for God protects it.^{lxxxiii}

LXX Septuagint

Chart6: Various Interpretations of the Measuring of the Temple (11:1-2)

Preterist View 1	Literally: Refers to Herod's Temple with the outer court as the court of the Gentiles. Measuring the Temple is a description of the destruction of Jerusalem and preservation of the church in John's day.
Preterist View 2	Figuratively: The inner court is God's protection for the church, and the outer court is the judgment of unbelieving Israel. Measuring represents the opposition between the synagogue and the church/144,000.
Idealist View 1	Figuratively: The inner court represents the church which belongs to God, while the outer court is and image of the church persecuted by the world.
Idealist View 2	Figuratively: The inner court represents the church which belongs to God, while the outer court is and image of the apostate church which turns against the faithful church.
Futurist 1 (dispensationalism)	Literally: Refers to a rebuilt temple in Jerusalem during the tribulation period by a remnant of believing ethnic Jews (the 144,000 of Revelation 7:1-8) *not compatible with Catholic Doctrine
Futurist 2	Figuratively: Represents the spiritual preservation of either the church or the believing Jews

Beale comments further on the spiritual interpretation of the temple and altar by examining the early interpretations of these concepts by St. Ignatius of Antioch (c. 35–c. 107)^{lxxxiv} in Asia Minor. Beale notes;

The above analysis of the “altar” corresponds to early Christian interpretation. In Ignatius, Eph. 5:2 “the place of the altar” is the authoritative unity of “the whole church” (so also Trallians 7:2; cf. Philadelphians 4). The exhortation to maintain such unity is based on “the one

temple [ναός], even God ... [and] the one altar ... the one Jesus Christ” to whom all should come (Magnesians 7:2). This altar is later equated with believers being “stones of a temple [ναός naos],” which is a “temple shrine [ναοφόροι naophoroi]” carried by all in the church (so Eph. 9; likewise Eph. 15). Cf. also Rom. 12:1, where believers are exhorted to offer their bodies “as a living, holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, [which is] your reasonable service of worship.”^{lxxxv}

The Fall of Babylon

Revelation 17-18

In chapters 17-18 of Revelation St. John uses several ancient rhetorical techniques. The first technique, in modern terms, would be a type of comparison and contrast. The second is a vivid description of blame or vice showing how undesirable and unworthy the city of Rome is. We must remember the importance of the city to the ancients. These chapters will contrast the evils of the city of Rome which was allegedly founded by the Roman gods, and was titled *the eternal city* with the coming New Jerusalem which truly is eternal (21:2).

In the opening words of chapter 17, John tells us that one of the *seven angels* holding the *seven bowls* appears and tells him, “Come here. I will show you the judgment on the great harlot who lives near the many waters” (17:1). The fact that this is one of the earlier seven angels indicates that chapter 17 further amplifies and explains the judgments of the sixth and seventh bowls from the previous chapter. This is not new material but a close up of the previous judgment.

In a further vision John is carried to a deserted place, presumably to be able to see the truth about the seductive woman. He sees her “seated on a scarlet beast that was covered with blasphemous names” (17:3). The ‘beast’ she rides is the description of Rome found earlier in Revelation 13:1, and the “blasphemous names” are the titles ascribed to the Roman emperor who himself claims to be a god.

John’s vision also echoes the Old Testament judgment “against the inhabitants of Babylon dwelling on many waters” found in the prophecy of Jeremiah (Jer. 28:11–13; 51:13). The ancient city of Babylon developed its prosperity through an impressive system of irrigation. Rome and its seductive prosperity is now compared to the evil and oppressive nation Babylon, who was judged by God through the prophets. Israel’s repeated unfaithfulness to their God by worshiping pagan deities is often described as fornication in the Old Testament (Hosea 2:5; Isaiah 1:21; Jeremiah 2:2; Ezekiel 16:36).

Rome is described in this imagery as the great whore who is guilty of seducing all nations through the worship of false gods. The kings of the earth have “fornicated” with her and the inhabitants of the earth became drunk on the wine of her harlotry (17:2). She is clothed in purple and scarlet (17:4; 18:12) and uses luxury and rich goods as a means of seduction (18:12). John tells us that this harlot is also drunk on the blood of the saints (17:6).

After this vivid description of the city of Rome, the angel offers some clues for the interpretation of these images (17:9). Although some aspects are clarified, many commentators are still left puzzled over some of the angel’s *clues and explanations* of these images.



Seven Hills

The woman is seated on seven hills (17:9; 17:18). Rome had for centuries been known as *the city of seven hills*. In fact the Roman historian Suetonius tells us that there was a yearly festival celebrating the enclosure of the seven hills with the Roman walls.

Rome's Seven Hills

Image: From Wikimedia Commons^{xxxvi}

The next part is less clear. Seven also represents seven kings; “five have already fallen, one still lives, and the last has not yet come.” There is little agreement over which kings are represented here. Do we start numbering with Julius Caesar or Augustus? Perhaps we should see the number seven as symbolic of fullness or completeness representing all the Roman rulers. The focus would then be on the eighth ruler. Is he a future antichrist? Or is the eighth ruler the Emperor Domitian as a type of all antichrists? The angel says that the eighth king is “the beast that existed once but exists no longer” (17:11). Is this a reference to the Nero-return-from-the-dead myth?

The *ten horns* appear to be rulers subordinate to the emperor who at first

work together under his authority and prosper and then later rebel against the authority of the harlot and devour her (17:16). While the *waters* represent large numbers of peoples, nations, and tongues.

A strong angel, or an angel having great authority descends from heaven in Chapter 18. This angel is illuminated by his own radiance. The general principle at work in John’s vision is that the greater the angel the greater the importance of the message. This section begins with the angels declaration that Babylon has fallen (18:1-3), and this is followed by a heavenly voice calling God’s people to “depart from her” (18:4). In divine judgment, Babylon will be paid back double for her sins and boasting. Three groups of people will offer laments for

her, the Kings of the earth who fornicated with her (18:9-10), the merchants of the earth who have lost their markets for expensive luxuries (18:11-17), and ship captains and sailors who would no longer grow rich from her wealth (18:17b-24).

At the heart of Rome's seduction was immense wealth (18:12-13). The lament of the sea captains points out the evil that the misuse of this wealth caused. "Because your merchants were the great ones of the world, all nations were led astray by your magic potion. In her was found the blood of prophets and holy ones and all who have been slain on the earth" (18:23b-24). First, Rome is judged because of its self-glorification (11:8; 14:8; 16:19; 17:1, 5, 18; 18:2, 10, 16, 19, 21, 23) but also because of its evil 'magic' or sorcery implying that

Rome influenced the nations to worship idols through sorcery.

Cooperation with idol worship was seen as seen as participation in the demonic realm (Acts 15:20; 1 Thessalonians 1: 9b-10; 1 Corinthians 10:14-16). One must remember that simply belonging to a trade guild, might necessitate worshiping the patron deity of that guild or facing negative social consequences and a possible loss of income. The seriousness of this issue for the early Christians is shown at the final judgment, where *sorcerers* and *idol-worshippers* are specifically named among those who do not inherit life in the New Jerusalem (21:8).

The Wedding Feast of the Lamb

Revelation 19

The cry of the martyrs in Revelation 6:10, "How long will it be?" is finally answered in chapter 19 with the final judgments leading up the culmination of all things in the New Jerusalem. John hears the loud voice of a great multitude in heaven who say "Alleluia!" in response to the heavenly judgment which is fallen on Rome. Although "Alleluia" is a common exclamation of praise in the Old Testament (Psalms 113-118), it is found only here in the New Testament.

Revelation 19 inspired the famous *Hallelujah chorus* in Handel's *Messiah*. This famous musical *oratorio* was based on Handel's meditations on collection of

Scripture quotations he encountered which included this chapter. He composed *Messiah* rapidly in the summer of 1741 and it is reported that when he got to the *Hallelujah chorus*, his assistant found him in tears saying, "I did think I saw heaven open, and saw the very face of God".^{lxxxvii}

There is an immense contrast between the lament of the three groups in Chapter 18 and the great joy and rejoicing of those in heaven. One is reminded of the heavenly worship earlier in Revelation 4-5; 7:10-12, and 11:15-18. In the previous passages the worship emanated outward from the throne from the elders and living creatures to the heavenly multitude. Here in Chapter 19 the movement is from the multitude (19:1-3) to the elders and living creatures (19:4).^{lxxxviii} Perhaps this is because of the vindication that God's judgment brings for the martyrs.

God's judgments are "true and just" (19:2) because he faithful to his covenant and his holiness prevents injustice. He has avenged the blood of his servants the martyrs (19:2) in a morally true and legally just manner. The judgment against the harlot is carried

out earlier in Revelation 17:16; 18:2-21. Revelation 19:2 is the answer to the cry of Revelation 6:10, which likewise alluded to Ps. 79:10: "How long, O Lord, holy and true, will you refrain from judging and vindicating our blood ...?"

Revelation 6:10	Revelation 19:2
They cried out in a loud voice, "How long will it be, holy and true master, before you sit in judgment and avenge our blood on the inhabitants of the earth?"	He has avenged on her the blood of his servants. Cf. Daniel 3:27 / Jer 51:48-49.

The image of smoke rising from destroyed the city forever (19:3) echoes the earlier judgment in 14:11 "The smoke of the fire *that torments* them will rise forever and ever."

The angel says, "Don't do that!" This happens again in 22:8-9. The angel's further reply in 19:10 touches on a theme in first century Judaism. The angel says, "Witness to Jesus is the spirit of prophecy."

[Jewish Background on the Spirit of Prophecy in Revelation 19:10](#)

The twenty-four elders and the four living creatures also bow in worship before the one sitting on the throne and say, "Amen. Alleluia" (19:4). A voice from the throne then invites his servants to praise God and there is a sound of a great multitude or "the sound of rushing water or mighty peals of thunder" as they reply, "Alleluia! The Lord has established his reign . . . For the wedding day of the Lamb has come, his bride has made herself ready" (19:6-7). The angel commands John, "Write this: Blessed are those who have been called to the wedding feast of the Lamb." And he said to me, "These words are true; they come from God" (19:9).

Although Judaism at the time of Jesus had no unified or centralized system of belief, there was an understanding of the Spirit which influenced popular expectations. Hebrew had become a specialized literary language which was replaced in common usage by Aramaic and Greek translations of the Scripture. The Aramaic translations were called Targums. In the century before the time of Jesus, both in early Targums and other Jewish writings we see the emergence of an expectation of a phenomena called the "Spirit of prophecy."

John finds the words of the angel so inspiring that he attempts to fall at the feet of the angel and to worship him. Beale notes, "Perhaps John mistook the angel for the divine figure from heaven in 1:13ff. and 10:1ff., who is worthy of worship."^{lxxxix}

Scholars have pointed out that this term referred to the Spirit acting on a person as the organ of communication between that person and God in a manner that is broader than usually thought of by the term 'prophecy.' Max Turner has pointed out four distinct activities of the Spirit that were attributed to the coming of the 'Spirit of prophecy' in Jewish expectation.^{xc}

The first is the reception of charismatic revelation and guidance in the form of supernatural knowledge about someone or something without the added dimension of the reception of inspired speech or ‘prophesying.’ The second is the reception of charismatic wisdom following the archetypal example of Bezalel who crafted the Temple furnishings through a special infilling of the Spirit in Exodus 31:3. This gift can also relate to the charismatic wisdom afforded to understand God’s Word (Sirach 39:6). Less commonly the ‘Spirit of prophecy’ can mean Spirit inspired prophetic speech in what we more typically think of as prophesying. The classic example would be the inspired speech of Balaam in Numbers 23-24. Balaam was supposed to utter a prophetic curse against Israel on behalf of Balak, King of Moab, but under the inspiration of the Spirit he utters prophetic words of blessing instead. The Jewish historian Josephus comments on this passage that Balaam was possessed by the Spirit of God and that the Spirit “gives utterance to such language and words as it will, and of which are unconscious” (Josephus, *Antiquities*, 4.119). Finally, Turner points to the ‘Spirit of prophecy’ as “invasively inspired charismatic praise or worship.” This might be analogous to the experiences of the bands of prophets in 1 Samuel 10, and 19. The Aramaic Targum to 1 Samuel 10:6 reads; “And the *spirit of prophecy* from before the Lord will reside upon you, and you will *sing praise* with them, and you will be changed into another man. Later rabbinic tradition linked this type of inspiration to the inspired Song of Moses in Exodus 14-15.

The coming of the Spirit at the Christian Pentecost in Acts 2 would be understood against these popular Jewish expectations. This would especially be connected with a future expectation that God would pour out the Spirit of prophecy on all of a restored Israel (Joel 2:28-32, cf. Ezekiel 36:27) the very passage quoted by Peter in his Pentecost sermon (Acts 2:17-21).

Beale points out the parallel to “the Spirit of prophecy” in the Aramaic Targum to Isaiah 61:1. He notes,

If this background is operative in Rev. 19:10, then the phrase indicates fulfillment of the promised “Spirit of prophecy,” which was to be a witness to the presence of the messianic era and therefore a witness here to Jesus as the only true object of worship (in contrast to angelic mediators of revelation [19:10a], idols, and the like). This Spirit was to be a possession of all those living in the latter-day community of faith (so Joel 2:28–32; Ezek. 39:29).^{xci}

The Coming King of Kings

In what is now clearly a prelude to the final large white throne of judgment (20:11), John sees “the heavens opened.” Do we see a progression with first a door to heaven standing opened (4:1), then the heavenly temple open (11:19), and now all the heavens opened (19:11)? From the heavens John sees a rider on a white horse who’s names is “Faithful and True”^{xcii} descending to judge and wage war. The riders cloak that “had been dipped in blood, and his name was called the Word of God” (19:13).

Most interpreters follow two main lines of thought, either the blood is that of Christ’s enemies, or that of Christ himself. There is considerable debate among commentators concerning whose blood the robe is dipped in. G. B Caird insists that since the blood is present prior to the battle it cannot be the blood of God’s enemies.^{xciii} Two points might be made immediately. First the text says that the rider “judges and wages war” before it describes his robes, and secondly we need to observe John’s repeated use of recapitulation. Ben Witherington III disagrees with Caird, noting that following Isaiah 63:1-

6 which is paralleled in 19:15, “the image of the garment dipped in blood and stained from walking in the winepress is the image of God’s judging and not of God suffering.”^{xci}

John sees the *armies of Heaven* following him but they appear not arrayed in battle gear but “on white horses and wearing clean white linen” (19:14).^{xci} Should we understand these armies as the people of God or Christian faithful?^{xcvi} John has just described a great multitude (19:6) who are prepared for the wedding day of the Lamb by wearing fine linen (19:7-8) which represents ‘the righteous deeds of the holy ones’ or saints (19:9).

The *armies of Heaven* could also naturally be understood as angelic hosts perhaps in a priestly role. In Revelation 15:6 the ‘the seven angels with the seven plagues’ who ‘came out of the temple’ were also ‘dressed in clean white linen.’

The description of Jesus with a sword coming out of his mouth ‘to strike the nations’ (19:15) is now a familiar image in Revelation (1:16; 2:12, 16, 19:15, 21). This language draws on a messianic interpretation of Psalm 2:9 and Isaiah 11:4.^{xcvii} Jesus ‘has a name written on his cloak and on his thigh, ‘King of kings and Lord of lords’” (19:16). The cloak is a symbol of his dignity and the thigh is the normal location of the sword symbolizing his power and authority.

The King then invites the birds of the air to a kind of anti-feast to the Wedding Feast of the Lamb (19:6-8). The beast, and the kings and armies who “had accepted the mark of the beast and those who had worshiped its

image (19:20), along with the false prophet are judged.

The kings and armies are slaughtered “by the sword that came out of the mouth of the one riding the horse” (19:21) and the beast and false prophet are “were thrown alive into the fiery pool burning with sulfur” (19:20).

The Thousand Year Reign

Revelation 20

Revelation chapter 20 is sort of theological rail station through which various sorts of interpretive trains pass. Each train travels from a different Scripture tradition and espouses a view of the end times which attempts to find its home in this passage. Six times in this passage St. John refers to a “thousand years” or a ‘millennium.’ During this period Satan will be bound so that he can no longer lead the nations astray (20:3), before finally being released again at the end of the millennium (20:7). Biblical scholar Richard Bauckham notes that various Christian traditions about the millennium “owes very little—other than the term ‘millennium’—to the account of the thousand-year reign of the martyrs with Christ in Revelation 20.” The single function of this narrative is the vindication of the martyrs or those “who had been beheaded for their witness to Jesus” (20:4).

Some early Christians were apparently influenced by one strand of Jewish traditions about a coming messianic age. It was believed that just as the world was created in seven days, so the entire history of the world would unfold in six millennia long ‘days’ (Psalm 90:4, 2 Peter 3:8) which would be followed by a seventh world Sabbath, or final millennium of paradise on earth. Some of the early Church fathers interpreted this metaphor literally and anticipated a literal future millennium. This type of speculation was later corrected by the Church, which has “rejected even modified forms of this falsification of the kingdom to come under the name of millenarianism” (CCC 676).

Following this day-equals-a-thousand-years schema, various pre-modern dating’s of the beginning of world were proposed which should have resulted in the Lord’s return in the

year 500, the year 800, or the year 2000 (or perhaps in the latest dating 2048).

When this type of schema was imposed on Revelation 20, it was thought that Christ would come back to reign over an earthly messianic kingdom and literally fulfill many Old Testament prophecies about the restoration of the Jewish people and the temple in Jerusalem. Christ will reign in Jerusalem for one thousand years before the final judgment. We sometimes refer to his view as *premillennial* because it proposed that Christ will return before the millennium. This view also generally expects the world to get worse and worse until Christ returns.

The modern premillennial view, with some additional novel teachings, such as the idea of the ‘rapture,’ were created by the Anglo-Irish Bible teacher John Nelson Darby in the mid 1800’s and popularized in the early 1900’s by the *Schofield Reference Bible*. This is the view of the popular evangelical author Tim LaHaye who wrote the *Left Behind* series, and is also the type of thinking that has given birth to such diverse movements as the Seventh Day Adventist, and the Jehovah’s Witnesses. Although this view, and its many cousins, claims to take biblical prophecy literally, it is highly selective about what it considers literal and many of its interpretations are far from self-evident.

Immediately prior to the 1800’s a popular view about the end times was *postmillennialism*. The Protestant religious revival of the *Great Awakenings* in early American history were fueled by this thinking. This view holds that the world will get better and better until Christ finally returns to begin the millennium. Our missionary actions in this world to bring about God’s reign and rule will hasten Christ’s return. The idea of the millennium in this view is not understood in a highly literal way. Two World Wars and a darkening world political situation have made this view less common.

The ancient view of the Church which offered an alternative to a literal interpretation of the millennium is called *amillennialism*. A number of early church fathers rejected literal interpretations of the millennium and read Revelation as a text of timeless truths about sin and vice. Some proposed that the millennium was an indefinite time representing the present age of the Church and that the ‘binding’ of Satan (Revelation 20:2) occurred through exorcisms and the presence of Christ in the world. Through his ministry Christ is able to bind the ‘strong man’ (Matthew 12:29; Luke 4:36). This view was popularized by St. Augustine who recommends it in his work *City of God* (XX.4-7). Setting aside popular works, the majority of modern Biblical commentators follow this view.

In this view the binding of Satan (Revelation 20:1-3) so that he “could no longer lead the nations astray” is occurring now in the age of the Church, so that the Gospel of the kingdom may reach all peoples. In John’s vision, Satan is bound with a chain, locked with a key and the entrance is sealed. The ancient serpent is restrained both with power and with authority (Matthew 28:18; Luke 9:11; 10:19). At the end of this age Satan will again be “released for a short time” (20:3) to cause a final deception and persecution of the Church (20:7). The Catechism warns,

Before Christ’s second coming the Church must pass through a final trial that will shake the faith of many believers . . . in the form of a religious deception offering men an apparent solution to their problems at the price of apostasy from the truth. The supreme religious deception is that of the Antichrist . . . (CCC 675).

Revelation 20:6 describes the ‘first resurrection’ of the martyrs will reign with Christ as his judges. We are not to see two literal resurrections, but must attribute this to John’s tendency to repeat events in recapitulation. St. Augustine interpreted this as metaphor of the

type ‘resurrection’ which occurs in the soul through Baptism (Romans 6:3-4).

Although our eternal destiny is determined at the moment of our death in a particular judgment (CCC 1021), there is a Last Judgment (CCC 1038-1039) which is described in Revelation 20:11-15. There is a general resurrection of all the dead followed by a judgment of each person according to their deeds and relationship with Christ. The Catechism notes,

In the presence of Christ, who is Truth itself, the truth of each man’s relationship with God will be laid bare. The Last Judgment will reveal even to its furthest consequences the good each person has done or failed to do during his earthly life (CCC 1039).

The New Jerusalem

Revelation 21-22

The scenes of judgement and destruction in the previous chapter are countered with scenes of creation and blessing in chapter 21. John writes, “Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth” (Revelation 21:1). These words echo the prophecies of Isaiah 65:17 and 66:22 about God creating a future new heaven and a new earth.

Speaking from his heavenly throne God declares, “Behold, I make all things new” (21:5). The Greek word used here for *new*, ‘*kainos*’ usually indicates newness in terms of quality, not time,^{xcviii} meaning ‘that which is new or recent and hence superior to that which is old.’^{xcix} Gregory Beale notes, “Despite the discontinuities, the new cosmos will be an identifiable counterpart to the old cosmos and a renewal of it, just as the body will be raised without losing its former identity.”^c The new creation will be like the resurrection of the dead. Normally the body becomes corrupt in death

and passes away, but in spite of this, our new resurrected body will still have continuity with our original body. God will make all things, new—emphasizing a kind of re-creation by which the old is transformed into the new.^{ci}

In this tension between continuity and discontinuity, John tells us that the “former heaven and the former earth had passed away, and the sea was no more” (21:1). He sees a holy city, a New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband (21:2). The central feature of this new reality is found in God’s declaration from the throne, “Behold, God’s dwelling [Greek *skēnē*] is with the human race. He will dwell with them and they will be his people and God himself will always be with them [as their God]” (21:3).

The mention of God’s *dwelling* has profound Old Testament connotations. In Leviticus God declares, “I will set my tabernacle [Hebrew, *mishkan*] in your midst, and will not loathe you. Ever present in your midst, I will be your God, and you will be my people” (Leviticus 26:11-12). The prophet Ezekiel echoes this, “I will make a covenant of peace with them; it shall be an everlasting covenant with them. I will multiply them and put my sanctuary among them forever. My dwelling [*mishkan*] shall be with them; I will be their God, and they will be my people” (Ezekiel 37:26–27). The Greek word *skēnē* was the ideal translation of the Hebrew *mishkan* because in later Jewish usage the verb *shakan* became associated with the *Shekinah* or presence of God among his people.^{cii} Normally God’s dwelling is associated with the tabernacle or temple but now John declares, “I saw no temple in the city, for its temple is the Lord God almighty and the Lamb” (Revelation 21:22). This is a work of God that begins in the incarnation, “And the Word became flesh and made his dwelling [Greek, *skēnē*] among us, and we saw

his glory, the glory as of the Father’s only Son, full of grace and truth” (John 1:14).

The most fundamental truth about eternity involves both the absence of powers which oppose God and diminish life and the eternal presence of God himself who gives life.^{ciii} Death or mourning, wailing or pain (21:4) have passed away and God’s dwelling is now eternally with his people. In firm contrast with worldly Babylon (Revelation 18) the New Jerusalem is “prepared as a bride adorned for her husband” (21:2) who calls the nations to drink from the water of life and to be healed with the leaves of the tree of life (22:1-5).

Surely G. B. Caird is correct that the description of the heavenly city “in magnitude, symmetry, solidity and splendor transcends the power of man to envisage.”^{civ} The city is described as a perfect cube measuring 12,000 stadia on each side (21:16) or roughly 1500 miles square. This would cover the inhabited Mediterranean world of John’s time, or in modern terms half of the western United States. The city is described as constructed with layers of precious gems, streets of gold, and pearly gates (21:21).

The commonly held picture of entering heaven through a single set of pearly gates with Saint Peter as the gate keeper, is challenged by the text in at least three ways.^{cv} First, there are twelve gates into the city, three on each side. John emphasizes that the city can be easily entered from any direction. Secondly, we are told that the gates are open day and night and are never shut (21:25). The gates are not to keep the nations out, but to provide a way to approach God. Those who approach the heavenly city have already faced the earlier judgment (18:12) and have been found worthy. Although the names of all twelve apostles are inscribed on the city’s foundations (21:14) there is no suggestion that Saint Peter is the gatekeeper.

The scope of God holiness has expanded to include all that is capable of being offered to God. The continuity with this present life is highlighted by John's note that "the kings of the earth will bring" (21:24) "the treasure and wealth of the nations" into the heavenly city (21:26). In Greek this is literally the *glory and honor* of the nations. This phrase has a double meaning of wealthy gifts and fame and adoration. John reminds the reader that "nothing unclean will enter" the heavenly city but clearly there is still some continuity between this life and the next which relates to the now universal scope of God's holiness. By virtue of our baptism we are each called to be Christ in

the midst of world and to bring God's holiness to bear on our daily lives and occupations.

Endnotes

ⁱ Scott McKellar, originally published in the Catholic Key, © 2014, vol. 46, No. 20 October 10, 2014. This version has been edited and updated.

ⁱⁱ St Justin Martyr, *Dialogue with Trypho*, 81, Trans. Thomas Falls, *Fathers of the Church*, , Vol 6, (CUA Press, 1948), p. 278.

ⁱⁱⁱ *Ibid.*

^{iv} *Ibid.*, *Dialogue with Trypho*, 82, p. 278.

^v This commentary is not extant but is witnessed in Eusebius of Caesarea's, *Ecclesial History*, 4, 26, 2.

^{vi} Cf. Andrew of Caesarea, *Commentary of the Apocalypse*, prologue. Trans. Eugenia Scarvelis Constantinou, *The Fathers Of The Church: A New Translation (Patristic Series)*, Vol 123, (CUA Press, 2011), p. ?.

^{vii} St Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, 4, 20.

^{viii} Tertullian, *Against Marcion*, 3, 14; *De resurrectione carnis*, 25.

^{ix} Origen, *Commentary on John*, Translated by Ronald E. Heine, *The Fathers Of The Church: A New Translation (Patristic Series)*, Vol. 80, esp. Book I, p. 31-94. Origen repeatedly references the author of both the Gospel and Revelation as "John, son of Zebedee" p. 50.

^x "Book of Revelation," in *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, 3rd rev. Ed. F. L. Cross and E. A. Livingstone (Oxford University, 2005), p. 1402-1403. *Revelation, Hebrews and Catholic Letters*, (New York: Scepter, 2006), p. 14.

^{xi} G. K. Beale, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), p. 35.

^{xii} Beale, (1999), p. 77 who cites Swete, *Apocalypse*, cliii.

^{xiii} *Ibid.*

^{xiv} David Chilton, *The Days of Vengeance: An Exposition of the Book of Revelation*, (Ft. Worth: Dominion Press, 1987), p. 21. Chilton cites the earlier work of Philip Carrington, *The Meaning of the Revelation* (London: SPCK, 1931), p. 65.

^{xv} *Ibid.*, p. 101. Richard Bauckham, *The Climax of Prophecy*, (Edinburgh T&T Clark Ltd, 1993), p 286.

^{xvi} Bauckham, (1993), p 286.

^{xvii} L.M. McDonald, "Ephesus," In Craig A. Evans and Stanley Porter, ed. *Dictionary of New Testament Background* (Downers Grove: IVP Press, 2000) p 318-321.

^{xviii} Gillman, J., "Timothy (Person)." In D. N. Freedman (Ed.), *The Anchor Yale Bible Dictionary* = ABD, ed. D. N. Freedman, (New York: Doubleday. 1992). Vol. 6: p. 560.

^{xix} Maximus the Confessor, *The Life of the Virgin* 97-98, trans. Stephen J. Shoemaker. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012). This is a somewhat late tradition as Maximus is c 580-662. Maximus relates that initially the Blessed Virgin Mary stayed with St John in Jerusalem then later travelled to Ephesus and lived there with John, before returning again to Jerusalem at the end of her earthly life. On the sheer diversity of Dormition traditions in the early church see Stephen J. Shoemaker, *Ancient Traditions of the Virgin Mary's Dormition and Assumption*, Oxford Early Christian Studies, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002). Shoemaker notes,

“The nature of the earliest traditions themselves strongly suggests the existence of multiple ‘origins’, which together have given rise to the complex diversity of the traditions as we now find them” (p. 5).

^{xx} Oster, R. E., Jr. s.v. Ephesus (Place), ABD, ed. D. N. Freedman, (New York: Doubleday, 1992) Vol. 2, p 549.

^{xxi} John J. Collins, “Introduction: Towards the Morphology of a Genre,” in *Semeia* 14: Apocalypse: The Morphology of Genre, ed. John J. Collins (Missoula, Mont.: Scholars, 1979), 9.

^{xxii} Scott McKellar Published in the Catholic Key, © 2014

^{xxiii} © 2014 Scott McKellar Published in the Catholic Key, October 2014

^{xxiv} © Scott McKellar, *Catholic Key*, November 21, 2014

^{xxv} © Scott McKellar, *Catholic Key*, Vol. 46.24 December 5, 2014

^{xxvi} © Scott McKellar, *Catholic Key*, December, 2014

^{xxvii} © Scott McKellar, *Catholic Key*, 47.1, Jan 9th 2015

^{xxviii} © Scott McKellar, *Catholic Key*, 47.2, Jan 23rd, 2015

^{xxix} Γέγονεν (*gegonen*) –perfect active indicative, of *ginomai*. The perfect tense indicates present state which results from a past action. David Aune, notes, “The perfect tense of γέγονεν [*gegonen*], “it is finished,” suggests a contrast with the previous use of aorist tenses and points to a climactic end of the series of plagues that God has inflicted on the world” [*Revelation 6-16*, Word Biblical Commentary, 52b, (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1998), p, 899]. The same word (*ginomai*) is used after this in 16:18 four times in the *aorist tense* indicating series of single past actions. There *were* lightning flashes and thunder, and there *was* a great earthquake, which *was* . . . *was* never before seen. Are we to see these actions as *cumulative aorists* indicating the continued result of Jesus words “It is finished”?

^{xxx} © Scott McKellar, *Catholic Key*, February, 2015

^{xxxi} Michael Barber, *Coming Soon: Unlocking the Book of Revelation and Applying its Lesson*

^{xxxii} © Scott McKellar, *Catholic Key*, February, 2015s *Today*, (Stuebenville: Emmaus Road, 2005).

^{xxxiii} On Irenaeus’ comment about our Lord’s age see John Chapman [1885-1934], “Papias on the Age of our Lord,” *Journal of Theological Studies* 9 No 33 (Oct. 1907): 42-61.

http://www.biblicalstudies.org.uk/pdf/jts/009_042.pdf Accessed 3/30/2015.

^{xxxiiii} E. Lipinski, “L’apocalypse et la martyre de Jean à Jérusalem.” *Novum Testamentum* (1969) 11:225-232; R. B. Moberly, “When was Revelation Conceived?” *Biblica* (1992) 73:376-393; J.C. Wilson, “The Problem of the Domitianic Date of Revelation” *New Testament Studies* (1993)39:587-605; K. L. Gentry, *Before Jerusalem Fell: Dating the Book of Revelation*. (Tyler: Institute for Christian Economics, 1989). On Gentry see note lix below.

^{xxxv} Werner Kümmel, *Introduction to the New Testament* (revised English ed.) (Nashville: Abingdon, 1975).

^{xxxvi} Ralph P. Martin, *New Testament Foundations: a Guide for Christian Students* (Volume 2), (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978), p. 374-377.

^{xxxvii} Donald Guthrie, *New Testament Introduction*, 4th ed. (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1990).

^{xxxviii} Luke Timothy Johnson, *The Writings of the New Testament*, revised Ed. (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1999), p. 579.

^{xxxix} Raymond Brown, *An Introduction to the New Testament*, The Anchor Bible Reference Library, (New York: Doubleday, 1997, p 805-809.

^{xxxix} G. R. Beasley-Murray, *The Book of Revelation* (Eugene: Wopf & stock, 1981). Beasley-Murray affirms the Domitian date. He notes, "It is unlikely that John intends us to interpret 11:1f. in a literal fashion, for contrary to many of his apocalyptically minded Jewish contemporaries he did not regard the temple of Jerusalem as impregnable" (p. 37, cf. p. 176-177). More recently he reaffirms this position in his article "Revelation, Book of" *Dictionary of the Later New Testament & Its Developments* (Downers Grove: IVP Press, 1997) in p. 1025-1038—esp. p 1028 where he asserts that the Domitian date "suits other evidence of the character and contents of the book. Above all the delineation of the antichrist as another Nero."

^{xl} Paul J. Achtemeier, Joel B. Green and Marianne Meye Thompson, *Introducing the New Testament: Its Literature and Theology*, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001), p. 572.

^{xli} Grant R. Osborne, *Revelation: Baker Exegetical Commentary*, (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008), p 7.

^{xlii} *Ibid.*

^{xliii} André Feuillet, *L'apocalypse: État de la question*. (Paris: Desclée, 1963), p. 48-49 (English edition p. 58-59).

^{xliv} G. B. Caird, *The Revelation of St. John the Divine*, (New York: Harper & Row, 1966). Accepts the Domitian date but "with the qualification that John used earlier material which he very imperfectly assimilated" (p. 6).

^{xlv} Robert H. Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, The New International Commentary, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977), p. 31-36.

^{xlvixlvi} Daniel Harrington, *Revelation: The Book of the Risen Christ*, (New York: New City Press, 1999), p. 15.

^{xlvii} Beasley-Murray (1981), p. 37, 176-177.

^{xlviii} Pierre Prigent, *L'Apocalypse De Saint Jean*, Commentaire du Nouveau Testament, Deuxième série, XIV (Bar le Duc: Déchaux & Nestlé, 1981) p. 157-158, « Avec Swete et Allo, il faut donc bien reconnaître qu'en dernière analyse c'est le monde que représente cette Jérusalem. » p. 168.

^{xlix} M. Eugene Boring, *Revelation: Interpretation Commentary*, (Louisville: WJK Press, 1989) p. 10.

ⁱ Richard Bauckham, *The Theology of the Book of Revelation*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), p. 18-19, 34-39. Although Bauckham does not have a section on the date of Revelation he clearly interprets the work against the background of Rome and Roman emperor worship later than Nero.

^{li} G. K. Beale, *The Book of Revelation: A commentary on the Greek Text* (Grand Rapids, MI; Carlisle, Cumbria: W.B. Eerdmans; Paternoster Press, 1999). Beale comments, "Sweet's conclusion about the issue of Revelation's date reflects a balanced judgment: "To sum up, the earlier date may be right, but the internal evidence is not sufficient to outweigh the firm tradition stemming from Irenaeus" (p. 27). Beale also comments on work by Gentry which is cited by Barber, noting that this work makes "thorough though inconclusive arguments in favor of the early date." p. 27 n136.

^{lii} Craig R. Koester, *Revelation and the End of All Things*, (Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 2001), esp. p. 105-107.

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- liii Mitchell G. Reddish, *Smyth & Helwys Bible Commentary: Revelation*, (Macon: Smyth & Helwys, 2001), p. 16-17.
- liv Ben Witherington III, *Revelation: The New Cambridge Bible Commentary*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003) He notes, “. . . on the whole a date during the reign of Domitian seems more plausible” (p. 4-5).
- lv Faculty of Theology of the University of Navarre, *Revelation, Hebrews & Catholic Epistles* (Navarre Bible Reader’s Edition) (New York: Scepter, 2006) “The year 95, given by tradition, is realistic and acceptable” (p. 16). Rev. Juan Chapa, director of the Navarre Bible project has recently published another work entitled, *Why John Is Different: Unique Insights in the Gospel and writings of John*, (New York: Scepter, 2013). Fr. Chapa notes, that the testimony of Irenaeus is “considered credible by specialist” and the “date under Domitian is consistent with the character and content of the book” (p. 212).
- lvi Osborne, *Revelation*, p 9. Osborne says both dates are possible but there is more evidence for later Domitian date.
- lvii Beale, p. 4.
- lviii J. M. Ford, *Revelation*. Anchor Bible; Garden City: Doubleday, 1975.
- lix Christopher Rowland, *The Open Heavens: A study of Apocalyptic in Judaism and Early Christianity* (New York: Crossroad, 1982).
- lx David C. Chilton, *The Days of Vengeance*. (Fort Worth: Dominion, 1987). Chilton and Gentry are members of the Christian Reconstructionism movement based in Tyler Texas, also known as Theonomy (Rule by God's law) or Dominion theology. This neo-postmillennialist movement generated considerable controversy among their fellow Evangelical Protestants.
- lxi Gentry, *Before Jerusalem Fell*.
- lxii Martin Hengel, *The Johannine Question*. (London/Philadelphia: SCM/Trinity, 1989), p 80-81. So also Beasley-Murray (1981) p. 37.
- lxiii David E. Aune, *Revelation 1-5 (52a); Revelation 6-16 (52b); Revelation 17-22 (52c)*, Word Biblical Commentary (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1997). Aune asserts, “The position taken in this commentary is that *both* views contain aspects of the correct solution, since it appears that while the final edition of Revelation was completed toward the end of the reign of Domitian (or, more likely, during the early part of the reign of Trajan), the first edition of the book was composed as much as a generation earlier based on written and oral apocalyptic traditions that reach back in to the decade of the A.D. 60s, if not somewhat earlier” (*Revelation 1-5 (52a)*, p. lviii).
- lxiv David L. Barr, *Tales of the End: a Narrative Commentary on the Book of Revelation*, 2nd ed. (Salem: Polebridge Press, 2012), p. 33.
- lxv *The Ignatius Catholic Study Bible: The New Testament*. (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2010), p. 490.
- lxvi Aune, *Revelation 1-5 (52a)*, p. lix.
- lxvii Gentry, *Before Jerusalem Fell*, p. 47.
- lxviii Aune, *Revelation 6-16 (52b)*, p. 829.
- lxix *Ibid*.
- lxx Lewis Barth, “Is Every Medieval Hebrew Manuscript a New Composition? The Case of Pirqué Rabbi Eliezer” <http://www.usc.edu/projects/pre-project/agendas.html> Accessed Tuesday, March 03, 2015.

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- lxxi Chaim Milikowsky, "The *Status Quaestionis* of Research in Rabbinic Literature," *Journal of Jewish Studies* 39:2 (1988): 201-11 as quoted in *Ibid.*
- lxxii *Pirke de Rabbi Eleazar* 11,
http://archive.org/stream/pirkderabbieli00frieuoft/pirkderabbieli00frieuoft_djvu.txt
Accessed Tuesday, March 03, 2015.—this text gives the reference as *Pirke de Rabbi Eleazar* 11 rather than *Pirke de Rabbi Eleazar* 10 as cited in the Ignatius Study Bible.
- lxxiii Aune, *Revelation* 17-22 (52c), p. 944.
- lxxiv Beale, p. 16.
- lxxv Cross, F. L., & Livingstone, E. A. (Eds.). *In The Oxford dictionary of the Christian Church* (3rd ed. Rev.). (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), p. 1314.
- lxxvi *Ibid.*, p. 556.
- lxxvii *Ibid.*, p. 363.
- lxxviii See Osborne, p. 8, Beale p. 13.
- lxxix Beale, p. 568.
- lxxx Cf. *Didache*, 11-13. Ignatius of Antioch encourages Polycarp to pray for the gift of prophecy, "but ask, in order that the unseen things may be revealed to you, that you may be lacking in nothing and abound in every spiritual gift" (*Polycarp* 2:2). Polycrates the Bishop of Ephesus describes the three prophetic daughters of the Apostle Philip "who lived in the Holy Spirit" at Ephesus and he describes Bishop Melito of Sardis as "the Eunuch who lived altogether in the Holy Spirit" (*Hist. Eccl* 5.24). Cf. the description by St. Justin Martyr, *Dialogue with Trypho*, 82 (p. 278). On this whole theme see the recently published dissertation by Neils Christian Hvidt, *Christian Prophecy: The Post-Biblical Tradition*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007) with a forward by Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger. Also note "the spirit of prophecy," in Revelation 19:10 and its parallel in 22:8-9.
- lxxxi Beale, p. 559.
- lxxxii *Ibid.* p. 562.
- lxxxiii *Navarre Bible* (2006), p. 75-76.
- lxxxiv *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church* (3rd ed. rev.), p. 822.
- lxxxv Beale, p. 564.
- lxxxvi http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Seven_Hills_of_Rome.svg
- lxxxvii <http://www.beliefnet.com/columnists/bibleandculture/2009/12/handels-messiah-the-story-behind-the-classic.html#ixzz3SmxFuBSD>
- lxxxviii Osborne, p. 662.
- lxxxix Beale, p. 946.
- xc Max Turner, *The Holy Spirit and Spiritual Gifts*, (Paternoster Press, 1996/Hendrickson, 1998), p. 6-12. Cf. Max Turner, *Power from on High: The Spirit in Israel's Restoration and Witness in Luke-Acts*, (Sheffield: SAP, 1996); Gonzalo Haya-Prats, *Empowered Believers: The Holy Spirit in the Book of Acts*, (Eugene: Cascade Books, 2011).
- xc i Beale, p. 948.
- xcii Cf. Revelation 3:14. "The Amen, the faithful and true witness, the source of God's creation, says this . . ."
- xciii Caird, p. 242.
- xciv Witherington, p. 243. He also references the Targum to Genesis 49:11 on the same theme.
- xcv The Greek βύσσινον (*bussinon*) implies 'expensive fine linen' (cf. Revelation 18:12).

^{x cvi} Aune notes that ‘holy ones’ is ‘ambiguous when used in such contexts, for it could refer to the people of God’ *Revelation 17-22 (52c)*, p. 1059. Beasley-Murray (1981) insists based on Old Testament backgrounds and New Testament usage in Matthew 25:31, Mark 13:27, and 2 Thessalonians 1:7f, that these must be angels (p. 281).

^{x cvii} Aune, *Ibid.* p. 1060-1061, points to parallels to Qumran exegesis of Isaiah 11:4.

^{x cviii} Beale, p. 1040.

^{x cix} Louw, J. P., & Nida, E. A. (1996). *Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament: based on semantic domains* (electronic ed. of the 2nd edition., Vol. 1, p. 593). New York: United Bible Societies

^cBeale, p. 1040.

^{ci} Caird, p. 265.

^{cii} The Hebrew, *Shekinah* is *Shekinta* in Aramaic. Three terms are used in the Aramaic translations or Targums of the Old Testament as circumlocutions for the name of God: *Memra*, or word, *Shekinta* dwelt, and *Yeqara*, glory. In the Aramaic *Targum of Jonathan* Leviticus 26:11 reads, “I will set the *Shekinta* of my *Yeqara* among you” or “I will set the *dwelling* of my *glory* among you.” Note how John uses all three in John 1:14 “The word (*Memra*) became flesh and dwelt (*Shekinta*) among us, and we beheld his glory (*Yeqara*).” Cf. Caird, p. 264.

^{ciii} Koester, p. 192.

^{civ} Caird, p. 272.

^{cv} Koester, p. 198.