

The Apocalypse of Jesus Christ

The Apocalypse does not mean what it says, it means what it means.

David Barr

Few writings in all of literature have been so obsessively read with such generally disastrous results as the Apocalypse.

Luke T. Johnson

The Apocalypse is the Jurassic Park of biblical interpretation. Two thousand years after it was written it can still startle the living daylights out of the casual reader - or even a lifelong student of the book.

J. Nelson Kraybill

There is a certain hypocrisy in building elaborate mansions in southern California all the while predicting the imminent end of the world.

David Barr

Anyone who claims to predict the future based on the Apocalypse is at best deceived and at worst a deceiver. Writers have become wealthy selling false scenarios to a public ready to believe that they have some secret knowledge drawn from the Apocalypse and other biblical writings.

The Bible is comprised of many different types of literature; history, poetry, gospels, letters and law statements, as well as prophetic statements. But nothing has proven more troublesome to the reader of the Bible than the passages known as "Apocalyptic Literature." In this lesson we will gain understanding as to what apocalyptic literature is, and isn't, and define a number of terms that will help us read such literature in a way that is faithful to its original intention.

Apples and Oranges:

Apocalyptic vs. Prophetic literature

Apocalyptic literature is not prophetic literature. One who reads the two as the same will always read them poorly.

Prophetic Literature:

Isaiah - Malachi (With the exception of Daniel)

Prophetic literature in the Bible concerns itself with the life, teachings, and oracles of the Hebrew prophets. It is comprised of a number of different genres.

- 1 . **Symbolic Action Story:** This type of story describes prophetic behaviour that is designed to convey a message. (Isaiah 20:1-6; Ezek 4:1-3; 5:1-4)
2. **Commissioning Story:** These account record the divine calling of the prophets and are designed to give credentials to the one who will "prophecy" on God's behalf. (Isaiah 6; Jeremiah 1:4-10).
3. **Vision Reporting:** These passages give account of what the prophet "sees" or "hears" and thus passes on to the people. Statements like, "This is what the Lord showed me" (Amos 7: 1), or "I looked up and saw," (Zech 2:1), are examples of such passages.

William Miller (1782-1849)



Miller, a Baptist preacher, studied the book of Daniel and Revelation and decided that Jesus was going to return on October 22, 1844. Almost 500,000 American people believed and waited the fateful day with strong expectation, and as many as 50,000 people sold or gave away their earthly possessions, quit their jobs and went to the countryside to await their transport to heaven.

As you can see - Miller was wrong. The event became known as, "The Great Disappointment." Many people gave up their beliefs and never returned to Christianity, others reworked Millers ideas and continued to expect Jesus during the 19 century. Among them was a group that eventually became known as the Seventh Day Adventist.

Hal Lindsay



Lindsay, in his famous book, *The Late Great Planet Earth*, based his predictions on the scriptures about Israel, believing that within one generation after Israel became a nation (1948), Jesus Christ would return (I personally grew up hearing this all the time). Because of this Lindsay predicted that Christ would return before 1988. - He didn't. Lindsay continued to teach about the end of the world until his death last year in 2024.

A Vision that became a Book: See the words, Hear the Visions

Most readers fail in their interpretation of Revelation right from the beginning. I cannot count how often preachers and teachers separate the first three chapters of the book from the rest saying that the opening chapters are letters and the rest of the book is a vision, but that is not true. The letters are as much a vision as the rest of the book. Consider how John introduces his encounter with Christ..

Rev 1:9 - I, John, your brother and companion in the suffering and kingdom and patient endurance that are ours in Jesus, was on the island of Patmos because of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus. 10 On the Lord's Day I was in the Spirit, and I heard behind me a loud voice like a trumpet, 11 which said: "Write on a scroll what you see and send it to the seven churches: to Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia and Laodicea."

And then Jesus says to him:

19 "Write, therefore, what you have seen, what is now and what will take place later. 20 The mystery of the seven stars that you saw in my right hand and of the seven golden lampstands is this: The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches, and the seven lampstands are the seven churches.

The vision begins in chapter 1 which means the letters to the churches are not like the epistles in the Bible, they are short cryptic notes, filled with visionary symbols and dictated by a visionary Jesus, who had a double-edge sword coming out of his mouth!

28...I will also give to him the morning star.

3:5...I will not blot your name out of the book of life

3:12...I will make you a pillar in the temple of my God; you will never go out of it. I will write on you the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, the new Jerusalem that down from my God out of heaven.

22:16...I Jesus have sent my angel to give you this testimony, for the churches. I am the root of David and the bright Morning Star.

20:15...and anyone whose name was not found written in the book of life was thrown into the lake of fire.

21 •22...And I saw no temple in the city for the temple is the Lord God the Almighty, and the Lamb.

21 :2...And I saw the holy city, the new

Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.

Revelation: Lesson Two. The Letter Scroll Part 1.

A Word about Numbers in Revelation and the Bible:

Because the Bible is a book of theology, or a religious document, it should not surprise us that most often, we find theological or spiritual meaning associated with many of the numbers we read about. And while on many occasions the numbers simply mean "amount" most often they contain a deeper meaning, a meaning that would not have been lost to the original readers. The following chart explains the general meaning behind a number of numerical values in the Hebrew and Christian Bible, and which is extensively used in the book of Revelation.

- Three - The perfect spiritual order (number of God)
- Four - The created order (earth and/or earthly things)
- Seven - Perfection
- Ten - Totality fully complete or filled)
- Twelve - Israel (God's people/Apostles)
- Three & one-half - A broken seven, the number of evil
- Multiples & Repetitions - Intensification
- 144,000 - (Rev 14:1-5) $12 \times 12 (10 \times 10 \times 10)$ Totality of Israel/God's People
- 1,600 stadia - (Rev 14:20) $(4 \times 4) \times 100$
- 40 years, 40 days - number of testing.

In the New Jerusalem 12's abound, Wall is a 12,000 stadia cube, 144 cubits wide, with twelve precious stones (3 on each side) 12 gates (3 on each side) made of 12 pearls, all set on 12 foundations. This cannot be stressed enough, when you read about the New Jerusalem, you are not reading about a city, you are reading about a people. The city isn't a cube, the people are a cube, because the people are God's people and fully complete.

With this basic understanding of numbers in Revelation, we should be very suspicious about timelines created by interpreters who believe the numbers are literal. Which means the arguments and discussions in the evangelical church regarding the millennium should be held suspect as poor biblical interpretation. 1000 years says more about the quality of "completion" than it does about the quantity of years.

A — The letter-vision and the cities.

1. **Ephesus (Rev 2:1–7)** — a major port and commercial/temple center (home of the great Artemis sanctuary). The church shows zeal for doctrine and endurance, but Jesus rebukes them for losing their "first love." The complaint fits a congregation living amid powerful cultic devotion and commerce where the local church's first affection could be displaced.

purity, penetrating gaze, and judicial strength. Dan. 7; Dan. 10; Ezekiel's theophany's.

- **Manna / white stone / garments / pillars**

The promises to overcomers reuse OT/Intertestamental imagery: manna (God's providence, Exodus/Exodus tradition), a white stone (possible civic/penal token imagery and symbolic of acquittal or new status), garments (clean robes—see Isaiah and Zechariah's cleansing imagery), and becoming pillars (evokes temple architecture and permanence such as the pillars of the temple). These all frame the churches' identity in covenantal, cultic and temple terms (seed-ideas that the rest of Revelation will develop).

C — Jesus in the Letters

Read Rev. 1:12–20 and then each letter's opening formula — John's vision language is recycled, phrase by phrase, so that the *one who is seen* in the vision speaks *in the letters*. Below is a compact map (chapter-1 image → where the same image is used as the letter's self-designation):

- “**in the midst of the seven golden lampstands” / “seven stars in his right hand” (1:12–16; 1:20)**
→ **Ephesus (2:1):** “He who holds the seven stars in his right hand, who walks among the seven golden lampstands.” (Direct reuse: the vision figure is the speaker.)
- “**I am the First and the Last; I was dead, and behold I am alive” (1:17–18)**
→ **Smyrna (2:8):** the letter begins, “These are the words of the First and the Last, who was dead and came to life.”
- “**out of his mouth came a sharp two-edged sword” (1:16)**
→ **Pergamum (2:12):** “These are the words of him who has the sharp two-edged sword.” (The weapon-image of judgment/word-judgment is re-applied.)
- “**one like a son of man... his eyes were like a flame of fire, his feet like burnished bronze” (1:13–15)**
→ **Thyatira (2:18):** “These are the words of the Son of God, who has eyes like a flame of fire and whose feet are like burnished bronze.”
- “**the seven spirits of God and the seven stars” (1:4; 1:16; 1:20 cross-references)**
→ **Sardis (3:1):** “These are the words of him who has the seven spirits of God and the seven stars.”
- **Authoritative control / keys and doors / faithful witness**
→ **Philadelphia (3:7):** “These are the words of him who is holy and true, who

Questions for Discussion:

What do you think Jesus would say to the “angel” of the church of Toronto today if we were one of the churches in Revelation?

What symbols, metaphors, and similes do we use to speak about Jesus and our Faith today, that would seem like “Code” to those not in the church?

Revelation is a type of code book for the early church. In their day, it would have been much easier to understand because they were familiar with the language, the genre and the symbols. In what ways do we as a local church subvert our government when we follow Christ?

Lesson 3: Jesus and his Church in Revelation

The Many Faces of Jesus Christ as seen in Revelation

When we read the apocalypse, we should be very aware of the fact that images are more fluid than in any other genre of literature. That means that we may see the same person, or thing, represented by totally different images and the visions will often represent the same event — told in a different way. There is not a 1:1 ratio in apocalyptic literature. The technical term for this is called "**polyvalent**," which means the images are capable of multiple interactions, so deciphering such images is less a rational act than an imaginative act (based on the image pool that the seer, and or his community may have to draw from).

In normal literature (even prophetic) A normally equals B, but in Apocalyptic lit. A=B, but also C=B and maybe D=B

This is most powerfully represented in the many different images of Christ in the book of Revelation. So as we take a closer look at the letter scroll, let's consider the many faces of Jesus in the book of Revelation.

- **Revelation 1:** Jesus is "one like the Son of Man with fire in his eyes, a sword in his mouth, a robe and sash, a voice of thunder, and a face like that of the sun.
- **Revelation 5:** Jesus is described by the angel as a Lion but appears as a lamb slain. This slain lamb had seven horns and seven eyes.
- **Revelation 6:** Jesus is a rider on a white horse with a bow and a crown, riding out to conquer.
- **Revelation 7:** Jesus is a Lamb surrounded by the saints worshiping him in Heaven.
- **Revelation 12:** Jesus is a new born baby who will rule the world with an iron scepter and who is snatched up to heaven after he is born.
- **Revelation 14:** Jesus is again a Lamb who is worshiped by the saints — this time on Mount Zion
- **Revelation 19:** Jesus is again a rider on a white horse, this time dressed in a robe dipped in blood and with the name King of Kings and Lord of Lords. He again has a sword coming from his mouth.
- **Revelation 21:** Jesus is the bridegroom of the Church (the New Jerusalem).
- **Revelation 22:** Jesus (the lamb) and God are the temple of heaven and the light of heaven. From them flows the river of life which is sustains the Tree of Life, which in turn sustains the people of God.

Thus, the visions reveal attributes, qualities and the nature of Jesus not his personal physical appearance. The man from Galilee does not make an appearance in Revelation, the person we know as Jesus on earth is found in Revelation in his spiritual form, literally the Word in the beginning who was with God and who was God, the first born over creation and the image of the invisible God. The frail broken Jesus is gone; the cosmic Christ is here to stay. Even the vision of a slain lamb is not that of a frailty, but rather resurrected power.

		you are not truly alive (3:1–2)	remember, hold fast, repent (3:3)	confess before Father (3:5)	
Philadelphia	Little strength, kept Christ's word, not denied the name (3:8)	None (no direct rebuke)	Hold fast to what you have, so no one takes your crown (3:11)	Crown, pillar in temple of God, new name (3:12)	Perseverance, mission, open door
Laodicea	None (no commendation)	Lukewarm, riches but wretched, blind, naked (3:15–17)	Be zealous and repent; open the door to Christ (3:19–20)	Sit with Christ on His throne (3:21)	Complacency, self-sufficiency, repentance

Because the letters function as a single unit, they invite each church to first of all examine their specific calling and command, but also to consider the other commands and examine themselves based on the whole of the letter.

Perseverance, victory, and our eschatological hope: The Key to understanding the book of Revelation.

The repeated overcomer promises root Christian life in perseverance, not mere profession is the central theme of Revelation. In an age of nominal Christianity, some churches in Revelation appear “alive” but are spiritually dead (e.g. Sardis). The letters warn that mere maintenance is insufficient; faith must prove itself under test.

Moreover, the promises point to eschatological consummation, or a final victory in Christ: white robes, name in the book of life, sharing Christ’s throne—all future realities that shape present behavior. The Christians are not just surviving; they are participating in a cosmic conflict whose outcome is assured. This is key to understanding both Revelation and our life in Christ, we are future minded, we live, serve, endure, etc. with the knowledge that the outcome is fixed, the battle is won, we simply live out our future victory today.

Perseverance in the book of Revelation:

- **Revelation 1:9** – “I, John, your brother and companion in the suffering and kingdom and patient endurance that are ours in Jesus, was on the island of Patmos because of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus.”
- **Revelation 2:2-3** – “I know your deeds, your hard work and your perseverance. I know that you cannot tolerate wicked people... You have persevered and have endured hardships for my name, and have not grown weary.”
- **Revelation 2:19** – “I know your deeds, your love and faith, your service and perseverance, and that you are now doing more than you did at first.”

Thus, the letter scroll is both an introduction to Revelation and a summary of the final victory. In the letters we find all that we need to follow Christ, and it is Christ himself that delivers these commands, he is both here and the one who is to come.

Questions for Discussion

- Revelation is an uncomfortable read for many people due to its use of “conquering” language and its war imagery. This was not always the case. What is it about our modern culture that is resistant to war language in Christianity?
- How can we speak of good and evil in our world without sounding judgmental or without condemning others? Should we even be worried about this? Why is the desire not to offend such an important part of our cultural experience?
- We all believe that Jesus is our judge, and yet we prefer the “gentle Jesus,” the one who had compassion on the crowds. How should revelation inform our Christology, so that we don’t lower Jesus to our “pal.”

Revelation Lesson 4: The Worship Scroll, Part 1 – The Throne Room

I must go on boasting. Though there is nothing to be gained by it, I will go on to visions and revelations of the Lord. I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago was caught up to the third heaven—whether in the body or out of the body I do not know, God knows. And I know that this man was caught up into paradise—whether in the body or out of the body I do not know, God knows—and he heard things that cannot be told, which man may not utter. 2 Cor 12:1-4

Introduction to the Worship Scroll.

The Worship Scroll, Rev. 4-11, reveals primary activities in the realm of heaven, that is, John is taken in a vision into the Throne Room of God and sees many signs and wonders related to God's actions and his relationship with his people. Remember, John is not in "heaven." John is seeing visions that correspond to God, his power and his plan as it relates to the larger story of Salvation. This section of Revelation can be divided into a few main parts:

1. The Throne Room
2. The Seven Seals
3. The Trumpets of the Lord
4. The Temple of Our God

We will study each of these sections individually and then attempt to understand how these visions combine to make of what we are calling the worship scroll.

A note about the designation. I am calling this section the "Worship Scroll," because of the visions of worship and the liturgy that can be found throughout this section. The section is neatly bracketed by declarations of worship in 4:8 and 11:15-18. And while there are other visions within visions, the overall theme of this section is worship in heaven pertaining to God's redemptive and punitive actions. In other words, while God executes his plan of salvation, the people, the angels, and the creatures all worship Him.

The Throne Room

The vision of the Throne room would not be foreign to the early church, or anyone in the Roman empire. Such images were common in both apocalyptic visions and prophecies, mostly because they could easily be understood by the audience in that time. What is different is the addition of the elders and the lamb.

The Four Creatures: While unique in their presentation, the early Jewish believers would recognize them from Ezekiel 1:

On one level, all these interpretations are acceptable, since the goal of the vision is to show how these Elders worship, not who they are. Remember this, it's their worship that is important.

The Angels: In 5:11 John sees “thousands upon thousands” of angels worshipping around the throne. He does not describe their appearance, rather he will see these angels acting on behalf of the lamb and the one on the throne.

The Lamb: Rev 4:6 *And between the throne and the four living creatures and among the elders I saw a Lamb standing, as though it had been slain, with seven horns and with seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth. And he went and took the scroll from the right hand of him who was seated on the throne.*

- The lamb is obviously Jesus, but what is not so obvious, the language of conquest, of sacrifice and slaughter, are obvious to the church, what is less obvious is why he has seven horns and seven eyes. John answers one question, telling us that the seven eyes are the seven spirits of God sent out to all the earth, and since we know that seven means perfection, then we understand that Jesus is the fullness of the invisible God – he fully possesses the Holy Spirit and has sent that spirit to the earth, “*Nevertheless, I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you. But if I go, I will send him to you.*” John 16:7.
- The irony of this image is found in the horns. For a lamb is not powerful to start with, but a slain lamb is by definition helpless. Horns, however, always represent power, so we are looking at a “powerful slain lamb.” The only one able to open the scroll.

The One on the Throne: At the centre of it all is the one on the throne, who we know to be God. However, God never speaks. Everything seems to happen around him, that is until we understand that when God speaks the heaven’s thunder.

Exodus 19:16–19 On the morning of the third day there were thunders and lightnings and a thick cloud on the mountain and a very loud trumpet blast, so that all the people in the camp trembled. Then Moses brought the people out of the camp to meet God, and they took their stand at the foot of the mountain. Now Mount Sinai was wrapped in smoke because the LORD had descended on it in fire. The smoke of it went up like the smoke of a kiln, and the whole mountain trembled greatly. And as the sound of the trumpet grew louder and louder, Moses spoke, and God answered him in thunder.

1 Samuel 7:10 As Samuel was offering up the burnt offering, the Philistines drew near to attack Israel. But the LORD thundered with a mighty sound that day against the Philistines and threw them into confusion, and they were routed before Israel.

Revelation 11:19 Then God's temple in heaven was opened, and the ark of his covenant was seen within his temple. There were flashes of lightning, rumblings, peals of thunder, an earthquake, and heavy hail.

Revelation 14:2 And I heard a voice from heaven like the roar of many waters and like the sound of loud thunder. The voice I heard was like the sound of harpists playing on their harps.

Revelation 16:18 And there were flashes of lightning, rumblings, peals of thunder, and a great earthquake such as there had never been since man was on the earth, so great was that earthquake.

Revelation 19:6 Then I heard what seemed to be the voice of a great multitude, like the roar of many waters and like the sound of mighty peals of thunder, crying out,

"Hallelujah! For the Lord our God the Almighty reigns."

God speaks in Revelation, and his voice crescendos until all His will is complete. But for now, we will remain in the throne room and lend our voices to those who worship!

Questions for Discussion:

1. The vision of the Throne Room is intended to teach us, or show us, the nature of God and those that worship him. What does this teach us about the act of worship and what can the local church learn from this vision?
2. Why is "reverence" so foreign to our Canadian culture? We seem to think of everything as casual or common, and if this is our culture, what must we as Christians do to guard ourselves against approaching God in a casual manner?
3. This vision begins with all of creation worshipping God, but it quickly turns and we discover that not all is right in the Universe. What can our worship do to show the world the splendor and power of God?

Revelation Lesson 4: Worship Scroll Part 2 - The Wrath of the Lamb.

"But you, son of man, hear what I say to you. Be not rebellious like that rebellious house; open your mouth and eat what I give you." And when I looked, behold, a hand was stretched out to me, and behold, a scroll of a book was in it. And he spread it before me. And it had writing on the front and on the back, and there were written on it words of lamentation and mourning and woe. Ez 2:8-10

On the twenty-fourth day of the eleventh month, which is the month of Shebat, in the second year of Darius, the word of the Lord came to the prophet Zechariah, the son of Berechiah, son of Iddo, saying, "I saw in the night, and behold, a man riding on a red horse! He was standing among the myrtle trees in the glen, and behind him were red, sorrel, and white horses. Then I said, 'What are these, my lord?' The angel who talked with me said to me, 'I will show you what they are.' So the man who was standing among the myrtle trees answered, 'These are they whom the Lord has sent to patrol the earth.' And they answered the angel of the Lord who was standing among the myrtle trees, and said, 'We have patrolled the earth, and behold, all the earth remains at rest.' ¹² Then the angel of the Lord said, 'O Lord of hosts, how long will you have no mercy on Jerusalem and the cities of Judah, against which you have been angry these seventy years?' Zech 1:7-12

The Lamb and the “action” in the Throne Room of God.

After describing the Throne Room in heaven, John suddenly begins to see things happening all around him. As we discuss what he sees, we must remember that everything is a vision, and now we begin to see visions within visions. Consider the following:

- John was in the spirit on the Lord's Day on the island of Patmos.
- John was taken into a vision of Jesus speaking to the churches
- While in that vision, John was taken through a door into the Heaven.
- Now John sees a vision of heaven in which he sees visions of things happening.
- So John is seeing visions within a vision of Heaven, within a vision he is seeing while in the spirit on the island of Patmos.

We must remember that the visions are simultaneous and embedded within each other, the phrase, “after this,” which John uses often, is not a statement of physical time, but rather of the chain of visions that he is seeing. It's as if John is saying, “I saw, and then I saw, and then I saw.” The visions are all around him, and not at all in any chronological order, as we shall soon see.

living creatures, saying, "A quart of wheat for a denarius, and three quarts of barley for a denarius, and do not harm the oil and wine!"

Death becomes certain and unavoidable in a world of sinful humanity: And I looked, and behold, a pale horse! And its rider's name was Death, and Hades followed him. And they were given authority over a fourth of the earth, to kill with sword and with famine and with pestilence and by wild beasts of the earth.

The seals open with the fulfillment of the curse, essentially, the natural order of evil on planet earth, these symbols would have been easily recognized by the early church, and they echo how God punished the Israelites when they rebelled against Him:

But if you will not listen to me and will not do all these commandments, if you spurn my statutes, and if your soul abhors my rules, so that you will not do all my commandments, but break my covenant, then I will do this to you: I will visit you with panic, with wasting disease and fever that consume the eyes and make the heart ache...

I will set my face against you, and you shall be struck down before your enemies. Those who hate you shall rule over you, and you shall flee when none pursues you... And if by this discipline you are not turned to me but walk contrary to me, then I also will walk contrary to you, and I myself will strike you sevenfold for your sins...

I will bring a sword upon you, that shall execute vengeance for the covenant. And if you gather within your cities, I will send pestilence among you, and you shall be delivered into the hand of the enemy.

Leviticus 26:14–33 (ESV)

Because you have defiled my sanctuary with all your detestable things and with all your abominations, therefore I will withdraw.

My eye will not spare, and I will have no pity.

A third part of you shall die by pestilence...

A third part shall fall by the sword around you...

And I will send famine and wild beasts against you, and they will rob you of your children; pestilence and blood shall pass through you, and I will bring the sword upon you. I am the LORD; I have spoken.

Ezekiel 5:11–17

The Fifth Seal and the introduction of the power of Evil over the saints.

The fifth seal seems like an interruption in the sequence, but it is better described as a caveat, as the fifth seal turns the camera on the plight of the saints in a sinful world.

They are dying for their faith and calling upon the Lord for justice. What is interesting is that they are told to wait a little longer until the full amount of those who are to be martyred has been fulfilled. Yet, they are still given white robes which is a sign of those

Questions for Discussion:

1. The four horsemen show us that God is in control even when there is chaos on earth. How do we reconcile this with our understanding of a good and loving God? How should we pray with regards to war and famine in light of Revelation chapter 6?
2. Revelation brings Jesus into a whole new light for most Christians as it is not normally his wrath that we speak about. How should the opening of the scroll inform our understanding of Jesus in our own lives? Can we live unchanged after being introduced to the Jesus of Revelation?
3. From the beginning, sin is something that humans try to hide. What does it say about our culture when we don't even try to hide sin anymore? What about the church? Do we talk enough about sin, and if not, how can the church confront the hidden sins of the believers as well as the open sins of the world?

Revelation Lesson 6: The Seven Trumpets and the People of God.

The People of God Through the Vision Cycles in Revelation.

And I heard a loud voice in heaven, saying, "Now the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of his Christ have come, for the accuser of our brothers has been thrown down, who accuses them day and night before our God. And they have conquered him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, for they loved not their lives even unto death. Therefore, rejoice, O heavens and you who dwell in them! But woe to you, O earth and sea, for the devil has come down to you in great wrath, because he knows that his time is short!" Rev. 12:10-12

Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you. Matt 5:10-12

As we enter deep into the visions of the throne room and begin to understand the judgement cycle of Revelation, this lesson will pause to consider the full picture of The Church as seen in the apocalypse. The following chart offers a summary of all the references and illusions to the people of God in Revelation.

	Scene / Setting	Reference	Symbol / Image of God's People	Context
1	Greeting to the Seven Churches	Revelation 1:4–6	Churches; Kingdom and Priests	Grace and peace to the churches; identity of the redeemed as royal priests
2	Commission to John and Messages to the Churches	Revelation 1:11–3:22	Lampstands; Stars (angels of the churches)	Christ speaks directly to the seven churches — commendations, rebukes, promises
3	The Church as a Kingdom of Priests	Revelation 5:9–10	Kingdom and Priests	The redeemed sing of being made a kingdom and priests to God
4	The Souls under the Altar	Revelation 6:9–11	Souls beneath the altar	Martyrs cry out; told to rest until their number is complete
5	The Sealing of God's Servants from Judgement	Revelation 7:1–8	144,000 sealed from Israel's tribes	God's servants marked for protection
6	The Great Multitude before the Throne	Revelation 7:9–17	Great Multitude in white robes	The redeemed worship before the throne; promise of shelter and comfort
7	The Prayers of the Church	Revelation 8:3–4	Saints; Golden bowls of incense	The prayers of the saints ascend before God

If we remember these interpretive principles, then we begin to see a magnificent picture of the church emerging from the visions. If we were to summarize the Church in the book of Revelation, we might say the following:

The church, that is the light of the world (the lampstands) must remain faithful to God. It faces deadly persecution from Satan (the dragon) and he is allowed to kill them for a time (the souls under the altar, the two witnesses), but the cry of the saints for justice is heard by God (incense on the altar) and God both judges the world and saves the saints (the multitudes in white robes). The church, thus saved, enters eternal life (the bride of Christ) where God lives with them in perfect relationship and communion for all of eternity (the New Jerusalem).

Souls, Saint's, and Witnesses: The many faces of the church in Revelation

⁹ When he opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain for the word of God and for the witness they had borne. ¹⁰ They cried out with a loud voice, "O Sovereign Lord, holy and true, how long before you will judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?" ¹¹ Then they were each given a white robe and told to rest a little longer, until the number of their fellow servants and their brothers^[el] should be complete, who were to be killed as they themselves had been.

The Souls Under the Altar: After the initial introduction to the churches in chapters 1-3 we now see her represented as praying souls under the altar of God. But their prayers are not the kind of prayers that we might imagine. They are not praying for the salvation of their families, their daily bread or peace in the world, they are praying for revenge and justice! While this may offend our modern sensibilities, we must remember that Revelation concerns itself with the plan of God concerning all mankind, and in that plan, those who rebel against God are sentenced to death.

⁹ After this I looked, and behold, a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands, ¹⁰ and crying out with a loud voice, "Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!"

The Saints: On several occasions, we see the church represented in its final state of salvation with white robes. Whether or not they are represented at 144,000, or a great multitude, the message is the same – all those that were to be saved, are saved. The number is complete because God's plan is perfect. Interestingly, they receive their white robes for their faithfulness to him (those under the altar), not because they have fought back or conquered through violence.

The Two Witnesses: The two witnesses are a bit more difficult to understand, and often biblical interpreters want to see two actual men. Once again, the problem with this

- “Where their Lord was crucified” = Jerusalem, representing the religious-political system hostile to God’s truth.
- Later, Rev 17–18 calls it “Babylon,” another composite symbol of the world’s rebellion.

This “city” represents the world’s collective system of opposition to God—religious, moral, and political. The witnesses die where *the Lord* was crucified: the same hostility the world showed to Christ, it shows to His people (John 15:18–20).

Rev 11:11–12 — The Resurrection and Ascension of the Witnesses

“After three and a half days a breath of life from God entered them... and they stood on their feet... and they went up to heaven in a cloud.”

- Ezekiel 37:5–10: Valley of dry bones — breath of life enters God’s slain people.

The “three and a half days” corresponds symbolically to the 3½ years (1260 days), a limited period of suffering (cf. Dan 7:25; 12:7).

Questions for Discussion:

1. Revelation offers us what might be the most comprehensive understanding of the Church in all the Bible. We are witnesses, martyrs, conquerors, all saved by the blood of the Lamb and sealed for eternal life. What can we at Heron Park do to show both our local church the world around us that this is who we are?
2. Jesus said that he would build his church upon the rock of Peter’s confession of faith. People often build churches on other things than Jesus. Name some of the wrong foundations that the church has been built on over the years.
3. Without a doubt, Revelation calls us to martyrdom if need be. Would you go to jail for your faith tomorrow? Would you accept death rather than recant of your faith? And, are these questions you think about very often?

Revelation Lesson 7: Trumpets, Woes, and Glory to God.

Then the seventh angel blew his trumpet, and there were loud voices in heaven, saying, "The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever." And the twenty-four elders who sit on their thrones before God fell on their faces and worshipped God, saying,

"We give thanks to you, Lord God Almighty, who is and who was, for you have taken your great power and begun to reign.

The nations raged, but your wrath came, and the time for the dead to be judged, and for rewarding your servants, the prophets and saints, and those who fear your name, both small and great, and for destroying the destroyers of the earth."

Rev. 11:16-18

The Worship Scroll (Rev 4-11) reveals several important themes to the careful reader of the book. We have learned that the visions move us back and forth in time. They are filled with symbolism and must not be read in any literal fashion, and we have seen that the central theme of the book is not judgement, but rather the salvation of the saints. In this lesson we will consider the final section of the worship scroll and see how the seven trumpets are, to a great extent, a magnification of the seven seals. In other words, the vision of the trumpets is now the second time God has destroyed the earth, but this time, we are clearly told that this is a great thing – the death of billions of people – a great thing. Revelation takes some time to get used to, if we take Revelation to be the divine word of God.

The seven trumpets and the magnification of Judgement.

The trumpets can be divided into sets for 4 and 3. The first 4 deal with the amplification of the first four seals, where the destruction of the earth is revisited but with greater judgement. Instead of a fourth, it's now a third that is destroyed. This should not be taken to be a fraction or a portion of the four seals, but rather the visions of the trumpets reiterate God's judgment with greater intensity, or greater finality.

Now the seven angels who had the seven trumpets prepared to blow them.

The first angel blew his trumpet, and there followed hail and fire, mixed with blood, and these were thrown upon the earth. And a third of the earth was burned up, and a third of the trees were burned up, and all green grass was burned up.

Eating the Word of God

Before the second woe is passed, a strange vision sees John hearing words and seeing a scroll that he is not allowed to speak about. This short vision seems to express John's authority in the community as if to validate the entire book of visions that he will be sending to the churches. Consider other examples of such visions:

Daniel 8:26

The vision of the evenings and the mornings that has been told is true, but seal up the vision, for it refers to many days from now.

Daniel 12:4

But you, Daniel, shut up the words and seal the book, until the time of the end. Many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall increase.

Daniel 12:9

He said, "Go your way, Daniel, for the words are shut up and sealed until the time of the end."

2 Corinthians 12:2–4

I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago was caught up to the third heaven—whether in the body or out of the body I do not know, God knows.

And I know that this man was caught up into paradise—whether in the body or out of the body I do not know, God knows—

and he heard things that cannot be told, which man may not utter.

And in Ezekiel, he is told to eat a scroll that will become that which he will share, just as John is told to eat a scroll and continue to prophecy.

Ezekiel 2:8–3:4

"But you, son of man, hear what I say to you. Be not rebellious like that rebellious house; open your mouth and eat what I give you."

And when I looked, behold, a hand was stretched out to me, and behold, a scroll of a book was in it.

And he spread it before me. And it had written on the front and on the back, and there were written on it words of lamentation and mourning and woe.

And he said to me, "Son of man, eat whatever you find here. Eat this scroll, and go, speak to the house of Israel."

So I opened my mouth, and he gave me this scroll to eat.

And he said to me, "Son of man, feed your belly with this scroll that I give you and fill your stomach with it." Then I ate it, and it was in my mouth as sweet as honey.

Revelation Lesson 8: The Dragon, the Woman, and the Plan of Salvation

Revelation chapter 12 begins a new series of visions. Thus far, we have seen the visions of the letter scroll, in which the church and her saviour have been introduced. Then we were taken into heaven to see the worship scroll, in which a series of visions focused on worshipping God while he revealed His ultimate power over darkness. In both visions sequences, we saw far reaching events spanning from the beginning of this (Rev 4), right up until the end of all things (Rev 6 & 11). And now, the visions break from the grand view of heaven and turn towards the fundamental problem on earth – that being the devil and his allies. It is as if the visions of Revelation have taken us from the call of the church in the letter scroll, to the grand picture of God's sovereignty and power in the worship scroll, then back to the earth where we discover just why all this judgment and destruction is happening. As it turns out, there is a war going on, a war that we have not heard about until now. Thus, we enter the War Scroll – Rev. 12 – 19

Reviewing the Map, an Overview of the Visions of Revelation:

Worship on Earth

- 1. The Letter Scroll**
 - a. The Vision of Christ
 - b. The Vision of the Churches and the Letters
- 2. The Worship Scroll**
 - a. The vision of the Throne Room

Worship in Heaven

- b. The vision of the Lamb
- c. The vision of the seals
 - i. The vision of "the sealed" God's People
 - ii. The Vision of the Trumpets
 - a) The vision of the little Scroll
 - b) The vision of the two witnesses

Worship in Heaven

- 3. The War Scroll**
 - a. The Temple is open
 - b. The woman and the Dragon
 - c. War in Heaven, Dragon is cast down
 - d. The Beast from the Earth
 - e. The Beast from the Sea
 - f. The Lamb and his People
 - g. The Call to War

heads seven diadems. ⁴ His tail swept down a third of the stars of heaven and cast them to the earth. And the dragon stood before the woman who was about to give birth, so that when she bore her child he might devour it. ⁵ She gave birth to a male child, one who is to rule^[a] all the nations with a rod of iron, but her child was caught up to God and to his throne, ⁶ and the woman fled into the wilderness, where she has a place prepared by God, in which she is to be nourished for 1,260 days.

The woman clothed with the sun: Three options are available to us as to the identity of this woman, but the preference here would be Eve.

Mary. Although for the modern reader Mary might be an obvious choice, in ancient times she would not have represented the type of person she does today, especially in the Catholic Church, who reveal her as almost divine herself. While she did give birth to Jesus, she was seen as the fulfillment of the promise, not the recipient of it.

Israel. Some see the woman as a metaphor for Israel, from whom the messiah would come. This option is better than Mary, but it still lacks the dramatic power of the third and best option – Eve.

To read Eve into this story is to take this vision back to the original problem and find in it the essence of God's divine plan. Let's consider a few interesting ideas in this vision.

- She has a crown of 12 stars; thus, she is the mother of God's people (12 being the number of God's people)
- She is pregnant and crying out in birth pains. Eve was cursed in that she would give birth with great pain.
- Her son would be the chosen one and rule the nations with an iron rod – a common Old Testament prophecy about Jesus.
- Once the dragon had been cast down to earth he pursues both the woman and her offspring, who are given eagle's wings and protected in the wilderness for 3 1/3 years – the symbol for the time of evil in the book of Revelation.

So, the woman is both Eve and Israel, which would include Mary. Thus, the woman is the agent of God's plan and the enemy of the devil from day one.

Gen 3:15 I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel."

The dragon might be the easiest of creatures to identify, but there is one significant problem in understanding his place in the vision and the universe. Concerning his identity we are told:

- *seven heads and ten horns, and on his heads seven diadems.*
- *His tail swept down a third of the stars of heaven and cast them to the earth.*

interpreted these as hints of an angelic rebellion, creating the traditional “Lucifer” narrative. Between the Testaments, Jewish apocalyptic writings (e.g., *1 Enoch*) expanded this imagery into stories of heavenly beings who fell and corrupted creation. By the time of the New Testament, this apocalyptic worldview supplied the framework for understanding evil as personal and cosmic.

In the Gospels and Epistles, Satan (Greek *Satanas* or *Diabolos*) is the *tempter, accuser, and ruler of this world* who opposes God’s kingdom, deceives nations, and enslaves humanity through sin and death. Yet his authority is provisional: Jesus confronts and defeats him in temptation, exorcism, cross, and resurrection. Paul and John describe a paradox—Satan still active but already judged, **his dominion is collapsing in Christ’s victory.**

Revelation 12 gathers and dramatizes these threads into a single cosmic vision. The “great red dragon” - “that ancient serpent, who is called the devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world” (12:9) - is cast from heaven after warring with Michael and his angels. This fall explains both the origin of evil’s presence on earth and the persecution of the faithful. The dragon’s rage against the woman and her offspring symbolizes Satan’s continuing but futile resistance to God’s redemptive plan. Revelation thus completes the canonical arc: the deceiving serpent of Eden becomes the defeated dragon of the Apocalypse.

Across Scripture, Satan is never God’s equal rival but a *creature* whose rebellion—whether envisioned as primordial or ongoing—functions within divine sovereignty. His role exposes the moral freedom of angels and humans, the reality of spiritual conflict, and the ultimate triumph of God’s kingdom. Revelation 12 stands as the theological synthesis of this development: evil is personal and cosmic yet already overcome through the Lamb’s victory.

Taking what we know and applying it to what we don’t.

The heart of Revelation is found in the battle between Good and Evil, God and Satan. Satan is not God’s equal, but he is God’s rival. Satan, who could not defeat God, chose to attack God’s creation – his people. God is saving his people and keeping them from defeat, but in a very strange way. To be victorious, God’s people must follow the slain Lamb and offer their lives in the same way He did. Victory comes through sacrifice. Defeating death means passing through death to life.

¹⁰ And I heard a loud voice in heaven, saying, “Now the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of his Christ have come, for the accuser of our brothers has been thrown down, who accuses them day and night before our God.

¹¹ And they have conquered him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, for they loved not their lives even unto death. Rev 12:10-11

Revelation Lesson 9: Beasts, Creatures and The Nations that Rage.

Psalm 2: The Reign of the Lord's Anointed

Why do the nations rage and the peoples plot in vain?

The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord and against his Anointed, saying, "Let us burst their bonds apart and cast away their cords from us."

He who sits in the heavens laughs; the Lord holds them in derision.

Then he will speak to them in his wrath, and terrify them in his fury, saying, "As for me, I have set my King on Zion, my holy hill."

I will tell of the decree: The Lord said to me, "You are my Son; today I have begotten you. Ask of me, and I will make the nations your heritage, and the ends of the earth your possession. You shall break them with a rod of iron and dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel."

Now therefore, O kings, be wise; be warned, O rulers of the earth.

Serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling.

Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and you perish in the way, for his wrath is quickly kindled. Blessed are all who take refuge in him.

After the vision of the Dragon, we are introduced to two of the most famous figures in the book of Revelation, the beast from the sea and the beast from the land, often called the antichrist and the false prophet. And while these beasts have played large in the popular culture of the apocalypse, in movies and books, and in the imagination of many Christians, the best interpretation of these creatures must remain governed by our two main rules for Revelation – everything is a vision, and the Bible is our best source of information for understanding those visions.

The Beast from the Sea:

Two main sources provide us with a solid interpretation of the beast from the sea: the book of Daniel and Revelation itself. First let's summarize its attributes:

- A Beast rises from the sea, having seven heads, ten horns, and ten crowns.
- It's like a leopard, with bear's feet and a lion's mouth.
- The dragon (Satan) gives it power, a throne, and authority.
- One head seems mortally wounded but is healed and the world marvels and follows it. In the Greek, it is the beast that is received not just the individual head, so the entire creature seems to be given second life.
- The beast speaks blasphemies, persecutes the saints, and rules for 42 months (3 1/2 years – the time of evil).

- Lion with eagle's wings - Babylon.
- Bear raised on one side - Medo-Persia.
- Leopard with four wings and heads - Greece.
- Terrifying beast with iron teeth and ten horns - Rome.

Revelation's beast combines all four:

- Lion's mouth → Babylon
- Bear's feet → Medo-Persia
- Leopard's body → Greece
- Ten horns → Rome (and beyond)

This fusion suggests the Beast in Revelation 13 embodies all the oppressive world empires of history — a culmination of human rebellion and satanic power. In other words, the beast from the sea is both the last kingdom and all that have come before it, the very essence of the kingdoms of this world, as described in Psalm 2.

In Daniel 7:24, the ten horns are ten kings or kingdoms arising from the final empire. A little horn arises among them, speaking arrogant words and persecuting the saints. Revelation 13's Beast continues this idea — blasphemous speech and oppression of God's people.

The mortal wound that is healed echoes the rise, fall, and revival of imperial powers (Daniel 2's statue: successive kingdoms). Symbolically shows that worldly empire keeps reappearing — political powers "die" and "revive" under satanic influence.

The Beast of Revelation 17:

The same beast appears in Revelation 17, this time carrying the great prostitute (which we will consider in an upcoming lesson. In this vision, the beast is explicitly tied to both the beast from the sea and the four beasts from Daniel.

Rev. 17: 6-15 When I saw her, I marveled greatly. ⁷ But the angel said to me, "Why do you marvel? I will tell you the mystery of the woman, and of the beast with seven heads and ten horns that carries her. ⁸ The beast that you saw was, and is not, and is about to rise from the bottomless pit^[b] and go to destruction. And the dwellers on earth whose names have not been written in the book of life from the foundation of the world will marvel to see the beast, because it was and is not and is to come. ⁹ This calls for a mind with wisdom: the seven heads are seven mountains on which the woman is seated; ¹⁰ they are also seven kings, five of whom have fallen, one is, the other has not yet come, and when he does come, he must remain only a little while. ¹¹ As for the beast that was and is not, it is an eighth, but it belongs to the seven, and it goes to destruction. ¹² And the ten horns that you saw are ten kings who have not yet received royal power, but they are to receive authority as kings for one hour, together with the beast. ¹³ These are of one mind, and they hand over their power and authority to the

- Gathers kings for battle through demonic spirits – 16:13–14
- Captured with the first beast and thrown alive into the lake of fire – 19:20
- Still present in the lake of fire when Satan is finally cast there – 20:10

The second beast, then, represents the religious systems that give validity to the first. In these visions we can see illusions to both Exodus and the prophets:

- **The magicians of Pharaoh (Exodus 7–9)**
 - Pharaoh's sorcerers *imitate Moses' signs* (e.g., turning rods into serpents, water to blood). Like the false prophet, they use *miraculous power to oppose God's truth*. Both deceive rulers and people through counterfeit wonders.
- **The golden calf incident (Exodus 32)**
 - Aaron makes an **image** for Israel to worship while Moses is on Sinai. The second beast likewise **commands the making of an image** of the first beast.
 - Both cases involve *false worship introduced by a religious leader*.
- **Nebuchadnezzar's golden image (Daniel 3)**
 - A **state-enforced idol** representing the king's empire.
 - A **death penalty** for those who refuse to bow.
 - Parallel to Revelation 13:15 — those who *do not worship the image* of the beast are *killed*.
 - Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego foreshadow believers who resist the beast's system.

The beasts in Revelation chapter 13 are not new, they are not even novel in the minds of the early church, rather they are a reiteration of that which has already been revealed. They represent the systems of the world, living in sin and rebellion against God. They are powerful, but God is more powerful, they will harm the church, but God will fully judge and destroy them. They were, they are and they will be until God's final judgement, and the most challenging point of all – they are attractive, seductive, and often disguise themselves as light!

Questions for Discussion:

1. The vision of the beasts speaks about the powers of the world and their ability to persecute and harm Christians. Currently Christianity is the most persecuted religion in the world. Why do you think that is so, and why do you think it still feels like we have a target on our back when we try to talk about this fact?
2. Canada's multiculturalism is, in practice, anti-Christian. Can you give examples of ways in which Canadian culture is currently anti-Christian?
3. If the kingdoms of the world are allowed to persecute Christians for a time appointed by God, what should be our response to such persecution?

Revelation Lesson 10: The Victor, the Victory and the Victorious.

Now that we have been fully introduced to the villains of the story, the Dragon, the Beasts and the ones that worship them, John turns again and sees a new vision with an old theme – the salvation of the Lamb. But in this vision, we begin to see many familiar images come together to form the set-up for the final visions of war. This vision cycle has three parts, 1) The Lamb and his followers, 2) The declaration of the “eternal gospel,” and 3) the reaping of the earth. As we begin this lesson it should be stated that this section of Revelation is ripe for misinterpretation. And the interpretation I will offer may surprise you.

The Victor and the Victorious:

14 Then I looked, and behold, on Mount Zion stood the Lamb, and with him 144,000 who had his name and his Father's name written on their foreheads. **2** And I heard a voice from heaven like the roar of many waters and like the sound of loud thunder. The voice I heard was like the sound of harpists playing on their harps, **3** and they were singing a new song before the throne and before the four living creatures and before the elders. No one could learn that song except the 144,000 who had been redeemed from the earth. **4** It is these who have not defiled themselves with women, for they are virgins. It is these who follow the Lamb wherever he goes. These have been redeemed from mankind as first fruits for God and the Lamb, **5** and in their mouth no lie was found, for they are blameless.

- By this point in Revelation, we are confident that the Lamb is Christ and the 144,000 represent the fullness of the elect – all those who have been redeemed by God.
- The Lamb is on mount Zion, which seems to be the Throne Room of God because the four creatures and the elders are also there.
- With these images, when we read back to chapter 4 and 5, we know this is vision of the future since the 144,000 have now joined the worshipers in the throne room.
- They are redeemed and pure. The reference to being virgins is a statement of righteousness and sanctification. The Bible is filled with this type of symbolism.

Jeremiah 3:1 “If a man divorces his wife and she goes from him and becomes another man's wife, will he return to her? Would not that land be greatly polluted? You have played the whore with many lovers; and would you return to me? declares the LORD.”

⁶ Then I saw another angel flying directly overhead, with an eternal gospel to proclaim to those who dwell on earth, to every nation and tribe and language and people. ⁷ And he said with a loud voice, “**Fear God and give him glory, because the hour of his judgment has come, and worship him who made heaven and earth, the sea and the springs of water.**”

⁸ Another angel, a second, followed, saying, “**Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great, she who made all nations drink the wine of the passion of her sexual immorality.**”

⁹ And another angel, a third, followed them, saying with a loud voice, “**If anyone worships the beast and its image and receives a mark on his forehead or on his hand, ¹⁰ he also will drink the wine of God's wrath, poured full strength into the cup of his anger,** and he will be tormented with fire and sulfur in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb. ¹¹ And the smoke of their torment goes up forever and ever, and they have no rest, day or night, these worshipers of the beast and its image, and whoever receives the mark of its name.”

¹² Here is a call for the endurance of the saints, those who keep the commandments of God and their faith in Jesus. ¹³ And I heard a voice from heaven saying, “Write this: Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on.” “Blessed indeed,” says the Spirit, “that they may rest from their labors, for their deeds follow them!”

The eternal gospel in Revelation includes:

- Deliverance for the redeemed
- Judgment for the wicked

This aligns with Paul's distinction: the gospel is “the aroma of life to those being saved and the aroma of death to those perishing” (2 Cor 2:15–16).

The Son of Man's harvest (vv. 14–16) Christ's saving work and his Guilty Verdict.

In order to fully understand Rev 14, consider what Jesus said about the end of time in Matt chapter 13.

³⁶ Then he left the crowds and went into the house. And his disciples came to him, saying, “Explain to us the parable of the weeds of the field.” ³⁷ He answered, “The one who sows the good seed is the Son of Man. ³⁸ The field is the world, and the good seed is the sons of the kingdom. The weeds are the sons of the evil one, ³⁹ and the enemy who sowed them is the devil. The harvest is the end of the age, and the reapers are angels. ⁴⁰ Just as the weeds are gathered and burned with fire, so will it be at the end of

- Gregory of Nazianzus - “How are the garments red, as of one who treads the winepress? His Body is adorned by the Passion and made splendid by the Godhead.”
- Gregory of Nyssa - “The words of Isaiah, ‘I have trodden the winepress alone,’ are spoken of Christ’s Incarnation and Passion.”

Isaiah presents a mysterious figure whose garments are stained red as though from treading a winepress: “I have trodden the winepress *alone*... their lifeblood spattered on my garments.” (Isa 63:3)

Key points:

- The figure suffers the crushing and emerges covered in blood.
- He acts *alone* — no one can join him in the work of judgment.
- His garments are stained with the “blood” produced by the winepress.

Early Christians understood this as pointing forward to Christ’s Passion, where He alone bears the crushing weight of divine judgment.

Thus in Isaiah 63 the winepress represents: The place where God’s wrath is poured out — and where Christ Himself bears it alone. In Romans 3:25 — Christ is the Propitiation (the One Crushed for Us) Paul explains why Christ’s suffering was necessary: “God put [Christ] forward as a *propitiation* by his blood...in His divine forbearance He had passed over former sins.” (Rom 3:25)

Therefore, the winepress reveals two simultaneous realities: Christ bore the fullness of the winepress for believers. He took the wrath. His blood flowed. The winepress of God became the place of mercy. AND, Christ administers the winepress against those who reject Him. The one who refused the “blood of the Lamb” must drink the “wine of God’s wrath” (Rev 14:10). Christ is both the target of divine wrath *for us* and the instrument of divine wrath *against unbelief*.

Question for Discussion:

- If the wine press of God is first pressed upon Christ and then those who do not believe, how can we understand Rev 14 and John 3:16? In other words, can we imagine that the whole earth is figuratively covered in the sacrificial blood of Christ, and at the same time, covered in the blood of rebellious humanity?
- From the letters to the churches, to the final state of salvation, the visions in Revelation make it clear that the followers of the Lamb are holy and have rejected the Dragon and his power. How can we, in 2025 Canada live holy lives?
- Many take this vision to mean that the whole world will hear the gospel before Jesus returns, but is that really what it is saying? Consider Romans chapter 1.

Revelation: Lesson 11 – The Fullness of God’s Wrath

Surely many of us are not comfortable with John’s violent images, with the easy equation of blood and wine, with the depiction of the lake of fire. But ancient sensibilities are not the same as modern; and war stories are not polite reading. This story is profoundly disturbing; nevertheless, when one reads through the symbols, this story is not immoral. The victories won are not won with power, but rather with sacrifice, and the blood that flows, save one, is the blood of the guilty. David Barr, Tales of the End.

Rev 15: The Seven Angels with Seven Plagues

Now that we have seen the events of war in heaven; the Dragon and his allies, the Lamb and his followers, and the centre of the battle, which is the cross of Christ, in Revelation described as the wine press of the wrath of God (see Isiah 63 from lesson 10). We now turn to the final vision of God’s wrath upon the earth, the seven bowls of God’s wrath:

Rev 15: Then I saw another sign in heaven, great and amazing, seven angels with seven plagues, which are the last, for with them the wrath of God is finished.

And I saw what appeared to be a sea of glass mingled with fire—and also those who had conquered the beast and its image and the number of its name, standing beside the sea of glass with harps of God in their hands. And they sing the song of Moses, the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying,

*Great and amazing are your deeds, O Lord God the Almighty!
Just and true are your ways, O King of the nations!
Who will not fear, O Lord, and glorify your name?
For you alone are holy. All nations will come and worship you,
for your righteous acts have been revealed.”*

After this I looked, and the sanctuary of the tent of witness in heaven was opened, and out of the sanctuary came the seven angels with the seven plagues, clothed in pure, bright linen, with golden sashes around their chests. And one of the four living creatures gave to the seven angels seven golden bowls full of the wrath of God who lives forever and ever, and the sanctuary was filled with smoke from the glory of God and from his power, and no one could enter the sanctuary until the seven plagues of the seven angels were finished.

With the War scroll well underway, the reader should return to Revelation 4 and 5 to understand the drastic change in visionary symbols. Rev 11:19 says, *Then God’s temple in heaven was opened, and the ark of his covenant was seen within his temple. There were flashes of lightning, rumblings, peals of thunder, an earthquake, and heavy*

Revelation for calling Jesus a little lamb – in fact he calls us little lambs when he tells Peter to “feed my lambs,” in John 21:15, and yet, the early church would have heard the words of Revelation in every strange way, i.e. ‘the lambkin and his followers,’ or “worthy is the lambkin that was slain.”

The Seven Bowls and final vision of God’s Judgement.

	Seals (Rev 6-8)	Trumpets (Rev 8-11)	Bowls (Rev 16)
1	White horse – conquest	Hail, fire, blood; 1/3 earth burned	Sores on those with beast’s mark
2	Red horse – war	Burning mountain; 1/3 sea to blood	Sea to blood; all sea life dies
3	Black horse – famine	Wormwood; 1/3 rivers poisoned	Rivers/springs to blood
4	Pale horse – death over 1/4 of the earth	1/3 sun, moon, stars darkened	Sun scorches people
5	Martyrs cry for justice	Abyss opened; demonic locusts torment	Darkness on beast’s kingdom
6	Great earthquake; cosmic signs	Four angels release 200M army	Euphrates dried; Armageddon gathering
7	Silence in heaven; starts trumpets	Kingdom proclaimed; lightning, earthquake, hail	“It is done!” Earthquake & huge hail

The seven bowls bring a conclusion to the universal judgement cycle of visions (seals, trumpets, bowls). It should not surprise us that God’s judgement consists of three sevens, denoting God’s wrath as both divine and perfect. Although we resist linear thinking in Revelation, one might say what was started in the seals is complete in the bowls, but a better way of imagining it would be to say that while the seals revealed only a portion of God’s final judgment, the bowls represent the full picture of God’s wrath upon his rebellious creation.

The final bowls bring us a challenging truth. People deserve to die.

“Just are you, O Holy One, who is and who was,
for you brought these judgments.

⁶For they have shed the blood of saints and prophets,

- **Revelation 1:16** - *In his right hand he held seven stars, from his mouth came a sharp two-edged sword, and his face was like the sun shining in full strength.*
- **Revelation 2:12** - *And to the angel of the church in Pergamum write: 'The words of him who has the sharp two-edged sword.'*
- **Revelation 2:16** - *Therefore repent. If not, I will come to you soon and war against them with the sword of my mouth.*
- **Revelation 19:15** - *From his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations, and he will rule them with a rod of iron. He will tread the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God the Almighty.*
- **Revelation 19:21** - *And the rest were slain by the sword that came from the mouth of him who was sitting on the horse, and all the birds were gorged with their flesh.*

⁴⁴ And Jesus cried out and said, "Whoever believes in me, believes not in me but in him who sent me. ⁴⁵ And whoever sees me sees him who sent me. ⁴⁶ I have come into the world as light, so that whoever believes in me may not remain in darkness. ⁴⁷ If anyone hears my words and does not keep them, I do not judge him; for I did not come to judge the world but to save the world. ⁴⁸ The one who rejects me and does not receive my words has a judge; the word that I have spoken will judge him on the last day. ⁴⁹ For I have not spoken on my own authority, but the Father who sent me has himself given me a commandment—what to say and what to speak. ⁵⁰ And I know that his commandment is eternal life. What I say, therefore, I say as the Father has told me." John 12:44-50

¹¹ Let us therefore strive to enter that rest, so that no one may fall by the same sort of disobedience. ¹² For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart. ¹³ And no creature is hidden from his sight, but all are naked and exposed to the eyes of him to whom we must give account. Hebrews 4:11-13

John's tip in chapter 1:1

"The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show to his servants the things that must soon take place. He made it known [esēmanen] by sending his angel to his servant John."

Sēmainō: to signify, to show, to give a sign, to communicate by symbol or sign.
To indicate, signify; to make known by a sign or symbolic action, especially through symbolic or figurative means.

Revelation Lesson 12: Fallen is Babylon

As we approach the final visions of Revelation the war scroll reaches its climax with two very powerful and disturbing scenes. The first is the vision of the fall of "Babylon," a synonym for every type of political and social and immoral power on earth, and the second is the final battle in which the Word of God finally ends the evil kingdom of Satan, the beast and all their followers. In this lesson we will examine chapters 17 and 18 and conclude with a short study of the idea of 'Hell' in the Apocalypse.

The Whore, the Beast and the Back Stabbers:

Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls came and said to me, "Come, I will show you the judgment of the great prostitute who is seated on many waters with whom the kings of the earth have committed sexual immorality, and with the wine of whose sexual immorality the dwellers on earth have become drunk." And he carried me away in the Spirit into a wilderness, and I saw a woman sitting on a scarlet beast that was full of blasphemous names, and it had seven heads and ten horns. The woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet, and adorned with gold and jewels and pearls, holding in her hand a golden cup full of abominations and the impurities of her sexual immorality. And on her forehead was written a name of mystery: "Babylon the great, mother of prostitutes and of earth's abominations." And I saw the woman, drunk with the blood of the saints, the blood of the martyrs of Jesus. Rev 17:1-6

The vision of the whore and the beast is unique for its extensive interpretation give by the angel, the following is the information that we are given:

- **The woman** - the great city that rules over the kings of the earth, seductive, powerful, deceitful and immoral (v.18)
- **The waters** - peoples, multitudes, nations, and languages (v.15)
- **The beast** - the one who "was, is not, and will ascend"; also, an eighth king belonging to the seven (v.8, 11)
- **The seven heads** - seven mountains and also seven kings (v.9–10)
- **The ten horns** - ten kings who receive authority for one hour with the beast (v.12)
- **The ten horns' action** - they will hate the woman, destroy her, and give their authority to the beast (v.16–17)

This is a fascinating interpretation as it brings together the vision of the beast from the sea and combines it with the Babylon motif. In this vision we are told that political powers, those past, present and future combine with economic and cultural powers to build a world of great evil. Essentially, Babylon is every city and one city. It is Rome, it is Jerusalem, it is Toronto and New York, for in these great cities of the world resided the wealth and power used to defile mankind.

Chapter 17 ends with some surprising information - that the powers of the world will turn on each other and devour each other.

¹⁶ And the ten horns that you saw, they and the beast will hate the prostitute. They will make her desolate and naked, and devour her flesh and burn her up with fire, ¹⁷ for God has put it into their hearts to carry out his purpose by being of one mind and handing over their royal power to the beast, until the words of God are fulfilled. ¹⁸ And the woman that you saw is the great city that has dominion over the kings of the earth."

*and the kings of the earth have committed immorality with her,
and the merchants of the earth have grown rich from the power of her luxurious living.”*

A Fitting Funeral

After the detailed vision of Rev. 17, chapter 18 serves as a dramatic announcement of God’s judgment on “Babylon the Great.” Its purpose is to show that God will decisively overthrow every empire that builds its power on oppression, immorality, violence, and economic exploitation. The chapter exposes the emptiness of Babylon’s luxuries, the grief of those who profited from her, and the justice of her sudden fall. For believers, Revelation 18 functions as both warning and encouragement: a warning not to participate in Babylon’s sins (“Come out of her, my people”) and an encouragement that God will vindicate His people and judge evil completely. It highlights the moral collapse of worldly power just before God’s final victory.

Now that the battle is won, and Babylon is fallen, Rev 18 uses the literary form of a funeral dirge—a mock lament where kings, merchants, and sea-captains mourn Babylon’s downfall—not because they loved her, but because their profits have evaporated. The chapter uses vivid symbolic imagery, repeated refrains (“in one hour”), and poetic parallelism to portray the total, irreversible collapse of evil’s economic and cultural power. This genre reinforces that the message is more than literal reportage; it’s a theological picture of how God views unjust systems and how decisively He will bring them down.

Understanding Hell, the Abyss and the Bottomless Pit in Revelation and the Bible.

As Revelation reaches its final visions, heaven and hell begin to take centre stage. Before we delve into the final few chapters, let’s consider the visions about hell in Revelation and put them into biblical context.

Jesus, the prophets and Gehenna as the prototype of Hell.

In the Hebrew Bible, the Valley of Hinnom (Hebrew *Ge-Hinnom*, Greek *Gehenna*) was a real location outside Jerusalem associated with idolatry, defilement, and child sacrifice (Jer. 7:31–32). Because of these horrors, the prophets declared it a cursed place, a site of coming judgment. By the Second Temple period, Gehenna became a symbolic realm of fiery judgment. Jewish literature regularly describes God punishing the wicked there with fire, sometimes temporarily, sometimes eternally.

Thus, before Jesus ever preached, Judaism already used water + fire + judgment imagery: fire representing divine wrath, water (or deep) representing chaos, and God’s judgment transforming one into the other. This symbolic universe is the backdrop for the idea of Hell for Jesus and Revelation.

Jesus uses the word Gehenna more often than all other New Testament authors combined, but in the English Bible, it is always translated as Hell. No one who heard Jesus speak would think of Sheol, or Hell, in the following passages, they would all relate his teaching to the idea of Gehenna, the evil of child sacrifice, and the unrelenting vengeance of God upon those who practiced such evil.

In the OT, the **deep waters** (Heb. *tehom*) represent:

- primordial chaos (Gen 1:2)
- flood judgment (Gen. 7–8)
- cosmic opposition (Ps. 74:13–14; Isa. 51:9–10)
- demonic or monster imagery (Leviathan)
- the place from which evil emerges (Job 26; Ps. 18:16)

The sea is not just water it is symbolic geography: the realm hostile to God, untamed, dangerous, mysterious, and often demonic.

Jesus and the Abyss: The Sea as the Demonic Realm

Luke 8 is the crucial text:

- The demons beg Jesus not to send them into the abyss.
- Instead, Jesus sends them into the pigs.
- The pigs rush into the sea (the abyss) and drown.

The story only makes sense symbolically if the sea is the gateway to the abyss, the place where evil belongs. Jesus often demonstrates mastery over this realm — calming storms, walking on the sea, hushing the waves — all things Yahweh alone does in the OT. This image is most profound in Revelation where before God's throne is a sea of glass. It's not supposed to make you think of peace, it's supposed to make you think of power. Before God, chaos is in control — like glass. This is often missed by the reader, even though at the end of Revelation, once evil has been destroyed, John describes what he sees:

*Rev 21:1-2 Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, **and the sea was no more**. And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.*

So when we read sea, or abyss, or lake of fire in Revelation we should hear, “hell, realm of evil, or the place where demons dwell.

- 9:1–2 (smoke rises out of the abyss)
- 9:11 (king over the abyss)
- 11:7 (the beast ascends from the abyss)
- 17:8 (the beast arises from the abyss)
- 20:1, 3 (Satan bound in the abyss)
- 11:7 — the Beast rises from the **abyss**
- 13:1 — the Beast rises from the **sea**

While we know that those who rebelled against God will find themselves in eternal judgement, and that that judgement will be terrible and unrelenting, we cannot make a one to one correlation with the lake of fire and the exact way that God will punish unrepentant sinners. For us it is good enough to say that Hell is real, it is the eternal state of those who die in their sins and it is eternal and dreadful.

Revelation Lesson 13: Weddings and Funerals

Then I heard what seemed to be the voice of a great multitude, like the roar of many waters and like the sound of mighty peals of thunder, crying out,

"Hallelujah! For the Lord our God the Almighty reigns. Let us rejoice and exult and give him the glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and his Bride has made herself ready; it was granted her to clothe herself with fine linen, bright and pure"— for the fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints. Rev 19:6-8

The final chapters of Revelation bring the war Scroll to a close in dramatic fashion. The enemy is destroyed, Christ reigns, and all things become new. But as this all happens, the reader encounters several difficult ideas that challenge our interpretive skills. This lesson will examine the final events of the book of Revelation before we encounter what the book calls a new heaven and a new earth. Those events include the final battle of good and evil, the binding of Satan for 1000 years, and the great white throne judgement.

The Names of Jesus in Revelation

In the closing chapters of Revelation, Jesus is called several very important names. To begin our lesson, here is a list of all the names that Jesus is called in the apocalypse.

- Jesus Christ — 1:1
- Faithful Witness — 1:5
- Firstborn of the Dead — 1:5
- Ruler of the Kings of the Earth — 1:5
- The One Who Loves Us and Freed Us by His Blood — 1:5-6
- Alpha and Omega — 1:8
- Son of Man — 1:13
- First and the Last — 1:17
- Living One — 1:18
- He Who Holds the Seven Stars — 1:16 / 2:1
- He Who Walks Among the Seven Lampstands — 2:1
- The One Who Died and Came to Life — 2:8
- Son of God — 2:18
- He Who Has Eyes Like a Flame of Fire — 2:18
- He Who Has Feet Like Burnished Bronze — 2:18
- He Who Has the Seven Spirits of God — 3:1
- The Holy One — 3:7
- The True One — 3:7
- He Who Has the Key of David — 3:7

deceive the nations any longer, until the thousand years were ended. After that he must be released for a little while.

4 Then I saw thrones, and seated on them were those to whom the authority to judge was committed. Also I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for the testimony of Jesus and for the word of God, and those who had not worshiped the beast or its image and had not received its mark on their foreheads or their hands. They came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years. 5 The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were ended. This is the first resurrection. 6 Blessed and holy is the one who shares in the first resurrection! Over such the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ, and they will reign with him for a thousand years.

The Defeat of Satan

7 And when the thousand years are ended, Satan will be released from his prison 8 and will come out to deceive the nations that are at the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them for battle; their number is like the sand of the sea. 9 And they marched up over the broad plain of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city, but fire came down from heaven^[b] and consumed them, 10 and the devil who had deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and sulfur where the beast and the false prophet were, and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.

In Revelation 20, Satan is bound for 1,000 years so that he cannot deceive the nations, while the saints reign with Christ. After that period, Satan is released briefly, deceives again, and is destroyed. There are three schools of thought on this passage:

- **Premillennialism** - The 1,000 years is a *future kingdom on earth* after Christ returns and represents a literal 1000 years
- **Amillennialism** - The 1,000 years is *symbolic* of the church age; Satan is bound from preventing the spread of the gospel.
- **Postmillennialism** - The 1,000 years is *symbolic*, representing a future era in history where the gospel transforms the nations before Christ returns.

The challenge we face when interpreting the idea of a millennium in Revelation is that, unlike so many other symbols in the book, this is the only time in the whole Bible that this idea appears! This is indeed a unique problem in the apocalypse, since we are used to interpreting it through other scriptures. How then will we solve this problem? We will take what we know and apply it to what we don't.

1. We know that Revelation is a book of visions and symbols and that numbers are not literal, rather they are theological or symbolic, therefore 1000 years should

- The best answer might be a combination of all explanations: John's 1000 years speaks of a time when divine judgement has occurred but before the moment of a new heaven and new earth, when rewards are given, the saints are resurrected, justice is restored. How long did this take? For that we will leave it to the Bible for our best answer:

Psalm 90:4 - A thousand years in your sight are like a day that has just gone by, or like a watch in the night.

2 Peter 3:8 - But do not forget this one thing, dear friends: With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day.

Add to this the fact that we now know that the cross was both God's mercy and His judgement, and we are left wondering about the reality of the 1000 year period. Thus we must be content to know that Satan both IS and WILL BE defeated, his power was lessened by the cross but he is still dangerous, and in the end, Christ's second coming will put a stop to him once and for all.

Heaven and Hell – The end of all things and the beginning of forever!

The final vision of Revelation brings the entire book to a climactic end with John seeing the final destiny of all people. And like Jesus in Matthew 25, the visions of Revelation separate humanity into two categories; those who followed the Lamb, who's names were in the book, and those who followed the Dragon, who's names were not found in the book.

The vision of the judgement of humanity is so grand it cannot be visualized, as John somehow sees a throne so powerful that heaven and earth fled from it for there was no place for them. What is being conveyed here is the profound truth about the presence of God that has been spoken of since the very beginning – that nothing can stand in His presence. Because, at the same time as heaven and earth are fleeing the throne, all of humanity as at once standing before the throne. Consider Nahum 1:5–6 “*The mountains quake before him; the hills melt; the earth heaves before him, the world and all who dwell in it. Who can stand before his indignation? Who can endure the heat of his anger?*”

Once the judgement is complete, the lake of fire is filled with all those who did not follow the Lamb, and then we see a vision of heaven, or do we?

The Bride, the City, the River and the Tree.

Heaven is not a cube. It is not 12,000 stadia high and wide and deep, and it does not have twelve gates and twelve foundations. For we now know that twelve is the number of the people of God so the people that are granted eternal life are...the people of God.

light of the sun, for the Lord God will give them light. And they will reign for ever and ever.

In most wonderful twist, the end of the book brings us back to the beginning. Heaven looks like a garden, but not any garden, the garden of Eden.

- A River of the water of Life.
- The tree of life.
- No curse of sin.
- No separation between God and Man.

And the book, or shall we say the vision comes to a close with a reminder that all that has been seen comes from Christ himself, that we must worship Him, obey him and not change one word that has been spoken. And will all this now said and done, we, Like John can pray, "Even so Lord, come quickly.

A Final Thought on the Victory of Christ:

Rev. 11:15; 19:2,3,6

When the seventh angel blew his trumpet, and there were loud voices in heaven, saying, "The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign forever and ever."

"Hallelujah!

Salvation and glory and power belong to our God,
for his judgments are true and just;

Hallelujah!

"Hallelujah!

For the Lord our God

the Almighty reigns.

Let us rejoice and exult

and give him the glory.

The Word Hallelujah appears in the Bible four times, all in the book of Revelation chapter 19. It means, 'Praise the LORD,' and it brings the book to a fitting climax as the enemies of God are defeated and the eternal reign of Christ begins. In perfect apocalyptic form, it is proclaimed four times; four being the number of the earth, thus all the earth will one day proclaim the power of God and praise his name, even those who have been cast into the lake of fire. Thus Revelation returns us to the beginning, to the way things were meant to be. God's creation worships him, be sustains us, and all is right in the universe. HALLELUJAH!