

74 YEARS – COMPANION III

JOHN THE BELOVED CHRONICLER

A commentary

If we explore and discover what the four main players in our historical carve out said and wrote, it should become clear what economy they represented and what economy informed their perspectives. It is called context, and context is critical to understanding the Word of God. The scriptures are not haphazard, and they are not a tossed salad where everything is indiscriminately thrown together. Cherry picking cherished verses and passages is no way to understand what the Lord is trying to tell us. We must discern the big picture if we are to grasp the Author and His purposes. We can't be cavalier about His Word. Everything we read has its proper place and special purpose. We must be smart about sorting these things, because, if we're not, we'll live in a know-nothing world beyond the ability of the Lord to use us to move His purposes forward. It is a question of being a spectator or a participant. If we really care about joining the Lord in His eternal purpose, we will have to pass the test of knowing His Word. There are no shortcuts. We must pay the price to know how the Word is divided up, what the economies are, who are the main players, and what those players spoke and wrote.

JOHN
His writings

THE REVELATION

John sees firsthand the persecution that has driven the remnant believers from Jerusalem following the death of Stephen. As one of the main brothers in the *ekklesia* in Jerusalem, he must know many of these saints personally. The persecution had to have made a deep impression on him as an orthodox Jew. Doubtless very familiar with the Hebrew scriptures, John realized that before the kingdom could come to Israel, there must first be the playing out of Daniel's famous prophecy in chapter 9:

Seventy weeks are determined for your people and for your holy city, to finish the transgression, to make an end of sins, to make reconciliation for iniquity, to bring in eternal righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy, and to anoint the Most Holy Place.

Know therefore and understand, that from the going forth of the command to restore and build Jerusalem until messiah the prince, there shall be seven sevens and sixty-two sevens. The street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublesome times.

And after the sixty-two sevens Messiah shall be cut off, but not for Himself; and the people of the prince who is to come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary. The end of it shall be with a flood, and till the end of the war desolations are determined. Then he shall confirm a covenant with many for one seven; but in the middle of the seven he shall bring an end to sacrifice and offering. And on the wing of abominations shall be one who makes desolate, even until the consummation, which is determined, is poured out on the desolator.

To help the understanding I will insert some keys that may throw light on this critical prophecy:

Seventy sevens

(490 years)

are determined for your people and for your holy city, to finish the transgression, to make an end of sins, to make reconciliation for iniquity,

(These three items were accomplished by Jesus in His first advent.)

to bring in eternal righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy, and to anoint the Most Holy.

(These final three will be accomplished at His second advent.)

Know therefore and understand, that from the going forth of the command to restore and build Jerusalem

(Nehemiah received permission from King Artaxerxes to return to Jerusalem and rebuild it {Nehemiah 2:5-8}).

until messiah the prince, there shall be seven sevens and sixty-two sevens.

(483 years)

The street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublesome times. And after the sixty-two sevens Messiah shall be cut off,

(Jesus is put to death in 30 AD.)

but not for Himself; and the people of the prince who is to come

(Titus, the Roman General in 70 AD)

shall destroy the city and the sanctuary. The end of it shall be with a flood, and till the end of the war desolations are determined.

(Here is the beginning of the Jewish Diaspora.)

Then he

(The coming prince, the leader and spokesman of the world)

shall confirm a covenant

(Isaiah 28:15-18 calls this an “agreement with Sheol.”)

with many

(With Israel)

for one seven;

(The tribulation, Jacob’s trouble, enduring 7 years)

but in the middle of the seven he shall bring an end to sacrifice and offering. And on the wing of abominations shall be one who makes desolate,

(The Anti-Christ, the Beast, who sets up his image in the temple to be worshiped.)

even until the consummation, which is determined, is poured out on the desolator.

(At the second advent)

John had just witnessed the fulfillment of the first three items of this prophecy – to finish the transgression, to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity. Jesus had accomplished these in His life and work. John now awaited the completion of the final three upon the second return to Earth by the Messiah – to bring in eternal righteousness, to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most Holy Place. So, when the Spirit prompted him to write to the seven assemblies, he was on Patmos close by. He may have been in the area preaching the word to them.

The timing is unknown. Speculations are all over the map, leaving us with context to work with. My guess is circa 40 AD. Why then?

John knew that Daniel’s seventieth seven (7 years) had to occur before the kingdom, and that it was unavoidable trouble for Israel. The bride (Israel) of Christ had to make herself ready to meet her Bridegroom, and that meant a good deal of suffering. But after the suffering the Messiah would descend to marry her and to establish His kingdom. What John was about to see was the execution of that seven-year period known as the tribulation, or Jacob’s trouble.

1:1-3

The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him to show His servants—things which must shortly take place. And He sent and signified it by His angel to His servant John, who bore witness to the word of God, and to the testimony of Jesus Christ, to all things that he saw. Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the words of this prophecy and keep those things which are written in it; for the time is near.

John had every reason to believe that what he was receiving and revealing would shortly come to pass. The kingdom was imminent, and this treatise was to warn the remnant saints to prepare for “things which must shortly take place.”

1:4

John, to the seven churches which are in Asia: Grace to you and peace from Him who is and who was and who is to come, and from the seven Spirits who are before His throne,

The recipients of this treatise are the seven congregations of the little flock that spread to Asia during the great persecution of Acts 8:1.

1:5

and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler over the kings of the earth.

To Him who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood,

The writer is the Triune God – the omnipotent Father, the seven-fold Spirit, and Jesus Christ, the faithful witness.

1:6

and has made us kings and priests to His God and Father, to Him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.

The purpose of Yahweh – to make members of the little flock kings and priests in the kingdom. The body of Christ has no such purpose.

1:7

Behold, He is coming with clouds, and every eye will see Him, even they who pierced Him. And all the tribes of the earth will mourn because of Him. Even so, Amen.

The slain One is the coming One.

1:8

“I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End,” says the Lord, “who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty.”

He is all-encompassing. He is the Lord of the past, the present, and the future.

1:9-10

I, John, both your brother and companion in the tribulation and kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, was on the island that is called Patmos for the word of God and for the testimony of Jesus Christ.

I was in the Spirit on the Lord’s Day, and I heard behind me a loud voice, as of a trumpet,

The Lord’s Day is the seventieth seven of Daniel’s prophecy, the seven-year period of tribulation for Israel, and the day of His wrath (Daniel 9).

There is nothing in John’s account that includes the body of Christ. It belongs exclusively to Israel.

1:11

saying, “I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last,” and, “What you see, write in a book and send it to the seven churches which are in Asia: to Ephesus, to Smyrna, to Pergamos, to Thyatira, to Sardis, to Philadelphia, and to Laodicea.”

The seven assemblies are in seven cities. Each city has one congregation, a motif found throughout the New Testament. Each city’s congregation has its own single government of elders. There are no exceptions either in the assemblies of the little flock or in the future assemblies of the body of Christ.

1:12

Then I turned to see the voice that spoke with me. And having turned I saw seven golden lampstands,

The voice and the golden lampstands (Yahweh’s divine nature) are one.

1:13-16

and in the midst of the seven lampstands One like the Son of Man, clothed with a garment down to the feet and girded about the chest with a golden band. His head and hair were white like wool, as white as snow, and His eyes like a flame of fire; His feet were like fine brass, as if refined in a furnace, and His voice as the sound of many waters; He had in His right hand seven stars, out of His mouth went a sharp two-edged sword, and His countenance was like the sun shining in its strength.

The Son of Man denotes the Earth. He is a Jew for the Jews.

This is the glorified, though exiled, king of Israel.

1:17

And when I saw Him, I fell at His feet as dead. But He laid His right hand on me, saying to me, "Do not be afraid; I am the First and the Last.

John is the beloved disciple whom Jesus loves, but even he is overcome with fear.

1:18

I am He who lives, and was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore. Amen. And I have the keys of Hades and of Death.

Jesus once dead is alive forevermore. Though His enemy bruised His heel, Jesus crushed his head and owns the keys to hell and death.

1:19

Write the things which you have seen, and the things which are, and the things which will take place after this.

John's subject matter. "The things which are" he has just covered, and that includes Jesus walking in the midst of the seven assemblies. The things that shall be John will begin to cover in chapter 4.

1:20

The mystery of the seven stars which you saw in My right hand, and the seven golden lampstands: The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches, and the seven lampstands which you saw are the seven churches.

Lampstands, stars, and angels are all elements of Judaism.

2:1

The mystery of the seven stars which you saw in My right hand, and the seven golden lampstands: The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches, and the seven lampstands which you saw are the seven churches.

Typical of all seven letters, there is only one ekklesia per city or town. It has no name. It is an expression of the universal ekklesia, and, except for geographical limitations, would meet with all other ekklesias. It has fellowship with other ekklesias. It holds one Messiah and King and it awaits His return to establish His kingdom. It is a golden lampstand bearing the Light to the world.

Each ekklesia has its own set of problems, and its own unique characteristics. All are encouraged to overcome to receive the King's reward. Woe to those who do not prepare themselves and fail to overcome. Remember, there is no assurance of salvation with these little flock saints, the remnant believers. Overcoming in Smyrna means avoiding the second death, the lake of fire. What then does failure mean? Not heeding Messiah's words.

Every assembly hears the same charge: "He that has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says unto the assemblies." There is the promise to overcomers, but there is also human responsibility. In the first three letters the human responsibility precedes the divine promise. In the last four it is reversed. Why? Good question. The fact that the divine and human combination exists is further proof that these *ekklesias* are of the remnant believers. They are not Christians in the body of Christ sense. Aside from the names found in the Hebrew scriptures – Balaam, Balac, Jezebel, children of Israel – and items like angels, synagogues, lampstands, tree of life, hidden manna, white stone, power over the nations, rod of iron, morning star, seven-fold Spirit, white raiment, book of life, key of David, the hour of trial, crown, pillar in the temple, and New Jerusalem – there are the threats for faithlessness as well. "I will come unto you quickly and will remove your lampstand"; "shall not be hurt of the second death"; "I will not blot out his name out of the book of life." This is a further development of what Jesus told His disciples in Matthew 24:12-14:

"And because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold. But he who endures to the end shall be saved. And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come."

Verse 13 is critical to the believing saints: "*But he who endures to the end shall be saved.*" Endurance is the way to salvation and reward. There is no other way for believing Israel.

4:1

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

The "hereafter" begins. What we see and will see is the working out of the tribulation on the chosen nation. It is for no other except the evil Gentiles who will undergo judgment.

4:2-4

Immediately I was in the Spirit; and behold, a throne set in heaven, and One sat on the throne. And He who sat there was like a jasper and a sardius stone in appearance; and there was a rainbow around the throne, in appearance like an emerald. Around the throne were twenty-four thrones, and on the thrones I saw twenty-four elders sitting, clothed in white robes; and they had crowns of gold on their heads.

John is taken up to a throne, a throne of a king and around Him His entourage of twenty-four elders (princes) which are angels. They are always associated with the throne, with ruling, thus their description as princes.

4:5

And from the throne proceeded lightnings, thunderings, and voices. Seven lamps of fire were burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God.

This is a throne of judgment.

4:6-7

Before the throne there was a sea of glass, like crystal. And in the midst of the throne, and around the throne, were four living creatures full of eyes in front and in back. The first living creature was like a lion, the second living creature like a calf, the third living creature had a face like a man, and the fourth living creature was like a flying eagle.

Four living creatures takes us back to Ezekiel 1, a creature representing Christ – the lion of Matthew, the calf of Mark, the man of Luke, and the eagle of John. Matthew’s gospel describes the king; Mark the slave; Luke the perfect man; and John the Son of God.

4:8

The four living creatures, each having six wings, were full of eyes around and within. And they do not rest day or night, saying:

Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, who was and is and is to come!”

Holy, holy, holy is the worship of the Triune God. “Lord.” “God.” “Almighty.” He was in the past; He is in the present; He will be in the future. The three names show the unity of the Triune God – Jehovah, Elohim, and Shaddai. These names are embedded in Hebrew history, not Christian history.

4:10

the twenty-four elders fall down before Him who sits on the throne and worship Him who lives forever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying:

The twenty-four princes cast down their crowns before the throne in preparation for the changing of the guard. The overcoming Jews will take the place of angels. This has nothing to do with Christians of the body of Christ economy. Countless times I’ve heard Christians say they can’t wait to get to heaven to cast their crowns at Jesus’ feet. Nonsense! Where did they get the crowns? Over what did they rule? How and when did they arrive at the throne? They have answers for none of this.

4:11

“You are worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power, for You created all things, and by Your will they exist and were created.”

The ascriptions come in threes (:9) because they are directed toward the Triune God.

5:1

And I saw in the right hand of Him who sat on the throne a scroll written inside and on the back, sealed with seven seals.

Chapter four hails the glory and holiness of the Creator Messiah. Chapter 5 hails the higher glory of the Great Redeemer of Israel.

The scroll is sealed on the back side with seven seals, proving that each seal opens up a section of the scroll.

5:5

But one of the elders said to me, “Do not weep. Behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has prevailed to open the scroll and to loose its seven seals.”

One is able – the Lion of Judah and the root of David – the fulfiller of the Hebrew scriptures. John looked for a Lion but saw a lamb.

5:6

And I looked, and behold, in the midst of the throne and of the four living creatures, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as though it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent out into all the earth.

This One is the Lamb who had been slain. He is both Lion and Lamb, showing that He paid the price as a lamb slain, and assumed power as a lion crowned. Unless the price is paid there can be no power.

Horns show His perfect authority, eyes His perfect knowledge and intelligence.

5:9

And they sang a new song, saying: “You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals; for You were slain, and have redeemed us to God by Your blood out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation, and have made us kings and priests to our God; and we shall reign on the earth.”

The song of redemption paid for by a man. “Us” should be “them,” for the four living creatures and the twenty-four princes are singing of Israel. As angels are not redeemed, so the Lamb’s blood is not for them.

5:11-12

***Then I looked, and I heard the voice of many angels around the throne, the living creatures, and the elders; and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands, saying with a loud voice:
“Worthy is the Lamb who was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom, and strength and honor and glory and blessing!”***

The song includes seven items of divine completion and perfection.

6:1-2

Now I saw when the Lamb opened one of the seals; and I heard one of the four living creatures saying with a voice like thunder, "Come and see." And I looked, and behold, a white horse. He who sat on it had a bow; and a crown was given to him, and he went out conquering and to conquer.

Change "come" to "go" and omit "and see." Note that all events of the first six seals happen on Earth.

What we don't know is if the going out of the white horse starts the clock on the seven-year tribulation.

The false messiah, the rider on the white horse, will present himself as the prince of peace (white horse) with a crown and a bow, but he is a deceiver. He goes forth to conquer and succeeds. The result of his conquering is misery, as seen in the next three horsemen. He will reign on the Earth once he rides forth on the white horse. He will be in mortal (human) form and will reign through deceit, though somewhat peaceably during the first half of the tribulation (Daniel 11:21). "Peaceably" when compared with what he will do in the future. For example, when he reigns "peacefully" in the first half, he will fill up the number of martyrs of the fifth seal.

There are no time constraints to his reign until he is assassinated at the midpoint; then three and a half years remain. From his assassination he goes into the abyss to await the false "resurrection"; Satan's trick to mimic the true resurrection.

The false messiah of this seal is the coming prince found in Daniel 11:36-45. His career will begin when he is able to consolidate power on the Earth and it will extend to his death at the midpoint of the tribulation. When he first begins to ride forth is unknown, but it appears that he will conquer his opposition until he assumes full control of the world. He is a worshiper of Satan and will be assisted in his career by the foul rebel. He will ride forth and conquer in Satan's name, not at first overtly, but eventually as a charismatic deceiver intent upon being worshiped as God. He will become Satan's second person of the unholy trinity. This is accomplished when he is assassinated and enters the abyss. Satan in his deceit and in an act of pseudo resurrection, revives the prince, and brings him forth as the Beast, the antichrist.

It should be noted here that Satan's frenetic activity during these final seven years is to make his final push to establish himself in the place of the Triune God and to be worshiped by the whole world. At the top of his list is the destruction of Israel.

Some scholars contend that the opening of the first seal is the beginning of the day of the Lord. Because the Lord's first advent covered a period of thirty-three and a half years. His second advent will match the first, that is, the first advent of Messiah in 4 BC to His ascension in 30 AD – 33.5 years – will determine the length of His second. That would separate out the first six seals

from the beginning of the tribulation, or the final seven years of Israel's history (Daniel's final "week"). In other words, the tribulation would not begin until the first six seals ran their course.

It may be so, but the prophecy doesn't demand it, and there is nothing in the text to verify or refute it. That is not to say it couldn't be true. If the seals opened over a long period of time, they would become a prelude to the tribulation and not part of it.

In describing these seals in Matthew 24:1-14, Jesus said, "All these are the beginning of birth pangs," which could indicate the six seals being a lengthy prelude to the "birth," the tribulation of seven years duration. This dovetails with the idea that the length of the second advent may match the first of 33 years. When we add 33 with 7 for the tribulation, we get 40, the number of trial and testing for Israel.

There is a strong tendency among fundamental Christians to believe the *ekklesia* will be "raptured," so called, just before the tribulation begins. They point to 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17 for proof, but a careful reading of that passage reveals some problems with that view. Firstly, 1 Thessalonians is the first letter Paul wrote (54 AD) during his ministry to the children of Israel (Acts 9:15) before their final rejection of Messiah in 62 AD. Because of that rejection, that resurrection never occurred and was relegated to the future.

Secondly, there is a trumpet, a shout, and an archangel, all elements of Israel's experience with Yahweh. This resurrection may be strictly for the remnant of believing Jews. Where does that leave the body of Christ in the age of grace?

There are only two general resurrections – one for the righteous, and one for the unrighteous. There is a special high calling of Christians of the body who have attained to the "out-resurrection" from among the dead (Philippians 3:11). That would mean the *parousia* (presence) of Jesus in the clouds of 1 Thessalonians 4 would have to include the remnant of Israel from the beginning of her history, and Gentile believers from history who did not attain to the upward call.

There is this consideration: the multitude of Gentiles standing before the throne were also resurrected after they were killed in the tribulation. This constitutes another resurrection, but this of Gentiles saved in the tribulation in response to the message of the two witnesses.

6:12-17

I looked when He opened the sixth seal, and behold, there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became like blood. And the stars of heaven fell to the earth, as a fig tree drops its late figs when it is shaken by a mighty wind. Then the sky receded as a scroll when it is rolled up, and every mountain and island was moved out of its place. And the kings of the earth, the great men, the rich men, the commanders, the mighty men, every slave and every free man, hid themselves in the caves and in the rocks of the mountains, and said to the mountains and rocks, "Fall on us and hide us from the face of Him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb! For the great day of His wrath has come, and who is able to stand?"

This great earthquake is the subject of Isaiah 13:6-13; of Haggai 2:6-7, 21-22; and of Jesus in Matthew 24:32-35.

The first six seals have everything to do with judgments on the Gentile nations. Of course, Israel is caught up in the turmoil in what is known as “Jacob’s trouble” (Jeremiah 30:7). The people of the nations have a huge choice in front of them – how will they treat the Lord’s distressed chosen? Gentile destiny is determined by it as seen in the judgment of the sheep and the goats of Matthew 25:31-46.

“Who shall be able to stand?” This question is answered in chapter 7. This seal takes us to the end of the prelude to the final seven years. Events become increasingly intense, wracking the Earth and shaking the heavens.

7:3

saying, “Do not harm the earth, the sea, or the trees till we have sealed the servants of our God on their foreheads.”

The sealing of the servants – 144,000 in number. These are the remnant of Israel from the past. It is doubtful that these come through or out of the tribulation, but rather before it. They were already sealed prior to any event marking the tribulation. In their description there is no mention of the tribulation.

7:4

And I heard the number of those who were sealed. One hundred and forty-four thousand of all the tribes of the children of Israel were sealed:

The 144,000 are on the Earth and here are preparing for battles against the evil prince. They are the faithful, and are the new nation Jesus spoke of in Matthew 21:43:

“Therefore I say to you, the kingdom of God will be taken from you and given to a nation bearing the fruits of it”;

And of which Michael told Daniel in 12:1:

“At that time Michael shall stand up, the great prince who stands watch over the sons of your people; and there shall be a time of trouble such as never was since there was a nation, even to that time. And at that time your people shall be delivered, everyone who is found written in the book.”

Here is the sealing of those names.

These faithful Hebrews will not stand idle but will war against the forces of evil on Earth. Surely many of them come from the overcomers from the seven congregations, and, by extension, all the little flock assemblies. Their sealing will protect them from harm. Daniel describes them in 7:9:

“I watched till thrones were put in place, and the Ancient of Days was seated. His garment was white as snow, and the hair of His head was like pure wool. His throne was a fiery flame; its wheels a burning fire.”

7:9

After these things I looked, and behold, a great multitude which no one could number, of all nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, with palm branches in their hands,

The first vision of the 144,000 of Israel is before the tribulation; the second vision is after (:14). These are the sheep of Jesus’ explanation of Gentile judgment in Matthew 25:31-46. They had passed the test of caring for the chosen nation during the tribulation.

7:12

“Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom, thanksgiving and honor and power and might be to our God forever and ever. Amen.”

Worship around the throne includes a seven-fold praise – the number of divine completeness and perfection.

8:1-5

When He opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven for about half an hour. And I saw the seven angels who stand before God, and to them were given seven trumpets. Then another angel, having a golden censer, came and stood at the altar. He was given much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all the saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne. And the smoke of the incense, with the prayers of the saints, ascended before God from the angel’s hand. Then the angel took the censer, filled it with fire from the altar, and threw it to the earth. And there were noises, thunderings, lightnings, and an earthquake.

Now is the time for events to proceed. Everything up to this point has been preliminary and has occurred on Earth, but now the scene shifts to heaven where we see the heavenly answer to the earthly prayers of the martyred saints under the altar (6:9). Heaven does answer prayers from the Earth, maybe after a pause of some length. This should encourage us.

This scene is in the heavenly tabernacle where the Father’s throne is, where the angels are, where the censor is, where prayers ascend, and where prayers are answered. The seventh seal includes the seven trumpets, the seventh of which includes the seven vials. All these represent a ratchetting up of judgment until the Son of Man appears on Earth. These trumpet and vial judgments do not stop once they begin. But during the explanations of them there is an interruption in chapter 12 that extends to chapter 18:24. It is very easy to stumble into confusion at that point. Just be aware of it.

11:1,3

Then I was given a reed like a measuring rod. And the angel stood, saying, “Rise and measure the temple of God, the altar, and those who worship there.

And I will give power to my two witnesses, and they will prophesy one thousand two hundred and sixty days, clothed in sackcloth.”

At the first day of the first half of the tribulation, there appears two witnesses on the Earth. They minister for 1260 days, three and a half years.

11:4

These are the two olive trees and the two lampstands standing before the God of the earth.

They represent the two olive trees of Zechariah 4 – Zerubbabel and Jeshua – but we aren’t told who they are.

11:5

And if anyone wants to harm them, fire proceeds from their mouth and devours their enemies. And if anyone wants to harm them, he must be killed in this manner.

Certainly intimidating fellows.

11:6

These have power to shut heaven, so that no rain falls in the days of their prophecy; and they have power over waters to turn them to blood, and to strike the earth with all plagues, as often as they desire.

They have the power Moses had in dealing with Pharaoh. They are not timid.

11:7-8

When they finish their testimony, the beast that ascends out of the bottomless pit will make war against them, overcome them, and kill them. And their dead bodies will lie in the street of the great city which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also our Lord was crucified.

They finish their testimony at the midpoint of the tribulation when the Beast (more on him in chapter 13) assassinates them. They are left dead in the street of Jerusalem in fulfillment of Psalm 79, a prophecy of this period. In addition, read Psalms 9 and 10 in this context.

11:9-10

Then those from the peoples, tribes, tongues, and nations will see their dead bodies three-and-a-half days, and not allow their dead bodies to be put into graves. And those who dwell on the earth will rejoice over them, make merry, and send gifts to one another, because these two prophets tormented those who dwell on the earth.

The two agents of judgment are not well-received by the people.

11:11-12

Now after the three-and-a-half days the breath of life from God entered them, and they stood on their feet, and great fear fell on those who saw them. And they heard a loud voice from

heaven saying to them, "Come up here." And they ascended to heaven in a cloud, and their enemies saw them.

They rise, scare everyone, and ascend to heaven, unleashing more remarkable judgments.

11:14-15

The second woe is past. Behold, the third woe is coming quickly. Then the seventh angel sounded: And there were loud voices in heaven, saying, "The kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever!"

The seventh trumpet (with its vials) sounds, releasing loud voices in heaven announcing the sovereignty of Christ in His kingdom. Though this is announced here, the consummation is in chapter 20. Here is the setting forth of the absolute truth when all the world is judged. Only Christ is sovereign; without Him the world is doomed.

11:16-18

And the twenty-four elders who sat before God on their thrones fell on their faces and worshiped God, saying:

We give You thanks, O Lord God Almighty, the One who is and who was and who is to come, because You have taken Your great power and reigned. The nations were angry, and Your wrath has come, and the time of the dead, that they should be judged, and that You should reward Your servants the prophets and the saints, and those who fear Your name, small and great, and should destroy those who destroy the earth.

The elders announce the final triumph of the Lord God Almighty (Jehovah Elohim Shaddai). "Reigned." Past tense. John is seeing the consummation of Israel restored and the enemies judged at last. Details come later.

11:19

Then the temple of God was opened in heaven, and the ark of His covenant was seen in His temple. And there were lightnings, noises, thunderings, an earthquake, and great hail.

The heavenly temple opens. It is the reality of what Moses and Solomon built (Moses the tabernacle and Solomon the temple) amid Israel. The ark of the old covenant once seen on Earth, is now the ark of the new covenant seen in heaven. In heaven the temple opens; on Earth are lightnings, thunderings, an earthquake and hail.

12:1

Now a great sign appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a garland of twelve stars.

This section, which runs through chapter 15, requires some serious thought to avoid the bog. Up until now the sequence of events has been straightforward from the beginning with the rider on the white horse to the end with the open heaven, judgment on Earth and the sovereignty of Christ. But now we get the *back story* of how it all happened. How, for example, did the Beast

get on the Earth to challenge the two witnesses? The back story fills in the details so we can grasp the whole story.

Chapter 12 starts with a sign, proving that we are not to take what we read literally. We should generally take the Bible literally except, as in this case, it clearly denotes a sign. When there is no sign designated, we cannot put symbols where no symbols exist. Here we find a “great” sign, one of momentous significance. The woman is Israel, not the body of Christ.

The sun is Jacob; the moon his wife (probably Leah, mother of Judah the ancestor of Messiah). In the Hebrew scriptures Israel is always a woman, a married woman, a divorced woman, or a widow, depending on her status with Yahweh.

The twelve stars are the twelve signs of the Zodiac through which the sun travels to tell redemption’s story. It is the most ancient knowledge of redemption “written” by Yahweh to tell, in 12 segments of constellations, the story of the Lord’s incarnation (Virgo the virgin) through His ruling on Earth (Leo the lion). The whole history is here in the stars and has been before writing was invented.

The first sign Virgo is a constant reminder of the promise of Genesis 3:15. Virgo holds a branch in her right hand, a highly meaningful reference to Christ (Jeremiah 23:1-6):

“Behold, the days are coming,” says the LORD, “that I will raise to David a Branch of righteousness; a King shall reign and prosper and execute judgment and righteousness in the earth. In His days Judah will be saved, and Israel will dwell safely; now this is His name by which He will be called: THE LORD OUR. RIGHTEOUSNESS. (Jeremiah 23:5-6)

Here the virgin is pregnant, the first sign of the Zodiac. He came to us in incarnation through the virgin, His first step in His career.

12:3

And another sign appeared in heaven: behold, a great, fiery red dragon having seven heads and ten horns, and seven diadems on his heads.

The next sign is of the red dragon with seven heads and ten horns. He has complete earthly authority, and his color is red as fire and red as blood. His career is of shedding blood and wreaking destruction among human beings. His heads could reference empires that have directly touched Israel – Egypt, Syria, Assyria, Babylon, Persia, Greece, and Rome – and his horns could be pointing toward ten kings to come.

12:4

His tail drew a third of the stars of heaven and threw them to the earth. And the dragon stood before the woman who was ready to give birth, to devour her Child as soon as it was born.

When Lucifer rebelled in heaven long before our current race, he formed a conspiracy with one third of the angels. These are the “stars of heaven” that Lucifer drew with him in his insurrection against Yahweh. Now he and his minions stand before Israel to destroy her child, and so has it

been since Yahweh announced to the serpent that his head would be crushed by a man, the seed of the woman. From that point on Satan (means “adversary”) has striven to prevent that seed from ever being born into the world. This, in capsule, is the great conflict of the ages.

This conflict first appeared when evil angels and human females copulated and produced Nephilim, a miserable, irredeemable angel/human hybrid that contaminated the pure human stock and necessitated the flood of Noah. Only eight souls remained pure, and able to allow passage for the seed of the woman. Only those eight survived the flood.

The second attempt occurred when Pharaoh decreed all Hebrew male babies were to be destroyed at birth. Pharaoh had his reason, but Satan had his – to end the line of the seed of the woman. A baby’s cry heard by Pharaoh’s daughter saved the line.

Another attempt on the line came closest of all when the royal line of Messiah came down to one young life that had to be hidden in the temple for six years away from the assassin’s knife (2 Chronicles 21 and 22).

Herod tried to destroy the line by killing all the male babies in Bethlehem two years old and under. Joseph, Mary, and Jesus escaped to Egypt.

Satan’s suggestion that Jesus cast Himself off the pinnacle of the temple was another attempt on His life.

The people of Nazareth tried to cast Him off a cliff; Satan tried to drown Him twice on the Sea of Galilee during severe storms.

Jesus was a marked man, and He knew it, always on the lookout to make His escape.

12:5

She bore a male Child who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron. And her Child was caught up to God and His throne.

Satan is thwarted. Jesus did His work on Earth and ascended to His Father in the first century.

At this point we fast forward through history to the midpoint of the seven years. It is important that we grasp this so we can understand what John is reporting.

12:6

Then the woman fled into the wilderness, where she has a place prepared by God, that they should feed her there one thousand two hundred and sixty days.

In the midpoint of the tribulation, when things are really heating up and the Beast is about to make his serious move against the Lord’s people, they flee to the wilderness for safety. Some think it is Petra in Jordan. Interesting, but undisclosed. The length of time there pinpoints the midpoint of the seven years.

12:7-9

And war broke out in heaven: Michael and his angels fought with the dragon; and the dragon and his angels fought, but they did not prevail, nor was a place found for them in heaven any longer. So the great dragon was cast out, that serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was cast to the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.

Michael takes the initiative to war against Satan and drives him out of heaven at the midpoint of the tribulation. He who formerly could access heaven is cast out to the Earth. Satan then releases the Beast from the abyss where he has been held since his assassination. In a mimic resurrection the second person of the satanic trinity is raised up by Satan to “be revealed in his time” (2 Thessalonians 2:5). His first order of business is to murder the two witnesses and to establish his image in the temple to be worshiped. Added to these events is the relentless persecution of Israel, and any Gentiles who obey or have obeyed the message of the two witnesses. This persecution is the genesis of the multitude of martyrs standing before the throne in chapter 7.

12:10-11

Then I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, “Now salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of His Christ have come, for the accuser of our brethren, who accused them before our God day and night, has been cast down. And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, and they did not love their lives to the death.

The heavenly proclamation of victory over the foul rebel. Heaven is cleansed and Satan is trapped on Earth with nowhere to hide.

12:12

Therefore rejoice, O heavens, and you who dwell in them! Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and the sea! For the devil has come down to you, having great wrath, because he knows that he has a short time.”

Not only does he have nowhere to hide, but also his time is running out. The vice closes.

12:13

Now when the dragon saw that he had been cast to the earth, he persecuted the woman who gave birth to the male Child.

Satan’s anger at his displacement is turned on the woman, on Israel.

12:14

But the woman was given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness to her place, where she is nourished for a time and times and half a time, from the presence of the serpent.

Satan the dragon loses the war in heaven and is cast to the Earth at the midpoint of the tribulation. He immediately turns on the woman and brings up the Beast from the abyss to lead the attack against her. She flees into the wilderness like Israel of old fled from Pharaoh. She hides for three and a half years (Daniel 7:25; 12:7) and is protected and nourished.

12:17

And the dragon was enraged with the woman, and he went to make war with the rest of her offspring, who keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.

Foiled in his attack, the dragon goes after the remnant of Israel, the 144,000 and the great multitude in chapter 7. We should keep in mind that this narrative is the back story of chapters 6-11.

13:1

Then I stood on the sand of the sea. And I saw a beast rising up out of the sea, having seven heads and ten horns, and on his horns ten crowns, and on his heads a blasphemous name.

This should be the last verse of chapter 12.

The dragon here matches the vision of Daniel 7 which shows how the beast came to be. The dragon stands on the sand, and out of the sea rises a beast with heads, horns, and crowns, obviously supernatural. He had been on Earth in his mortal phase for three and a half years. We need to remember that we are studying a sign, not a mere mortal. As such he represents a conglomeration of all worldly sovereignty. He is the supernatural concentration in one person of the statue Nebuchadnezzar erected in the Babylonian desert that represented the four empires that directly touched the nation of Israel – Babylonian, Persian, Grecian, and Roman. So, all heads and horns of earthly dominion are united in one, the embodiment of human sovereignty in place while the kingdom of Israel is in waiting and in preparation.

Be certain, he is an actual man who comes to power through force and intrigue. Daniel 7 and 11 provide the details, but trying to deal with the subject here is getting into the tall grass with little to show for it. That this prince arose from the area around the Mediterranean Sea is all we need to know to understand Revelation.

13:2

Now the beast which I saw was like a leopard, his feet were like the feet of a bear, and his mouth like the mouth of a lion. The dragon gave him his power, his throne, and great authority.

The beast stands upon the Earth as the reincarnation of the prince of the first three and a half years. He is like a leopard (Greece) with the feet of a bear (Persia) and the mouth of a lion (Rome) exercising great authority. He is the consolidation of earthly power in a single satanic man. He has acquired his power by doing what Jesus refused to do, and that is to worship Satan as God. This has been Satan's obsession from day one, and now he has a man willing to worship him as the almighty sovereign. His reward for this sniveling veneration is his place in the evil trinity. Satan is the anti-Yahweh; this beast is the anti-Christ. There is one to go.

13:3-4

And I saw one of his heads as if it had been mortally wounded, and his deadly wound was healed. And all the world marveled and followed the beast. So they worshiped the dragon who gave authority to the beast; and they worshiped the beast, saying, "Who is like the beast? Who is able to make war with him?"

The prince has been assassinated, and is here, in supernatural form, revived and raised from the abyss by the dragon. He is recognizable because the world wonders after him. Not only do worldlings react, but they also revere him. Such is the depth of delusion loosed on the Earth through the energy of the dragon. Even the Lord's chosen nation is caught in the deception, allowing for the desecration of their Temple.

13:5-6

And he was given a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies, and he was given authority to continue for forty-two months. Then he opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme His name, His tabernacle, and those who dwell in heaven.

The blasphemer has 42 months remaining.

13:7

It was granted to him to make war with the saints and to overcome them. And authority was given him over every tribe, tongue, and nation.

His war with the saints results in the great multitude of chapter 7, including the 144,000 sealed and taken up. He overcomes the believing Gentiles who also are taken up. They have refused his mark and will not worship him. This explains the multitude before the throne (7:9-17).

13:8

All who dwell on the earth will worship him, whose names have not been written in the Book of Life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.

"Foundation" means "overthrow," seen in Genesis 1:2 when the ruined Earth was flooded with water. A better translation is: "And all that dwell upon the earth will worship him – everyone whose name has not been written from the overthrow of the world, in the book of life of the Lamb that has been slain."

He is charismatic and the unbelieving world flocks to worship him. But so terrible is he that the only resource for the faithful is to suffer martyrdom or to flee. None who refuse to flee will escape the beast.

13:10

He who leads into captivity shall go into captivity; he who kills with the sword must be killed with the sword. Here is the patience and the faith of the saints.

"Patience" is better translated "patient endurance."

13:11-12

Then I saw another beast coming up out of the earth, and he had two horns like a lamb and spoke like a dragon. And he exercises all the authority of the first beast in his presence and causes the earth and those who dwell in it to worship the first beast, whose deadly wound was healed.

Enter the third person of the evil trinity. The dragon is predominating; the second serves the dragon; the third promotes the second. The third is also called the false prophet and is the anti-spirit. He is religious, coercing people to worship the beast.

13:13-15

He performs great signs, so that he even makes fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men. And he deceives those who dwell on the earth by those signs which he was granted to do in the sight of the beast, telling those who dwell on the earth to make an image to the beast who was wounded by the sword and lived. He was granted power to give breath to the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak and cause as many as would not worship the image of the beast to be killed.

Signs and wonders from the hand of Yahweh were meant to convince and convict Israel to believe. The false prophet proves that signs and wonders can be easily duplicated and corrupted, proving that it is pure folly to seek such things.

2 Thessalonians 2:9-12 : “The coming of the *lawless one* is according to the working of Satan, with all power, signs, and lying wonders, and with all unrighteous deception among those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this reason, God will send them strong delusion, that they should believe the lie, that they all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness.”

Because people are so gullible, they will be deceived by so-called wonders and signs from the trickery of the evil trinity. The false prophet takes advantage and forges an image, perhaps a replica of Nebuchadnezzar’s desert idol. And this image speaks! What does it say? “Worship me or die!”

13:16-17

He causes all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and slave, to receive a mark on their right hand or on their foreheads, and that no one may buy or sell except one who has the mark or the name of the beast, or the number of his name.

Those who fail to resist the worship will be branded and receive a mark on their hands or foreheads. Thus does evil cascade when people trade their faith and freedom for comfort and security. Living from day to day will be completely controlled, and so those refusing the brand will be forced underground to avoid their informers.

13:18

Here is wisdom. Let him who has understanding calculate the number of the beast, for it is the number of a man: His number is 666.

The number of man who was created on the sixth day. It is never a good number. It is not surprising that Nebuchadnezzar's image was 60 cubits high, 6 cubits wide, and the call to worship came from 6 musical instruments. This image would eventually be raised up in Jerusalem, just as it was in Babylon, and for the same reason.

14:1

Then I looked, and behold, a Lamb standing on Mount Zion, and with Him one hundred and forty-four thousand, having His Father's name written on their foreheads.

We are here reminded that we remain under the sign of 12:1 which is the back story of the events from the rider on the white horse (6:2) to Christ the reigning King and Judge of all nations (11:15). We have seen the opening of seven seals and the sounding of seven trumpets. We have witnessed the two wild beasts and their earthly rampage against the Lord's people. And now we see the 144,000 standing with the Lamb on heavenly Mt. Zion.

Here is the fulfillment of the promise to the overcomers of the assemblies in chapters 2 and 3, proving that many in the 144,000 are drawn from the believing congregations raised up during the first half of the seven years. We here witness the result of the sealing in chapter 7 of the 144,000. These saints will form the core of the new nation, a remnant of a larger number to come. We have had a preview of them in 7:9-17 and will find more.

14:2-5

And I heard a voice from heaven, like the voice of many waters, and like the voice of loud thunder. And I heard the sound of harpists playing their harps. They sang as it were a new song before the throne, before the four living creatures, and the elders; and no one could learn that song except the hundred and forty-four thousand who were redeemed from the earth. These are the ones who were not defiled with women, for they are virgins. These are the ones who follow the Lamb wherever He goes. These were redeemed from among men, being firstfruits to God and to the Lamb. And in their mouth was found no deceit, for they are without fault before the throne of God.

Only the 144,000 can sing this heavenly song because only they had the experience. These rejected "the lie" of believing and practicing the religion of the profane trinity. This qualified them as moral "virgins."

14:6-7

Then I saw another angel flying in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach to those who dwell on the earth—to every nation, tribe, tongue, and people—saying with a loud voice, "Fear God and give glory to Him, for the hour of His judgment has come; and worship Him who made heaven and earth, the sea and springs of water."

Being part of the back story, this gospel belongs to the very first economy when men were to fear (reverence) the Creator. Such was the dire situation on the Earth that such a primitive gospel is now utilized.

14:8

And another angel followed, saying, “Babylon is fallen, is fallen, that great city, because she has made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication.”

This is still part of the back story, and it provides a preview of what is coming in real time in chapters 17 and 18. This is the last of the Lord’s judgments on the Earth contained in the seven vials. All these vials belong to Babylon.

14:9-11

Then a third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, “If anyone worships the beast and his image, and receives his mark on his forehead or on his hand, he himself shall also drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out full strength into the cup of His indignation. He shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb. And the smoke of their torment ascends forever and ever; and they have no rest day or night, who worship the beast and his image, and whoever receives the mark of his name.”

This may be the most serious warning ever given to the children of Israel, and to Gentiles in general. Surely, they are under intense pressure to worship the image and take the brand of the beast; thus the warning.

14:12-13

Here is the patience of the saints; here are those who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus.

Then I heard a voice from heaven saying to me, “Write: ‘Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on.’ ”

The Lord does not deliver from death, but graciously encourages. These will stand before the throne as we have seen in chapter 7.

14:14-20

Then I looked, and behold, a white cloud, and on the cloud sat One like the Son of Man, having on His head a golden crown, and in His hand a sharp sickle. And another angel . . . crying with a loud voice to Him . . . “Thrust in Your sickle and reap . . . for the harvest of the earth is ripe.”

So He who sat on the cloud thrust in His sickle on the earth, and the earth was reaped.

So the angel thrust his sickle into the earth and gathered the vine of the earth, and threw it into the great winepress of the wrath of God. And the winepress was trampled outside the city, and blood came out of the winepress, up to the horses’ bridles, for one thousand six hundred furlongs.

At last – the judgment of the Earth. At last many prophecies are fulfilled.

2 Thessalonians 1:6-6:

Since it is a righteous thing with God to repay with tribulation those who trouble you, and to give you who are troubled rest with us when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not know God, and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Matthew 13:41:

The Son of Man will send out His angels, and they will gather out of His kingdom all things that offend, and those who practice lawlessness,

Mark 4:29:

But when the grain ripens, immediately he puts in the sickle, because the harvest has come.”

Matthew 24:37-42

But as the days of Noah were, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be. For as in the days before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, and did not know until the flood came and took them all away, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be. Then two men will be in the field: one will be taken and the other left. Two women will be grinding at the mill: one will be taken and the other left. Watch therefore, for you do not know what hour your Lord is coming.

Jeremiah 2:3

“Israel – holiness to the LORD, the first fruits of His increase. All that devour him will offend; disaster will come upon them,” says the Lord.

This describes the battle of Armageddon when the forces of antichrist battle with Messiah’s army. The Earth is like grapes ripe for harvest. It is ripe for judgment and is reaped with sharp sickles and cast into the winepress of the wrath of God.

The city is Jerusalem; the winepress is outside the city.

This is under the sign and is the sketch of the final judgment; the full picture, the reality, will follow the pouring out of the seventh vial in chapters 17 and 18 when real time continues.

15:1-2

***Then I saw another sign in heaven, great and marvelous: seven angels having the seven last plagues, for in them the wrath of God is complete.
And I saw something like a sea of glass mingled with fire, and those who have the victory over the beast, over his image and over his mark and over the number of his name, standing on the sea of glass, having harps of God.***

We are still operating under the sign of 12:1. We have just passed the final judgment of the winepress of God in 14:20. Here is the time for celebrating the victory over the beast. The celebrants come through the Great Tribulation. They are the two groups of chapter 7 – the 144,000 and the great multitude of Gentiles – the first is the remnant of the woman’s seed (12:7), and the second is the recently saved Gentiles martyred for refusing the mark of the beast.

The sea of glass is mingled with fire. The Lord’s wrath is at its peak intensity.

15:3-4

They sing the song of Moses, the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying: Great and marvelous are Your works, Lord God Almighty! Just and true are Your ways, O King of the saints! Who shall not fear You, O Lord, and glorify Your name? For all nations shall come and worship before You, for Your judgments have been manifested.

Two songs – one old, the song of Moses; one new, the song of the Lamb. Only they could sing it because only they endured the tribulation.

The song of Moses is the Lord’s witness of His faithfulness to His children. Bullinger says, “‘The Song of the Lamb’ looks forward to the completion of all that ‘the Song of Moses’ foretells.”

15:8

The temple was filled with smoke from the glory of God and from His power, and no one was able to enter the temple till the seven plagues of the seven angels were completed.

This ends the great “wonder” or sign of 12:1. Now we leave this parenthetical insertion, this back story that has gone back before creation and coming up to the present, to the open temple in heaven revealing God’s glory. The original account that ended in chapter 11 also ends with an open temple in 11:19. What remains in both the story and the back story is the pouring out of the seven vials. Now we are in real time under no sign. We now follow the narrative from the sounding of the seventh trumpet (11:15) to the completion of Israel’s seventieth seven, the judgment of the nations, the destruction of antichrist and his armies, and the return of the King. The sequence is as follows – the reality (chapters 6-11); the sign sketch (chapter 12-15:8); back to reality (16:1-22:21). Reality becomes the life-size, fully colored picture of the present.

16:1

Then I heard a loud voice from the temple saying to the seven angels, “Go and pour out the bowls of the wrath of God on the earth.”

We come to the final assault on the profane and satanic trinity – the dragon, the beast, and the false prophet.

The vials contain judgments only. Six of the seven match the judgments on Pharaoh in Egypt. We have no liberty to not take them literally.

The judgments fall on the beast, the false prophet and their followers.

16:12-14

Then the sixth angel poured out his bowl on the great river Euphrates, and its water was dried up, so that the way of the kings from the east might be prepared. And I saw three unclean spirits like frogs coming out of the mouth of the dragon, out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet. For they are spirits of demons, performing signs, which go out to the kings of the earth and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty.

The gathering of armies to the beast for the final battle. The fake words from false miscreants set the tone for the kings and their armies. They will soon realize the extent of this deception.

16:15

“Behold, I am coming as a thief. Blessed is he who watches, and keeps his garments, lest he walk naked and they see his shame.”

The encouragement of the Son of Man to his troops, even with the battle about to rage.

16:16

And they gathered them together to the place called in Hebrew, Armageddon.

For the righteous this is a long-awaited and positive development.

16:17

Then the seventh angel poured out his bowl into the air, and a loud voice came out of the temple of heaven, from the throne, saying, “It is done!”

This is the last opening of the temple. The Son of God comes forth to battle (19:11). But first a pause to witness the supernatural judgment of Yahweh on Babylon and the beast's empire.

16:18-19

And there were noises and thunderings and lightnings; and there was a great earthquake, such a mighty and great earthquake as had not occurred since men were on the earth. Now the great city was divided into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell. And great Babylon was remembered before God, to give her the cup of the wine of the fierceness of His wrath.

This earthquake Ezekiel saw in 38:20. The capitol of the beast and the cities of his allies fall under Earth's force. Babylon is split in thirds.

16:20-21

Then every island fled away, and the mountains were not found. And great hail from heaven fell upon men, each hailstone about the weight of a talent. Men blasphemed God because of the plague of the hail, since that plague was exceedingly great.

The judgment intensifies. The weight of a talent is around 100 pounds. That is a chunk of ice! Still, men blaspheme. Who can know how deep is the darkness in a human heart?

17:1

Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls came and talked with me, saying to me, “Come, I will show you the judgment of the great harlot who sits on many waters,

This is probably the most complicated part of John’s treatise. It shows exactly who is this beast who leads the world’s armies against Jerusalem and the Lord’s people. Having already slain the 144,000 and the great multitude of martyrs, he sets himself for the final assault against Israel and her city. They are the last impediment to his plan to secure world-wide worship and control.

So how is it that the beast, the antichrist, who has forcibly assumed control over the Earth, especially the Middle East that controls the whole, is now come to be associated with a great whore who sits upon many waters? And what makes a whore?

She gives herself to those willing to pay the price for her services. Those services are outside the boundaries of law and decency. Her services corrupt and ruin the buyers. She entices her clients until they cannot resist her, and then she takes control of them.

This great whore, a whore above all others, “sits on many waters.” She is a worldwide system, spreading her vile activity to every continent and country.

She is a corporate woman as is Israel. She is not a whore because of what she is, but because of what she *does*. Her actions make her a whore. As a system of evil, we see all the earmarks of harlotry. Enticing and stealthy, manipulative and coercive – all for the purpose of relieving people of their wealth in exchange for pleasure.

17:2

with whom the kings of the earth committed fornication, and the inhabitants of the earth were made drunk with the wine of her fornication.”

Leaders of every country commit fornication with her. Fornication is copulation outside the bounds of marriage, so she ruins every meaningful relationship. Fornication is not for commitment but for raw pleasure. Inhabitants of the Earth are made drunk with the wine of her fornication. They lose their ability to think clearly and lose control of themselves. She represents pleasure and the authorities of the Earth are driven by the pursuit of it.

17:3

So he carried me away in the Spirit into the wilderness. And I saw a woman sitting on a scarlet beast which was full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns.

She dwells in the wilderness, the only place suitable for a godless and malicious and entrapping wench. Here we switch from a sign to a metaphor. The sign of 12:1 ended in 15:8 with the open temple in heaven. As a metaphor, this woman is a diabolical system designed to entangle the world’s inhabitants.

She sits on a “scarlet colored beast,” the beast who is red with the blood of thousands of martyrs. We know this beast, this second of the evil trinity, this antichrist. He carries upon him all the names of blasphemy and has seven heads and ten horns. Being the colossal amalgam of all the political systems of men from the beginning, he exercises absolute power over the Earth.

This beast is strictly human when he first comes on the scene during the first half of the tribulation. He was assassinated and went down into the abyss in a counterfeit burial mimicking Jesus. He brings awe to the world’s inhabitants when he is raised from the abyss, aping Jesus’ resurrection, and takes on superhuman form having seven heads and ten horns. This proves his absolute authority.

What are the seven heads of the beast? He incorporates in his superhuman form all the political systems of all time that have directly touched Israel. Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Persia, Greece, and Rome make up six heads. The seventh belongs to the beast and will last for the final three and half years known as the Great Tribulation.

17:4

The woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet, and adorned with gold and precious stones and pearls, having in her hand a golden cup full of abominations and the filthiness of her fornication.

The woman is idolatrous and is adorned with outward beauty but binding the most contemptible evil inside her being. She plays upon the basest instincts of people, especially men. Her golden cup conceals rank wickedness. Her leading sin is idolatry, and she craves to be adored and worshiped, and will prostitute herself to gather people around her for that purpose. Remember, she is a system of evil.

17:5

And on her forehead a name was written: MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH.

“Mystery” denotes religion, knowing secrets that no one else knows. The original source of religion – ancient Babylon – developed a priestly class who were exclusively privy to the dark secrets of Satan’s realm of activity. They handled all the worship because they knew the demonic mysteries. This made them powerful and revered by the commoners, the uninitiated. Idol worship took off from there in the form of a tower, a ziggurat, a stepped pyramid.

Babylonian religion was the mother, and every godless religion from that day to this is a daughter. And religion in that context, that is idolatry, has been and is the source of the abominations of the Earth.

Not only is the woman the great whore in gathering wealth and luxuries around her, but she is also the mother of religious daughters. In both areas she seeks to be worshiped, as does the beast who carries her.

17:6

I saw the woman, drunk with the blood of the saints and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus. And when I saw her, I marveled with great amazement.

Idolatry results in the death of saints. For the woman to be worshiped, she must murder those who won't comply.

17:8

The beast that you saw was, and is not, and will ascend out of the bottomless pit and go to perdition. And those who dwell on the earth will marvel, whose names are not written in the Book of Life from the foundation of the world, when they see the beast that was, and is not, and yet is.

The interpretation of John's vision.

In the first half of the seven years the beast lived and moved on the Earth as a human man. He was assassinated and went down into the abyss. He was revived by the dragon (Satan) and returned from death. He "was, and is not, and yet is." His ultimate destiny is perdition in the lake of fire.

17:10

There are also seven kings. Five have fallen, one is, and the other has not yet come. And when he comes, he must continue a short time.

This is the line leading to the beast. Seven kings, five of which are dead. Who were these kings if not the kings of the great empires? "Five kings are fallen" refer to Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Persia, and Greece. "One is," in John's day, is Rome. "The other is not yet come" is antichrist who reigns a short time (seven years).

These empires come only into biblical history because they had and will have a direct connection to Israel and its city Jerusalem. To the Lord history revolves around Israel as does all prophecy. Secular history fills in some gaps, but not all.

In the Lord's design Israel was to take prominence over the Earth and should have from the beginning when they entered their land after Egypt. They had the king (David) but not the temple. That was left to Solomon, David's son. No story in the Bible approaches the sadness of Solomon except Judas Iscariot. David provided him with everything. He cleansed the land of enemies leaving Solomon a clean slate upon which to build the Lord's house, even giving him the plans to follow. Solomon started his kingship asking the Lord only for wisdom to rule well. The Lord blessed him remarkably and he finished the magnificent structure. His fame went far and wide and drew the accolades of all who came and saw. But alas. Solomon succumbed to women, and women led him into idolatry, the one sin that crossed the line from which he could never retreat. A thousand women cluttered his life.

The Lord's judgment on the decadent situation brought a split among the tribes; exile to Babylon; exile to Assyria; loss of the land, the temple, and the city, creating a vacuum the Gentiles rushed in to fill. Such is the legacy of idolatry.

But through a series of pathetic kings, the ten northern tribes split off from Judah and Benjamin, and Assyria took them captive. Then Nebuchadnezzar came in to Judah and captured the land and the city and destroyed the temple, taking many captives with him. By capturing Jerusalem, he became the starting point of the “times of the Gentiles.” That extended to 1948 when Israel gained statehood, and to 1967 when they retook their city. For the first time since the Maccabees threw off Greek rule in 165 BC did they have jurisdiction over Jerusalem. That was the end of Gentile domination of Israel. It proves conclusively that we are living on borrowed time. There is nothing more to be accomplished prophetically except the rebuilding of the temple. Israel has the land; it has the city. All that remains is the temple that antichrist will desecrate with his image – probably a replica of Nebuchadnezzar’s statue.

17:14

These will make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb will overcome them, for He is Lord of lords and King of kings; and those who are with Him are called, chosen, and faithful.”

They are those described in 14:1 standing with the Lamb on Mt. Zion. They are the 144,000 sealed for battle. This describes the scene following the Lord’s return to the Mount of Olives allowing His people to escape antichrist and his armies. Once they escape, He goes to battle against the beast and his armies on Mt. Zion.

17:15-16

Then he said to me, “The waters which you saw, where the harlot sits, are peoples, multitudes, nations, and tongues.

And the ten horns which you saw on the beast, these will hate the harlot, make her desolate and naked, eat her flesh and burn her with fire.

The satanic trinity embodied in the beast finds here a rival in the woman (Babylon), who has a world-wide reach. Formerly she sat upon the beast in 17:3 and he carried her. In other words, she ruled him and used him for her own purposes. Using his subordinated power, she spread her idolatry to the Earth because she wants to be worshiped. There is not room enough in the world for both. Religion must be destroyed in favor of commerce.

The kings associated with the beast hate the woman who is diverting worship from the beast by her enticements to those addicted to her idolatry and the wealth incumbent in it. They attack her and dispose of her, a demonstration of savage disunity among the evil players.

The competition is simple: Will a man rule or a woman? Both cannot. The beast is the man; Babylon is the woman. They cannot coexist when they are both vying for the same thing – the worship of all humans on Earth. So, the ten kings of the beast attack her – the priests, her priestesses, her temples, her image, her temple servants, and all those involved in promoting idols and idol worship. The kings dare not oppose, for the beast is the superhuman raised out of the abyss.

17:17

For God has put it into their hearts to fulfill His purpose, to be of one mind, and to give their kingdom to the beast, until the words of God are fulfilled.

The Lord God is behind this, and works through the kings. He uses their own agency to judge idolatry.

17:18

And the woman whom you saw is that great city which reigns over the kings of the earth.”

The woman is Babylon the city. This proves she is a system with a headquarter. This is how a city can be a woman. A city contains people, in this city, idolatrous people profiting from the weakness of pleasure-addicted clients.

18:1-2

After these things I saw another angel coming down from heaven, having great authority, and the earth was illuminated with his glory. And he cried mightily with a loud voice, saying, “Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and has become a dwelling place of demons, a prison for every foul spirit, and a cage for every unclean and hated bird!

Here are the details of the woman’s judgment. Though 17:16 tells of the kings executing violence on the woman, here it is divine judgment on a city, for the woman is a metaphor.

For this judgment to occur, Babylon must be rebuilt in the same region as original Babel. Both have all to do with idols – Babel, the beginning; Babylon, the end. The time it takes to build such a city would exceed the parameters of seven years. Therefore, we could reason this way: the Lord’s first advent from birth to ascension was about 33 years. We could count His second advent from the going forth of the rider on the white horse to His return to the Mount of Olives as 33 years, meaning the rider could start riding 26 years before the first trumpet signals the beginning of the seven years.

Or we could count 33 years to the first trumpet, add seven years for the tribulation period resulting in a 40-year span, forty being a period of trial throughout Israel’s history.

In any event there is ample time for the building of the city of Babylon and Jerusalem’s temple as well. When the woman marshals her resources toward the one goal of constructing a city astride a mighty river as was ancient Babel, modern Babylon would astonish in its rebuilding.

“Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen.” Why two falls? The woman is the dark force behind the literal city. Her system of idolatry has propelled her into direct competition with the dragon, the beast, the false prophet, and the kings supporting the beast. The conflict is about allegiance and veneration of the hearts of men and women. The beast and the woman fight for the same thing – to be worshiped. The beast has his image; the woman has her city. The beast has his kings; the woman has her merchants. The woman loses.

The ancient prophets speak of this: Isaiah 47:1-15; Jeremiah 50:4-9, 51:24, 45, 53, 57, 63-64.

18:3

For all the nations have drunk of the wine of the wrath of her fornication, the kings of the earth have committed fornication with her, and the merchants of the earth have become rich through the abundance of her luxury.”

Not only does she lose, but all who have given their souls to her through idolatry, lose as well. All her pleasure-giving enticements and delicacies go down with her.

18:4

And I heard another voice from heaven saying, “Come out of her, my people, lest you share in her sins, and lest you receive of her plagues.

This is shocking. What are Jews doing in Babylon? The answer is simple: either they were forcibly taken there, or they were involved in commerce by choice. Regardless, they are told to flee the city. Failure to obey this warning will destroy them. This warning hearkens back to Jeremiah 51:6.

18:5-7

For her sins have reached to heaven, and God has remembered her iniquities. Render to her just as she rendered to you and repay her double according to her works; in the cup which she has mixed, mix double for her. In the measure that she glorified herself and lived luxuriously, in the same measure give her torment and sorrow; for she says in her heart, ‘I sit as queen, and am no widow, and will not see sorrow.’

See Jeremiah 51:9

This in no way belongs to the current “age of grace.” It belongs to a future economy that encompasses the nation of Israel, and in that economy, there is judgment. Isaiah 47:7-15 is a perfect match for these verses. This economy is the economy of the kingdom, previously interrupted in 62 AD when Israel rejected Messiah.

18:8

Therefore her plagues will come in one day—death and mourning and famine. And she will be utterly burned with fire, for strong is the Lord God who judges her.

This is the same burning destruction mentioned in 17:16, and here are the details. Babylon’s sudden disappearance from Earth at this time in history proves it had to be rebuilt. This verse does *not* describe the gradual decay of ancient Babylon.

18:9-10

“The kings of the earth who committed fornication and lived luxuriously with her will weep and lament for her, when they see the smoke of her burning, standing at a distance for fear of her torment, saying, ‘Alas, alas, that great city Babylon, that mighty city! For in one hour your judgment has come.’

These kings are mentioned in 17:2. The “ten kings” always belong to the beast. “Kings of the earth” belong to Babylon. The rivalry now ends in the destruction of the city. The woman’s idolatrous system sourced in Nimrod along with its rank sin of fornication is judged. Double judgment consumes the literal city. There is no opposition to this judgement. The kings of the Earth are human; the beast and his horns are superhuman. They will have no dissenters to their rule. The earthly kings can only look on and wail. The man of sin prevails over the woman. False religion is no more.

18:11-14

***“And the merchants of the earth will weep and mourn over her, for no one buys their merchandise anymore: merchandise of gold and silver, precious stones and pearls, fine linen and purple, silk and scarlet, every kind of citron wood, every kind of object of ivory, every kind of object of most precious wood, bronze, iron, and marble; and cinnamon and incense, fragrant oil and frankincense, wine and oil, fine flour and wheat, cattle and sheep, horses and chariots, and bodies and souls of men. The fruit that your soul longed for has gone from you, and all the things which are rich and splendid have gone from you, and you shall find them no more at all.*”**

The end is complete, and all the woman’s insatiable suitors are left to mourn. All their luxuries and pleasures go up in literal smoke, along with their lucrative commerce born and raised in idolatry.

18:18-19

***and cried out when they saw the smoke of her burning, saying, ‘What is like this great city?’ ‘They threw dust on their heads and cried out, weeping and wailing, and saying, ‘Alas, alas, that great city, in which all who had ships on the sea became rich by her wealth! For in one hour she is made desolate.’*”**

Who can tell of the angst of the unbelieving world when their queen of wealth and idols falls headlong into devastation? The shattering of dreams, the inward and outward dislocation, the sense of abject emptiness! How fragile are the carefully laid plans that do not involve divine welfare, guidance, and blessing.

18:20

***“Rejoice over her, O heaven, and you holy apostles and prophets, for God has avenged you on her!”*”**

This shows a previous economy to our own when prayers and praise for vengeance are entirely suitable. How many apostles and prophets have felt the keen edger of idol religion since Nimrod? The mother and her daughters have cast their swords against the Lord’s servants from the beginning. No more!

18:21-23

***Then a mighty angel took up a stone like a great millstone and threw it into the sea, saying, “Thus with violence the great city Babylon shall be thrown down, and shall not be found anymore. The sound of harpists, musicians, flutists, and trumpeters shall not be heard in you*”**

anymore. No craftsman of any craft shall be found in you anymore, and the sound of a millstone shall not be heard in you anymore. The light of a lamp shall not shine in you anymore, and the voice of bridegroom and bride shall not be heard in you anymore. For your merchants were the great men of the earth, for by your sorcery all the nations were deceived.

Here is the divine exclamation point on the judgment of the perennially odious thorn in the side of heaven and the heavenly-minded. Idolatry is no more! All the pleasures of sin that have plagued humanity since Cain's murder of Abel is no more! And "the great men of the earth" are destitute in one hour. The Earth has nothing left but the beast and his kings and his armies.

18:24

And in her was found the blood of prophets and saints, and of all who were slain on the earth."

Here is the reason for the exacting of extreme vengeance. Jeremiah 51:47-49 speaks to it:

Therefore behold, the days are coming that I will bring judgment on the carved images of Babylon; her whole land shall be ashamed, and all her slain shall fall in her midst. Then the heavens and the earth and all that is in them shall sing joyously over Babylon; for the plunderers shall come to her from the north," says the Lord. As Babylon has caused the slain of Israel to fall, so at Babylon the slain of all the earth shall fall.

The woman in her whole history has negatively impacted Yahweh's chosen, Israel. That alone is enough to trigger His wrath.

19:1-5

After these things I heard a loud voice of a great multitude in heaven, saying, "Alleluia! Salvation and glory and honor and power belong to the Lord our God! For true and righteous are His judgments, because He has judged the great harlot who corrupted the earth with her fornication; and He has avenged on her the blood of His servants shed by her." And the twenty-four elders and the four living creatures fell down and worshiped God who sat on the throne, saying, "Amen! Alleluia!" Then a voice came from the throne, saying, "Praise our God, all you His servants and those who fear Him, both small and great!"

This is the first "Hallelujah" in the New Testament, and we receive it in conjunction with righteous judgment. Whereas the earthlings cry "Woe! Woe!", the heavenly chorus shouts "Hallelujah!" At last, the prayer of the martyrs under the altar is answered:

And they cried with a loud voice, saying, "How long, O Lord, holy and true, until You judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?" (6:10)

19:6-7

And I heard, as it were, the voice of a great multitude, as the sound of many waters and as the sound of mighty thunderings, saying, "Alleluia! For the Lord God Omnipotent reigns! Let us be glad and rejoice and give Him glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready."

In no way is the body of Christ to be found in these scenes. This is the culmination of Israel's economy. The marriage of the Lamb is the marriage of Messiah to His chosen nation. Only Israel can marry Messiah. Take notice of these verifying verses:

Isaiah 54:5-8

For your Maker *is* your husband, the Lord of hosts is His name; and your Redeemer is the Holy One of Israel; He is called the God of the whole earth. For the Lord has called you like a woman forsaken and grieved in spirit, like a youthful wife when you were refused," says your God. For a mere moment I have forsaken you, but with great mercies I will gather you. With a little wrath I hid my face from you for a moment, but with everlasting kindness I will have mercy on you."

Isaiah 62:4-5

You shall no longer be termed Forsaken, nor shall your land any more be termed Desolate; but you shall be called Hephzibah, and your land Beulah; for the Lord delights in you, and your land shall be married. For as a young man marries a virgin, so shall your sons marry you; and as the bridegroom rejoices over the bride, so shall your God rejoice over you.

Hosea 2:16, 19

"Therefore, behold, I will allure her, will bring her into the wilderness, and speak comfort to her. "I will betroth you to Me forever; yes, I will betroth you to Me in righteousness and justice, in lovingkindness and mercy.

Jeremiah 3:14

"Return, O backsliding children," says the LORD; "for I am married to you. I will take you, one from a city and two from a family, and I will bring you to Zion.

Abraham's vision secures Israel's status. All Israel was called as the sand of the seashore (Genesis 18:16), as the wife residing on Earth. An elect remnant was called out of Israel, represented by the stars of Genesis 15:5. She is the Bride, residing in heaven.

The wife, the earthly Israel, has made herself ready. Her readiness has everything to do with meeting conditions laid down by the Lamb. Meeting those conditions is entirely her responsibility.

This contrasts with the body of Christ. We are already made ready by His work (Colossians 1:12). "We are complete in Him" (Colossians 2:10; and we are "perfect in Christ Jesus" (Colossians 1:28); and "we are accepted in the beloved" (Ephesians 1:6). The wife stands by works, the body by grace.

19:8-9

And to her it was granted to be arrayed in fine linen, clean and bright, for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints.

Then he said to me, "Write: 'Blessed are those who are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb!'" And he said to me, "These are the true sayings of God."

The appearance of the wife is white linen – the righteous works, or acts, or deeds of the saints who comprise her. Her devotion to the Lamb in practical living for others is what everyone sees. This is what she will wear to the marriage.

There is only one wife, but many attendants who have done their part to make her what she is. The wedding feast in Matthew 25 describes this clearly. The bride was already prepared, but half her companions were not, and so missed the festivities. Israel has a choice: full devotion to the Bridegroom to attain bridehood, partial devotion to be her attendant and enjoy the marriage feast, or lack of devotion and be shut out from the blessing.

19:10

And I fell at his feet to worship him. But he said to me, "See that you do not do that! I am your fellow servant, and of your brethren who have the testimony of Jesus. Worship God! For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy."

The angel and John are engaged in the same work – the angel reports, John writes. Both are necessary for the enlightenment and encouragement of the saints. So the angel forbids John's worship and corrects him, stating strongly that everything he has shared and everything John has seen has to do with Jesus, the true prophet.

19:11

Now I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse. And He who sat on him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and makes war.

We should never mistake this white horse and rider with the one who opened the first seal in 6:2. This rider is faithful and true; the other is neither. The false Christ of the first seal goes out to subdue everything and everyone to himself. This rider goes out to make righteous war against the first. In His first advent He rode a donkey into Jerusalem to His execution; here in His second advent He rides a white horse into war with the antichrist. There He came in humiliation as the suffering Messiah; here He comes in power and glory as the conquering king.

19:13

His name is called The Word of God.

The Lord created with words; He destroys with words. Everything He is is conveyed on words. That is His means of communicating with His creation and of dealing with the material universe.

19:14

And the armies in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, followed Him on white horses.

These are angelic armies accustomed to war against the enemies of Yahweh. They shouldn't be reasoned away as if we know everything about heaven and its inhabitants.

The lines are drawn:

Antichrist against Christ.

Angels against angels.

Superhuman beings against glorified saints.

Mortals against mortals.

The whole kingdom of God against the whole kingdom of Satan.

19:15-16

Now out of His mouth goes a sharp sword, that with it He should strike the nations. And He Himself will rule them with a rod of iron. He Himself treads the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. And He has on His robe and on His thigh a name written:

***KING OF KINGS AND
LORD OF LORDS.***

This fulfills Psalm 2:

*Why do the nations rage,
And the people plot a vain thing?
The kings of the earth set themselves,
And the rulers take counsel together,
Against the LORD and against His Anointed, saying,
“Let us break Their bonds in pieces
And cast away Their cords from us.”*

*He who sits in the heavens shall laugh;
The Lord shall hold them in derision.
Then He shall speak to them in His wrath,
And distress them in His deep displeasure:
“Yet I have set My King
On My holy hill of Zion.”*

*“I will declare the decree:
The LORD has said to Me,
‘You are My Son,
Today I have begotten You.
Ask of Me, and I will give You
The nations for Your inheritance,
And the ends of the earth for Your possession.
You shall break them with a rod of iron;
You shall dash them to pieces like a potter’s vessel.’ ”*

*Now therefore, be wise, O kings;
Be instructed, you judges 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,
When His wrath is kindled but a little.
Blessed are all those who put their trust in Him.***

This is the treading of the winepress of 14:19. It is the triumph of the woman's seed, the humble incarnate, the Prince of Israel.

Notice that the sword of destruction comes not from His hand but from His mouth. He is the *Word of God*.

19:17-18

Then I saw an angel standing in the sun; and he cried with a loud voice, saying to all the birds that fly in the midst of heaven, "Come and gather together for the supper of the great God, that you may eat the flesh of kings, the flesh of captains, the flesh of mighty men, the flesh of horses and of those who sit on them, and the flesh of all people, free and slave, both small and great."

The call to the aftermath of a battle yet to be fought. Surpassing confidence.

19:19

And I saw the beast, the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against Him who sat on the horse and against His army.

The kings of the Earth are deluded as were those angels who believed the lies of Lucifer that they could overtake the Supreme. These kings join the beast in a futile effort to triumph over the Christ.

19:20-21

Then the beast was captured, and with him the false prophet who worked signs in his presence, by which he deceived those who received the mark of the beast and those who worshiped his image. These two were cast alive into the lake of fire burning with brimstone. And the rest were killed with the sword which proceeded from the mouth of Him who sat on the horse. And all the birds were filled with their flesh.

The two superhumans who came up living from the abyss are now cast alive into the lake of fire. The mortal kings and armies are slain by the Christ, and the birds of 19:17-19 feast on their flesh.

Those who destroyed the woman Babylon, who carried out the Lord's judgment on the wicked city, are here destroyed by the avenging Messiah with His armies. The pestilent evil that has inflicted itself on the Lord's creation and creatures from before the foundation of the world is thrust alive into the lake of fire. Two thirds of the infernal trinity are out of commission. Only the dragon remains.

Note again the means of warfare and vengeance – “the sword which proceeded from the mouth of Him.”

20:1-3

Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, having the key to the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. He laid hold of the dragon, that serpent of old, who is the Devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years; and he cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal on him, so that he should deceive the nations no more till the thousand years were finished. But after these things he must be released for a little while.

Evil is reserved for final judgment at another time, that time being at the end of the millennial kingdom when he will emerge to deceive the nations inhabiting the Earth. Obviously, some among the nations will make their choice with Satan. It is beyond comprehension that having lived under the Messiah King for 1000 years, some would cast their lot with evil. What could they possibly hope to gain?

Why would Satan be released? The next station in the eternal drama is eternity itself. Only the pure and faithful can enter the hallowed realm. Satan is released to test the nations. Are there any who dissent from the king's rule? Are there any who chafe at the rod of iron? Are there any who hate that the children of Israel are always preferred, and that they always occupy first place? These and other questions find answers when Satan goes forth from the abyss. The citizens of the kingdom will have a choice to make, and that choice will determine their eternity.

20:4

And I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was committed to them. Then I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for their witness to Jesus and for the word of God, who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received his mark on their foreheads or on their hands. And they lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years.

This is the determination of vindication and reward for those of 6:9-10, who cried from under the altar. These would share in the Messiah's reign. (See Matthew 25:31)

20:5-6

But the rest of the dead did not live again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is he who has part in the first resurrection. Over such the second death has no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years.

These will come to life at the resurrection of the unrighteous. They will miss the reign of those taken in the first resurrection, the subject of 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17. This “first” (or best) resurrection is mentioned in the following verses and concerns Israel and the remnant assemblies: Luke 14:14; 20:34-36; Acts 24:15; 26:6-8; and Hebrews 11:35.

The body of Christ, in contrast, is a “secret,” revealed only by special revelation. See Ephesians 1:17 and Colossians 2:2-3.

To sum it up, the resurrection of 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17 and 1 Corinthians 15:51-52 is for the righteous of Israel, not the body of Christ. Reigning with Christ is the reward for the overcomers of Israel and is nothing for which Christians in the body of Christ should aspire. Being attached to the Head is blessing enough. Leave for Israel what belongs to her.

20:7-8

Now when the thousand years have expired, Satan will be released from his prison and will go out to deceive the nations which are in the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle, whose number is as the sand of the sea.

This is the most futile act of desperation ever attempted since time began. Notice that Satan goes out to the four corners of the Earth, those regions furthest away from Jerusalem and the influence of the King. After 1000 years of living under the perfect righteousness of the Messiah, people still don't learn. They would rather live under the influence of the evil nature and its god. Rather than chasing around scriptures concerning Gog and Magog, let them be a term for Gentiles in general.

20:9

They went up on the breadth of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city. And fire came down from God out of heaven and devoured them.

The Lord has had enough. Satan's end will come in a special judgment.

20:10

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

Here is the terrible trinity reunited in the lake of fire. It is the end of a long and bitter journey that began at the heavenly rebellion and continued in Genesis 3:15. His head is crushed at last.

20:11

Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away. And there was found no place for them.

This is the last judgment. No fanfare here. No thundering voices; no mighty angels announcing this and that. No breathless silence. Only business. Only the Judge.

20:12-13

And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God, and books were opened. And another book was opened, which is the Book of Life. And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books. The sea gave up the dead who were in it, and Death and Hades delivered up the dead who were in them. And they were judged, each one according to his works.

The judged are those who did not raise in the resurrection of the righteous. The judgment is based on evidence found in the books. Since the book of life contains names, probably these books also contain names. Perhaps there is a biography attached to the names, since they are judged “according to their works.” “Works” belong to the economies of Israel, and so are judged.

20:14-15

Then Death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire.

A statement of raw fact. Death and the place of death and all those not in the book of life, all are cast into the burning lake of righteous retribution. Whether we think it fair of a loving deity or not, we better get used to it, because it is finished. The incinerator of the universe will roar for eternity and never consume its contents.

21:1-2

Now I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away. Also there was no more sea. Then I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.

A new heaven and a new Earth are not to be confused with the physical elements that make up their composition. Rather think of what has happened upon the Earth and in and under heaven. Therein lies the problem and therein comes the judgment. From the beginning Satan has been ever active and has left his blight wherever he went and whatever he did. This scourge must be removed and, at this point in the narrative, has been.

The source of the holy city is Yahweh Himself. That does not mean that the New Jerusalem is not physical and literal. If something is not literal the Spirit will tell us (see Revelation 12:1)

21:3-4

And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, “Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them and be their God. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away.”

This is a pronouncement to all people everywhere who have passed through the millennial kingdom whether Jew or Gentile.

Death shall be no more. A glorious reality to be enjoyed for eternity.

21:5-8

Then He who sat on the throne said, “Behold, I make all things new.” And He said to me, “Write, for these words are true and faithful.” And He said to me, “It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. I will give of the fountain of the water of life freely to him who thirsts. He who overcomes shall inherit all things, and I will be his God and he shall be My son. But the cowardly, unbelieving, abominable, murderers, sexually immoral,

sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death.”

The divine carrot and stick. To the saints of the tribulation who endured and overcame comes a wonderful reward. To the weak and fearful who took the mark of the beast comes a dreadful punishment.

The second death was the Lord’s threat to the assembly at Smyrna. He would give no such word to the body of Christ.

21:9-12

Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls filled with the seven last plagues came to me and talked with me, saying, “Come, I will show you the bride, the Lamb’s wife.” And he carried me away in the Spirit to a great and high mountain, and showed me the great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God, having the glory of God. Her light was like a most precious stone, like a jasper stone, clear as crystal. Also she had a great and high wall with twelve gates, and twelve angels at the gates, and names written on them, which are the names of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel:

The bride is the heavenly city comprised of a certain class from Israel. Like Babylon, the New Jerusalem has its meaning and substance in its inhabitants. They are those of Israel who, like Abraham, sought a heavenly city:

. . . for he waited for the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker *is* God. (Hebrews 11:10)

These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off were assured of them, embraced them and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the Earth. For those who say such things declare plainly that they seek a homeland. And truly if they had called to mind that country from which they had come out, they would have had opportunity to return. But now they desire a better, that is, a heavenly. Therefore, God is not ashamed to be called their God, for He has prepared a city for them. (Hebrews 11:13-16)

What John is seeing is what Abraham and the sojourners sought. These are different from the Israelites called out of Egypt to the promised land. Among them, surely, were some who saw the Abrahamic vision of the heavenly city – Moses, Joshua, Caleb, David, etc. – but they are not identified by name. This group would include all those listed in Hebrews 11.

The city expresses the glory of Yahweh because the bride is transformed through sufferings. No doubt the ancient saints of Israel are constituents.

That the city is Hebrew is beyond dispute. At the twelve gates are twelve apostles of the Lamb and the gates bear the names of the twelve tribes of Israel.

21:13-14

Three gates on the east, three gates on the north, three gates on the south, and three gates on the west. Now the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them were the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.

The twelve foundations bear the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb, proving once again that the city is entirely of the kingdom economy.

21:21

The twelve gates were twelve pearls: each individual gate was of one pearl. And the street of the city was pure gold, like transparent glass.

A city so large (1500 miles long on each side and high) cannot have just one street, so rather we should say all street *material* was pure gold.

21:22

But I saw no temple in it, for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple.

The temple was nothing without the indwelling One. The city has no temple because it is a temple of sorts, since the Lord lives there.

21:23

The city had no need of the sun or of the moon to shine in it, for the glory of God illuminated it. The Lamb is its light.

The city lights the universe because “God is light and in Him is no darkness at all.”

21:24-26

And the nations of those who are saved shall walk in its light, and the kings of the earth bring their glory and honor into it. Its gates shall not be shut at all by day (there shall be no night there). And they shall bring the glory and the honor of the nations into it. But there shall by no means enter it anything that defiles, or causes an abomination or a lie, but only those who are written in the Lamb’s Book of Life.

The believing Gentiles who came through the tribulation will enjoy the city for eternity. They are rewarded for their beneficence toward Israel during the reign of antichrist. They learned through much personal trial and sacrifice to walk in the divine light coming from the beleaguered earthly nation. Now they are privileged to walk forever in the divine light of the new holy city.

The arrangement then is as follows: the Father and the Son are the temple at the top. The inhabitants of the city are the bride comprised of those saints (Jew and Gentile) who, in their earthly sojourn “sought a city which has foundations whose builder and maker is God.” This would include the litany of saints from Hebrews 11 and any ancient saints of the same ilk. The twelve apostles of the Lamb, the little flock of believing Jews and Gentile converts, and any others the Lord will include.

The new Earth, upon which the city rests, bears all the rest of Israel who faithfully followed their God from Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob up to Messiah.

In the Lord's promise to Abraham in Genesis 22:16-18, the bride as the city is the stars of heaven. Israel of the new Earth is the sand on the seashore. One heavenly, one earthly. Both wonderful, but one superior. All are saved from eternal perdition, but not all occupy the same position in glory.

22:1-5

And he showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding from the throne of God and of the Lamb. In the middle of its street, and on either side of the river, was the tree of life, which bore twelve fruits, each tree yielding its fruit every month. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. And there shall be no more curse, but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it, and His servants shall serve Him. They shall see His face, and His name shall be on their foreheads. There shall be no night there: They need no lamp nor light of the sun, for the Lord God gives them light. And they shall reign forever and ever.

There is no reason to doubt the literality of these words. The tree of life hearkens back to the garden of Eden. The Lord provided the tree to prolong life forever. Once the couple ate the fruit of the tree of knowledge, they slowly began to die.

The nations eat the healing leaves and life continues. This is Paradise, once lost, now regained.

22:8-9

Now I, John, saw and heard these things. And when I heard and saw, I fell down to worship before the feet of the angel who showed me these things. Then he said to me, "See that you do not do that. For I am your fellow servant, and of your brethren the prophets, and of those who keep the words of this book. Worship God."

John is rebuked by the angel. Worship only belongs to the Lord. The angel made John realize that they were partners in these eternal things. Worship belongs to Yahweh.

22:10

And he said to me, "Do not seal the words of the prophecy of this book, for the time is at hand.

Sometimes the Lord's vision is sealed, as when Daniel had to seal up the vision in 12:4,8, and 9. But not here. Daniel's vision concerned the end times and could not be fulfilled then. So, he had to seal them. Here John is told to not seal up the words of the prophecy because that interlocking economy (the body of Christ) is long past.

22:12-13

"And behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to give to every one according to his work. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End, the First and the Last."

The Lord's return rewards His people's works, appropriate for that economy.

22:14

Blessed are those who do His commandments, that they may have the right to the tree of life, and may enter through the gates into the city.

“Do His commandments” should be “wash their robes.”

Why are garments important? Because they express a person’s character and attitude. Usually, a saint who is particular about his outward garments can be trusted with eternal truths. What he is outwardly reflects what he is inwardly. The admonition to “put on Christ” is a very real appeal to allow the inward Christ to modify and transform outward behavior. Taking care of the inward relationship with Christ will result in a proper expression (garments) of Him. Only proper behavior ensures entrance into the city and the right to the tree of life.

22:16

“I, Jesus, have sent My angel to testify to you these things in the churches. I am the Root and the Offspring of David, the Bright and Morning Star.”

Our Lord signs off by iterating His credentials. The root (divine) and offspring (human) of David. Jesus, both God and man, is the fulfillment of Balaam’s prophecy in Numbers 24:17-19:

“I see Him, but not now; I behold Him but not near; a star shall come out of Jacob; a scepter shall rise out of Israel . . . Out of Jacob One shall have dominion . . .

He is here fully and brightly shining as He ushers in eternal blessedness for His people.

22:17

And the Spirit and the bride say, “Come!” And let him who hears say, “Come!” And let him who thirsts come. Whoever desires, let him take the water of life freely.

In Genesis after sin Adam and his wife heard Yahweh say, “Go!” Yahweh had to cast them from the garden. But now the word is “Come!” Paradise once lost is now restored. The bride, the remnant of Israel, the faithful throughout her history who looked for a city with foundations, cries out “Come!” She is now completely one with the Spirit.

22:19

and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the Book of Life, from the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book.

A final warning – do not tamper with this book. Do not turn it into a fantastical book of symbolism. Do not apply human imagination to its message. Rather embrace it for what it is – the speaking of the Lord Jesus. He is coming! And when He does, all of Yahweh’s work of planning, designing, and creating will consummate in Him and in His bride.

22:20

He who testifies to these things says, "Surely I am coming quickly." Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus!

The final words of Jesus on the subject: "Surely I am coming quickly." What seems to us an eternity is to Him a mere moment. John's response is the chorus of the remnant of believers – "Amen! Even so, come Lord Jesus!"

22:21

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.

Even in this economy of works, of judgment, and of the kingdom there is grace! And that grace is with the saints!

John's burden for his fellow believers, companions in the faith, is discharged. When the number of remnant believers is filled up, Jesus will come again.

THE GOSPEL

1:1-4

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made. In Him was life, and the life was the light of men.

John is the fourth biographer, the one who saw Jesus as more than just a man. He, of all the biographers, saw Jesus as the soaring eagle far above the Earth, as the Son of God bearing divine life to humanity. His testimony in 1 John 1:1-4 is clear.

John saw Jesus as the manifestation of the true life – not the biological life (*bios*), and not the psychological life (*pseuche*), but as the divine life (*zoe*). To John He was the expression of the Word of God. God the Father conveys Himself as divine life through and upon the vehicle of language. He is conveyed upon the spoken and written word. Christ the expression, or conveyance, of the eternal life of His Father. Without Him as the *Word* we would not, and could not, know the Father. When He speaks, the Father is there.

As the Word, He creates; He speaks matter into existence. Physical, soulical, and spiritual existence is impossible without His speaking. In this speaking One is divine (*zoe*) life, and this divine life enlightens human beings to the truth.

The ancient Hebrew prophet Ezekiel began his book with a strange vision of a creature with four faces and four wings per face. One face was of a man; the second a lion; the third an ox; and the fourth an eagle. The four gospels explain this four-faced creature by providing four biographies of Jesus.

In Matthew He is the lion, or the king, and has a genealogy that traces His lineage to Israel's king David.

In Mark He is the slave, the ox who bears burdens. As a lowly slave He has no pedigree.

In Luke He is a man whose line goes back to Adam, the original man.

In John He is the eagle, the Son of God whose attention is heavenly toward His Father. Being so, He has no human lineage, thus no genealogy.

If we keep this vision in mind while we read the gospels, they will make sense. We'll be able to see Jesus in His fulness fulfilling His commission.

1:9

That was the true Light which gives light to every man coming into the world.

He is the true light. In fact, everything He is, every attribute of the Triune God, is contained in His life. He is the light for every person born into this world.

1:10

He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, and the world did not know Him.

This verse expresses a bitter irony. He made the world; He came into the world; and the world did not know Him.

1:11

He came to His own, and His own did not receive Him.

He even came unto His own people, unto Israel, and they rejected Him. How did John know that Israel did not receive Him? That didn't happen until 62 AD. Apparently, John wrote after the final rejection by Israel. Before that time, there was some hope that the dispersed Jews would receive their Messiah. After that, John could confidently write that "His own did not receive Him."

If this is an accurate assessment, then John could have had fellowship with Paul about the mystery of the body of Christ. Could this explain the unique nature of his gospel? It is far different than the first three. Was John portraying the Lord as divine life for a reason? In his talks with Paul (if indeed there was), did he realize that Paul was in the process of bringing forth a new economy, unveiling a secret hidden since before creation? Would this knowledge have burdened him to present Christ as full of life for *all* people to live by?

1:12

But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name:

But to those Jews who did receive Him, He gave them the authority to become children of the Father.

1:13

who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.

By believing, a person is born through the coming together of the Holy Spirit and the human spirit. He is born of God!

1:14

And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.

The eternal Word became flesh, that is, a man. To John's eyes He came as the tabernacle of God and tabernacled among His people as the only begotten of the Father. Yahweh was at home in Him. This man of life is full of grace and truth, two of many divine characteristics contained in His life. John saw beyond His humanity and discovered divinity.

1:16

And of His fullness we have all received, and grace for grace.

John leads his readers into Christ's fullness, which is grace multiplied.

1:17

For the law was given through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.

John sees way beyond the old law and finds grace and truth in a wonderful person. This concurs with Paul's ministry. John, like Paul, sees the inferiority of the law when compared to Jesus Christ.

1:18

No one has seen God at any time. The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him.

The Son makes the Father known, for He is from and in the deepest part.

1:29

The next day he saw Jesus coming to him and said, "Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!"

This word sets the tone. Jesus is the Lamb of God. He is on Earth to be sacrificed for the sins of His people Israel in particular, and the world in general. The baptizer's ministry paves the way for Jesus into Israel. He goes before to open the way through the preaching of repentance and baptism.

1:34

And I have seen and testified that this is the Son of God.”

John the baptizer sees Jesus in both aspects – man as the lamb and Christ as the Son of Yahweh.

2:1

On the third day there was a wedding in Cana of Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there.

It is remarkable that the first sign recorded by John is a wedding feast. Jesus came to bring repentance to Israel that He might marry her as His bride. It must have grieved John to think what could have been.

2:15-16

When He had made a whip of cords, He drove them all out of the temple, with the sheep and the oxen, and poured out the changers’ money and overturned the tables. And He said to those who sold doves, “Take these things away! Do not make My Father’s house a house of merchandise!”

Jesus reacts to the commercial activity in the temple. His being there proves His Jewish orthodoxy. Cleansing the temple proves His passion for His Father and His property.

3:1-8

There was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews. This man came to Jesus by night and said to Him, “Rabbi, we know that You are a teacher come from God; for no one can do these signs that You do unless God is with him.”

Jesus answered and said to him, “Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.”

4Nicodemus said to Him, “How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother’s womb and be born?”

Jesus answered, “Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not marvel that I said to you, ‘You must be born again.’ The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear the sound of it, but cannot tell where it comes from and where it goes. So is everyone who is born of the Spirit.”

Regeneration is a requirement in both the kingdom and grace (body) economies. Being water baptized is a requirement only in the kingdom economy (:5), not in the body economy. That baptism happens in the Spirit (Ephesians 4:3-6).

Regeneration is not a creed or a law to follow. It is a function of the Spirit (:8).

3:14

And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up,

Jesus is to be lifted on a pole – not a cross (Greek stauros, a stake, or pole, or tree). His wrists will be nailed above His head, and He will writhe and twist in His struggle to breathe. This will simulate the ancient serpent that Moses raised up to save the people from snakes attacking them.

Christ the Son of God took on human flesh as the man Jesus. Like every man He had an evil nature that tried to influence His thoughts and behavior. Put plainly, Jesus bore in His flesh His enemy Satan, who was trapped there, and unless Jesus activated that evil nature, Satan was impotent and as good as dead. He was on his way to death and destruction – the bruising of his head promised in Genesis 3:15.

3:15-16

that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life. For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.

Yahweh's love for the world is so great, He gave us His Son as the payment for our sins.

3:29

He who has the bride is the bridegroom; but the friend of the bridegroom, who stands and hears him, rejoices greatly because of the bridegroom's voice. Therefore this joy of mine is fulfilled.

The baptizer's clear word proves Israel is the bride of Christ. Jesus is, of course, the Bridegroom. John, the orthodox Jew, could never be a friend of the bride if the bride were Gentile.

4:5-7

So He came to a city of Samaria which is called Sychar, near the plot of ground that Jacob gave to his son Joseph. Now Jacob's well was there. Jesus, therefore, being wearied from His journey, sat thus by the well. It was about the sixth hour.

A woman of Samaria came to draw water. Jesus said to her, "Give Me a drink."

Jesus is here out-of-bounds. Jews had no dealings with these hybrid Samaritans – the product of Assyrian occupation years before. In fact, they hated them because of their Gentile contamination. Jesus doesn't care for their misplaced sensibilities. He is thirsty and she is the only one available to satisfy His thirst. Here is what a dear brother wrote about this encounter:

“The scene at Sychar's is one of the most amazing in human history. The dread Judge of quick and dead and one of the vilest sinners are met together. But He is there not to condemn her but to seek and to save her. The Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace, was sitting weary by a well and thirsty. He, as a man, was dependent on an outcast woman for a little water. His grace and love, rejected by Israel, now pour out their fulness upon an impure Samaritan – for love is pained unless enabled to act. The floodgates of grace lifted themselves up to bless the misery which love pitied. Man's heart, withered with self-righteousness, cannot understand this.

Thus, sinners respond to the grace which Pharisees proudly refuse; for grace flows in the deep channels dug by sin and misery.” – George Williams

4:13-14

Jesus answered and said to her, “Whoever drinks of this water will thirst again, but whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst. But the water that I shall give him will become in him a fountain of water springing up into everlasting life.”

The living water is for everyone, not just Jews. It is eternal, for it keeps springing up from within.

4:15-18

The woman said to Him, “Sir, give me this water, that I may not thirst, nor come here to draw.”

Jesus said to her, “Go, call your husband, and come here.”

The woman answered and said, “I have no husband.”

Jesus said to her, “You have well said, ‘I have no husband,’

Jesus calls on the woman to deal with the blockages in her life. Living water is freely given, but the vessel to hold it must be emptied and repaired to make room.

4:39

And many of the Samaritans of that city believed in Him because of the word of the woman who testified, “He told me all that I ever did.”

This believing woman spread the gospel to the community through her testimony.

4:49-56

The nobleman said to Him, “Sir, come down before my child dies!”

Jesus said to him, “Go your way; your son lives.” So the man believed the word that Jesus spoke to him, and he went his way. And as he was now going down, his servants met him and told him, saying, “Your son lives!”

Then he inquired of them the hour when he got better. And they said to him, “Yesterday at the seventh hour the fever left him.” So the father knew that it was at the same hour in which Jesus said to him, “Your son lives.” And he himself believed, and his whole household.

This again is the second sign Jesus did when He had come out of Judea into Galilee.

This is the second sign to Israel in John’s biography.

5:1,8-9

After this there was a feast of the Jews, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. . . Jesus said to him, “Rise, take up your bed and walk.” And immediately the man was made well, took up his bed, and walked.

This is the third sign, and Jesus deliberately healed on the Sabbath.

It is curious that John would not name the feast here but describes it as “a feast of the Jews.” Who was his audience? If it were the little flock, surely, he would name the feast. If it were Gentiles, then the description is apt. Did John write his gospel to remnant believers caught hanging after the terrible national rejection of Messiah at Rome in 62 AD?

5:16-18

For this reason the Jews persecuted Jesus and sought to kill Him, because He had done these things on the Sabbath. But Jesus answered them, “My Father has been working until now, and I have been working.”

Therefore the Jews sought all the more to kill Him, because He not only broke the Sabbath, but also said that God was His Father, making Himself equal with God.

The Jews would rather a man remain sick than for his healing to occur on the Sabbath. Why did Jesus do this on the Sabbath? Because His Father works, so must He. By invoking the Father’s name, the intensity to kill Him increases.

5:29

and come forth—those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation.

There are only two general resurrections – one for the righteous and one for the unrighteous. There is a special resurrection for the worthy of the body of Christ (Philippians 3:11). As far as I can tell, if a Christian fails to attain to the special resurrection, then he will join with the Jews in the resurrection of the righteous described in 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17.

6:11-12

And Jesus took the loaves, and when He had given thanks He distributed them to the disciples, and the disciples to those sitting down; and likewise of the fish, as much as they wanted. So when they were filled, He said to His disciples, “Gather up the fragments that remain, so that nothing is lost.”

This is the fourth sign to Israel.

6:19

So when they had rowed about three or four miles, they saw Jesus walking on the sea and drawing near the boat; and they were afraid.

This is the fifth sign to Israel.

6:38

For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me.

Jesus' clear statement of His mission.

6:51

I am the living bread which came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever; and the bread that I shall give is My flesh, which I shall give for the life of the world.

Jesus confounds the unbelieving Jews whose spiritual blindness ties them in knots.

6:53-54

Then Jesus said to them, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in you. Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day.

He is unrelenting and doubles down.

6:57

As the living Father sent Me, and I live because of the Father, so he who feeds on Me will live because of Me.

The key to knowing Jesus is by "eating" Him. Without the Spirit, this is impossible to grasp.

6:60, 63

***Therefore many of His disciples, when they heard this, said, "This is a hard saying; who can understand it?"
It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing. The words that I speak to you are spirit, and they are life.***

Even some of His disciples (not the twelve) stumbled here, but Jesus clarifies. In the physical realm it is impossible to understand; but the Spirit gives life through the words Jesus speaks. His words are our "food." By ingesting His words, we ingest Him.

7:23

If a man receives circumcision on the Sabbath, so that the law of Moses should not be broken, are you angry with Me because I made a man completely well on the Sabbath?

Jesus' life, words, and actions offend the unbelieving Jews. The three sacred pillars of Judaism – the law of Moses, the Sabbath, and circumcision – come under fire because Jesus healed a man on the Sabbath. He divides out those who would follow Him.

8:28-29

Then Jesus said to them, “When you lift up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am He, and that I do nothing of Myself; but as My Father taught Me, I speak these things. And He who sent Me is with Me. The Father has not left Me alone, for I always do those things that please Him.”

Jesus predicts His death on the tree. At this point, many in Israel believe, and will soon populate the remnant congregations.

8:31-32

Then Jesus said to those Jews who believed Him, “If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed. And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.”

Belief leads to truth and truth to freedom. Seeking the truth, finding the truth, knowing the truth, and living by the truth results in freedom – freedom internally from satanic attacks; freedom from fear; freedom from the oppression of the soul; and freedom from the dread of external oppression. Knowing Jesus is knowing truth. He sets free.

8:39-41

They answered and said to Him, “Abraham is our father.”

Jesus said to them, “If you were Abraham’s children, you would do the works of Abraham. But now you seek to kill Me, a Man who has told you the truth which I heard from God. Abraham did not do this. You do the deeds of your father.”

Then they said to Him, “We were not born of fornication; we have one Father—God.”

The Jews claim Abraham and Jesus refutes them. They allege that He came through fornication. This must have infuriated the Father when leaders of His chosen nation stoop this low to disparage His Son and yet claim Him as their father.

Mary must have heard this whispered many times during her lifetime after Jesus was born, and it must have seared deeply into her soul. But had she to do it over, I don’t think she would have changed a thing.

8:42

Jesus said to them, “If God were your Father, you would love Me, for I proceeded forth and came from God; nor have I come of Myself, but He sent Me.

Our unflappable Savior calmly states the fact of His life.

8:43-47

Why do you not understand My speech? Because you are not able to listen to My word. You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources, for he is a liar and the father of it. But because I tell the truth, you do not believe Me. Which of you convicts Me of sin? And if I tell the truth,

why do you not believe Me? He who is of God hears God's words; therefore you do not hear, because you are not of God."

Jesus boldly speaks the truth: the unbelieving Jews who cling to Judaism are not of God. In fact, they are of their father the devil and do what he wants them to do. This is His offensive in His ongoing battle with the Pharisees.

8:48-59

Then the Jews answered and said to Him, "Do we not say rightly that You are a Samaritan and have a demon?"

"I do not have a demon; but I honor My Father . . . if anyone keeps My word he shall never see death."

"Now we know that You have a demon! Abraham is dead . . . Who do You make Yourself out to be?"

Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day, and he saw it and was glad."

"You are not yet fifty years old, and have You seen Abraham?"

"Most assuredly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I AM."

Then they took up stones . . . but Jesus hid Himself.

Jesus meets their attack straight on, declaring amid their frustration and rage that not only did He predate Abraham, but also that He *is* the great I AM, the Almighty Jehovah who has always existed. No way could the Jews swallow this or let it go.

9:1-7

Now as Jesus passed by, He saw a man who was blind from birth. And His disciples asked Him . . . "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents . . . ?"

Jesus answered, "Neither . . . but that the works of God should be revealed in him . . . I am the light of the world."

When He had said these things, He spat on the ground and made clay with the saliva; and He anointed the eyes of the blind man with the clay. And He said to him, "Go, wash in the pool of Siloam" . . . So he went and washed, and came back seeing.

This is the sixth sign to Israel. No surprise, Jesus heals the man on the Sabbath day, proving two things: He *is* the Sabbath of Israel and is the antidote for blindness, neither of which they received.

9:13-16

They brought him who formerly was blind to the Pharisees. Now it was a Sabbath when Jesus made the clay and opened his eyes. Then the Pharisees also asked him again how he had received his sight. He said to them, "He put clay on my eyes, and I washed, and I see."

Therefore some of the Pharisees said, "This Man is not from God, because He does not keep the Sabbath."

Others said, "How can a man who is a sinner do such signs?" And there was a division among them.

The legalists cannot see beyond their traditions and are blind men. And, sadly, the Sabbath Himself is in their midst.

10:1

“Most assuredly, I say to you, he who does not enter the sheepfold by the door, but climbs up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber.

Jesus’ indictment of the Pharisees.

10:4

And when he brings out his own sheep, he goes before them; and the sheep follow him, for they know his voice.

The key to understanding the *true* Israel: who in Israel hear the words of the Word of God? The answer is the little flock, those remnant believers.

10:10-11

The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly.

“I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives His life for the sheep.

The leaders in Israel steal, kill, and destroy. The true Shepherd comes to give divine life (*zoe*) to the sheep.

10:16

And other sheep I have which are not of this fold; them also I must bring, and they will hear My voice; and there will be one flock and one shepherd.

10:21

Others said, “These are not the words of one who has a demon. Can a demon open the eyes of the blind?”

This reveals the purpose of the signs, not for the stubborn leaders, but for the common people who believe.

10:26-27

But you do not believe, because you are not of My sheep, as I said to you. My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me.

The difference between the believing and unbelieving Jews is in hearing the words of Jesus. This makes them His sheep.

11:14-15

Then Jesus said to them plainly, “Lazarus is dead. And I am glad for your sakes that I was not there, that you may believe. Nevertheless let us go to him.”

This is the seventh and last sign Israel will witness.

11:25-27

Jesus said to her, “I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live. And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die. Do you believe this?”

She said to Him, “Yes, Lord, I believe that You are the Christ, the Son of God, who is to come into the world.”

This is the point of the sign – to see Jesus as the resurrection; to see a person, not an event. Jesus changes the raising from the dead from an event to a living person. This is a critical distinction.

Martha doesn't see it. Her answer has nothing to do with His question. If she really saw Him as the resurrection, she would rejoice, not weep.

11:33-35

Therefore, when Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who came with her weeping, He groaned in the spirit and was troubled. And He said, “Where have you laid him?”

They said to Him, “Lord, come and see.”

Jesus wept.

Jesus does not weep over Lazarus because He knows what He is about to do. He weeps because Martha and the others do not see Him for who He is. After so much time among them and it comes down to this. No wonder He is troubled to the point of tears.

12:32-33

And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all peoples to Myself.” This He said, signifying by what death He would die.

Here is a clear reference to His death on a pole, or a tree. From that vantage point He will draw *all* people unto Himself, not just one race. What did John know?

12:37

But although He had done so many signs before them, they did not believe in Him,

What a terrible result of His ministry to His own people! It must have been agonizing for the apostle to write these words.

12:38-40

that the word of Isaiah the prophet might be fulfilled, which he spoke:

“Lord, who has believed our report? And to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?”

Therefore they could not believe, because Isaiah said again:

“He has blinded their eyes and hardened their hearts, lest they should see with their eyes, lest they should understand with their hearts and turn, so that I should heal them.”

This passage contains a terrifying principle that stretches all the way back to Pharaoh. When Moses contended for the release of his people, Pharaoh hardened his heart at least four times after four plagues. As the plagues continued and Moses advocated, the record states that the Lord hardened Pharaoh’s heart. The same is happening to Israel regarding Jesus. He came to them and healed them and fed them and cast out their demons, but they would not believe. They had their opportunity to decide, but now it is too late. They crossed the line into hardness, “therefore they could not believe.”

Imagine this! Imagine crossing a line from which there is no retreat. Forever trapped by the result of poor decisions. Unbelieving Israel could not return to their rejected Messiah. It was too late.

14:9

Jesus said to him, “Have I been with you so long, and yet you have not known Me, Philip? He who has seen Me has seen the Father; so how can you say, ‘Show us the Father’?”

The Son is the expression of the Father. Everything He is and does reveals the Father.

14:17-18

the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you. I will not leave you orphans; I will come to you.

The Son is the Spirit, and the Son sends the Spirit.

15:5-6

“I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing. If anyone does not abide in Me, he is cast out as a branch and is withered; and they gather them and throw them into the fire, and they are burned.

Lest we forget that Jesus came for Israel under the economy of the kingdom, we have this reminder that salvation has no assurance. Abide and thrive or abide not and die. To whom much is given much is required. This is not the economy of grace to come.

16:7-8

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 depart, I will send Him to you. And when He has come, He will convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment:

Once the Lord departs, faith will take over because He will be invisible. But His other form – the Spirit – will carry on the work with the apostles. The work will primarily involve the Spirit.

16:13

However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come.

The Spirit guides people to Christ who is truth. “Things to come” could be the new economy since the old economy was about to be set aside.

18:20

Jesus answered him, “I spoke openly to the world. I always taught in synagogues and in the temple, where the Jews always meet, and in secret I have said nothing.

The scope of Jesus’ ministry is strictly to the Jews. He sets the tone for the apostles and their work to increase and build up the little flock believers. They are the true Israel of God because they believe in and embrace their Messiah.