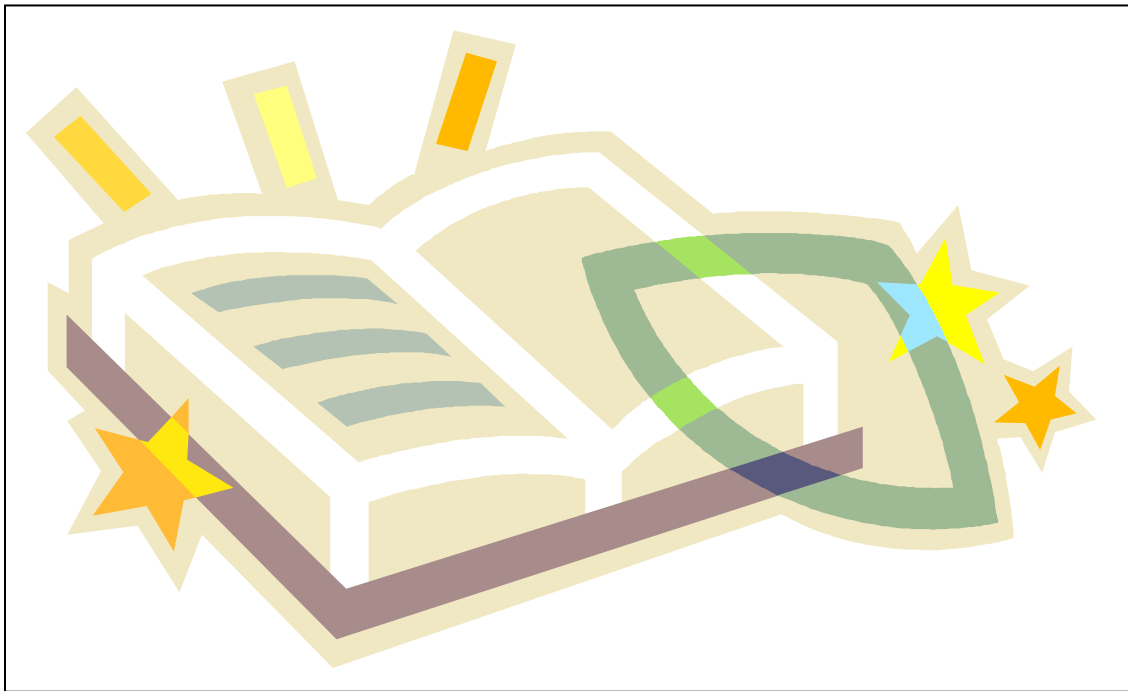


Revelation

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Introduction

Revelation - thought of by many as the most difficult book in the bible - is vitally important because it reveals things of the future.

When we can actually put things into their correct place in the time line of history and of the future, then we find that revelation of the future holds no fear for those who believe in Jesus as their saviour.

We also find that which was obscure and difficult to understand, falls into place and is actually easily understandable.

So we are going to set out on a journey through time that should bring clarity and understanding.

Chapter 1

The representative churches.

John is to be found on the island of Patmos where he was banished by the Romans. The time was the late 90's in the first century.

John receives a vision which unfolds before him in stages

The first stage is a vision of Jesus Himself. Such a vision that John reports, *'and when I saw Him, I fell at His feet as dead.'* Jesus touches John and instructs him: *'Write the things which you have seen, and the things which are, and the things which will take place after this.'*

Seven churches are introduced as the seven churches which are in Asia (verse 4). It does not mean that there were only seven churches in Asia – rather that these are representative churches which are found in Asia. (For example churches are known to have existed in Galatia, Hierapolis, Lystra and Iconium, all in Asia, as well as other places such as Corinth, Phillippi, Thessalonica and so on.)

So it is clear that the churches are representatives and are not the whole of the church at that time.

In obtaining an understanding of the message of the book it is also important to note that all the representative churches were there at the same time.

The age of the church.

Many scholars believe that the revelation of the churches also refers to the pre eminent state of the church over time. i.e. what Revelation 2:1-7 says of the church at Ephesus will be the dominant features of the whole church for a particular period of time.

With this understanding it is possible to trace through world history certain dominant features of the church through the ages.

This is the position proposed by Arnold Fruchtenbaum:

The Church	The meaning of its name	Brief description	Time AD
Ephesus	'desired'	the Apostolic church - loses its first love.	30 -100
Smyrna	'myrhh - death Embalming'	the church of the Roman persecution	100-313

Pergamun	‘thoroughly married’ (to the state)	the church of the age of Constantine – compromises	313-600
Thyatira	‘continual Sacrifice’	the church of the dark ages -becomes corrupt	600-1517
Sardis	‘those escaping’	the reformation – life from the dead	1517-1648
Philadelphia	‘brotherly love’	the great missionary church ‘faithful’	1648-
Laodicea	‘man ruling’	the church of apostasy ‘lukewarm – thinks itself rich but is blind and wretched.’	Tribunational

By way of reminder – all the features of all the churches were present when Revelation was written – so we must expect all the features of the various churches mentioned in Revelation to be present today. This understanding suggests that particular features will be more to the forefront in different times.

It is also important to note that John was speaking about churches rather than individuals – there have always been many people who absolutely love Jesus Christ. However, the organised church does not always reflect that same love – indeed it often seems to fall very short.

It is not our objective here to go through each church in detail. What we want to see is that John is reporting the things that are – just as he was told to do.

There is no fear in the messages to the churches for any individual believer. If you believe that Jesus died, carrying the penalty of your sin in His human flesh and that this sacrifice was acceptable to the Father – then you are born again. It is God’s promise to you that a fundamental change has taken place in your status. You have received the Holy Spirit into your own human spirit as a guarantee of your eternal inheritance.
(1 John 3:14 Ephesians 1:14)

The church today

We will spend a few moments considering the church of today to see how it fits with the description of the church in Philadelphia and how it is sliding towards the church of Laodicea

There is no doubt that considered in worldwide terms there is great missionary activity in many places - particularly Asia and South America. We should avoid the trap of judging

the whole church by any individual church or movement or indeed the western church .
The church still has an open door no one can shut.
At the same time we should take note of the way things are developing.

So we take a look at the Laodicean church (bearing in mind that 'church' means 'meeting' or 'gathering' and the word is not limited to believers.)

The Laodicean church has no sign of true believers – they cannot see, they consider themselves in need of nothing but actually need salvation. It has all the appearance of being the church in the tribulation after all born again believers have been removed in the rapture.

Is lukewarm – neither hot nor cold.
Considers its self 'rich.'
Thinks that it needs nothing
Is unaware that it is wretched, miserable, poor, blind and naked.

It is counselled to:

'buy gold refined in the fire' – so that you may be rich
'and white garments' - that you may be clothed
'and anoint your eyes with eye salve' – that you may see.

It is a description of a church filled with people who cannot be described as 'born again believers'. Born again believers are already blessed with every spiritual blessing.
(Ephesians 1:3)

Indeed it seems true to say that vast parts of the organised church today is full of unbelievers. The gospel is no longer preached. The veracity of scripture as the plumbline for belief and action has gone. Almost anything goes and doctrine is more and more determined by what is happening in the world.

(Let us remind ourselves once more – this is representative of the predominant church position – not the whole – there are many churches today which are not 'Laodicean.'
Nevertheless, the major denominations are more and more fitting the description.)

The time line.

Now I want to introduce a thought that will take us through the Book of Revelation. John is being given a revelation progressively through time.

He was told write the things that you have seen, the things that are, and the things which will take place after this.

Through Revelation runs a time line. Step by step we are going to be taken into the future.

Chapter 2

The view from heaven.

Now John is shown an open door into heaven.

We have just recorded the church through its history to today – what happens next?

There is an open door to heaven and the command *‘come up here, and I will show you things which must take place after this.’* (4 verse 1)

The scene in heaven is one of readiness. Around the throne are twenty four elders (the word elder means an older man – not an angel). Around the throne of God are seven lamps of fire, representing the seven spirits of God and heavenly creatures. The scene is one of worship.

In the hand of God is a scroll sealed with seven seals. We will see that this scroll is a scroll of judgement – that is judgement over the inhabitants of the earth. This judgement is a prelude to the setting up of God’s Kingdom on earth. Who is worthy to initiate the judgement of God on the earth? Is anyone perfect? Is anyone sinless? Is anyone qualified?

The twenty four elders recognise the only one in heaven and earth who is worthy to open the scroll – He is the Lamb, He is the Lion of Judah, He has prevailed, He is Jesus.

‘You are worthy,’ they exclaim.

‘You have redeemed us to God by your blood’.

‘You have made us kings and priests.’

‘We shall reign on the earth,’ - this is a description of the inheritance of the believers, the true church – for we have become co-heirs with Christ. (Romans 8:17)

Rapture or no rapture – the question?

In our time line we see the description of the church age followed by the open door and the scene in heaven. So we need to stop a while and examine one of the vexed questions of Christianity.

Is the church – that is the true believers – caught up into heaven? – the so called ‘rapture’ of the church.

Our question is very easily answered:

‘Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air.’
1 Thessalonians 4:17.

How could such a thing be? Can this human flesh float in the air?

Again our question is easily answered:

‘Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does corruption inherit incorruption.’

Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.

For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality.'

1 Corinthians 15:50-53

All this fits with the very promise of Jesus:

"Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me.

"In My Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you.

"And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also.'

John 14:1-3

The scripture make sit clear that we will indeed be caught up to meet Him in the air – 'raptured.'

The timing of the rapture Is it before the scroll is opened?

The next part of the question must be when?

We have already stated that the scroll represents judgement and indeed the resultant penalty – often referred to as 'the wrath of God.'

We should not be put off by the idea that God is a God of wrath as well as a God of love. For the plumline of scripture makes it clear:

'And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins, in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience, among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others.' Ephesians 2:1-3

'For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness' Romans 1:18

'But in accordance with your hardness and your impenitent heart you are treasuring up for yourself wrath in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God, who "will render to each one according to his deeds":' Romans 2:5-6

The scripture also makes clear the way of safety and freedom from the wrath of God:

'But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us,

even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.

For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God,'
Ephesians 2:4-8

**So now our question becomes this:
Is the rapture before, during or after the period of judgement
revealed in the scroll ?**

As with all matters of doctrine there are many varied views expressed within the church. At this point it is well to remember that many churches have in their midst many people who are not born again – they are unbelievers, in that they do not believe in personal redemption through the blood of Jesus. (They will nearly always express belief in God as some sort of power or father figure. But God, Himself has provided only one way to know Him, and that is through Jesus. *"Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved."* Acts 4:12)

In addition to their being many unbelievers there are many who do not take the scripture as the basis for their doctrine. For them the scripture is subjected to choice – they will select what they want to believe, rather than let the scripture be *'good for doctrine, for reproof, for correction and for instruction in righteousness.'* (2 Timothy 3:16)

In this booklet we are approaching the subject from the viewpoint that the scripture is the authority for our doctrine.

So from this viewpoint what does the scripture have to say:

- 1) *Look for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ.*
Titus 2:11
This should be our attitude, we are expectant of the coming of the Lord.
- 2) We, believers, are not appointed to wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ.
1 Thessalonians 5:9.
- 3) We will be saved from the wrath to come.
Romans 5:9
- 4) *'Wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come.'*
1 Thessalonians 1:10.

So the scripture makes it clear that the wrath of God is not for us – it is not our destiny at all. Rather, we have been forgiven our sins, past, present and future, when we placed our trust in Jesus. Even if we become unfaithful in our actions He remains faithful because He cannot deny Himself. (2 Timothy 2:11-13)

In Revelation Chapter 4 John has been taken into heaven and is enjoying the view from heaven after the 'church age' and before the opening of the scroll. The church is not mentioned again in the book of Revelation.

(Here it is well to remember that the church is the congregation or the meeting. The meeting contains both believers and unbelievers. Amongst the church there is the body of Christ – that is those who believe in Him for salvation. Not everyone in 'the' or 'a' church is part of the body of Christ, only the believers.)

In the Book of Revelation the next mention of the body of Christ is in Chapter 19 where we have become the bride of Christ.

Chapter 3

Progressive revelation – seals

Chapter 5 of Revelation sees the Lamb of God being declared worthy and taking the scroll. At this point the scroll is described as having 7 seals. That is – when you look at the scroll 7 seals are visible, to be opened one at a time. With the opening of each seal comes an event or events one after the other.

The scroll is so arranged that the seals are opened in order – you cannot open number 7 before you open 1 to 6.

Hence we have progressive revelation – one revelation follows another, follows another, follows another and so on. This is part of the ‘time line of revelation.’

It is commonly acknowledged that the number 7 refers to spiritual perfection. This indicated that the scroll is a spiritually perfect document. It is entirely right and just – it is perfect.

Chapter 5 also makes it clear that the receiving of the scroll by Jesus is connected with the coming of His kingdom. The judgement of God must come first, and unbelievers must face the judgement and the wrath of God before the Kingdom can be established.

This period of judgement is often referred to as ‘The Tribulation’ or ‘The Great Tribulation,’ - getting its name from Matthew 24:

"For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be" . Matthew 24:21

(The reference in Matthew is to the period starting from when the ‘abomination of desolation’ is standing in the holy place. Hence the belief that the Temple must be rebuilt in Jerusalem for this to be fulfilled.)

Jesus refers to the abomination of desolation in verse 15. He relates it specifically to the prophet Daniel. The reference is in Daniel 9: 24-7 – the passage that deals with the future of Daniel’s people, the Jews. Verse 27 speaks of antichrist confirming a covenant of peace with Israel for 7 years. Half way through the covenant antichrist brings an end to sacrifice and offering (in the rebuilt temple) and the abomination of desolation is established in the temple.

Whilst Matthew is here referring to a part of the period of judgement and wrath the name ‘The Tribulation’ or ‘The Great Tribulation’ has been adopted for the whole 7 year period.

The first 4 seals

A time of great difficulty comes upon the earth. Conquering, bloodshed, famine and death are represented by different horses with their riders. The effects of each seal are clearly stated and can be taken just as they are.

The fifth seal

The fifth seal reveals many who have been martyred for the truth. These are those who have been martyred for their faith in the early stages of the Tribulation – that is after the true believers have been raptured.

The sixth seal.

Now cosmic disturbances are added to the difficulties on earth with the exclamation, *‘For the great day of His wrath has come, and who is able to stand.’*

Mankind takes to hiding even calling on the rocks and mountains to fall on them to hide them from the wrath of God.

The scripture makes it very clear that this is a period of the wrath of God.

Chapter 4

What about Israel?

One of the features of Revelation is that from time to time it back tracks to fill in details and we need to back track a little also.

God chose Israel to be the chief nation on the earth – to be His special people:

"For you are a holy people to the LORD your God; the LORD your God has chosen you to be a people for Himself, a special treasure above all the peoples on the face of the earth.

"The LORD did not set His love on you nor choose you because you were more in number than any other people, for you were the least of all peoples;" Deuteronomy 7:6-7

As we know from history and from scripture, Israel were promised the Messiah. The Messiah came for the House of Israel, but Israel failed to recognise Him and He was cut off from the earth.

Thus prophecy was fulfilled - in Daniel, chapter 9, there is a prophecy concerning the future of Israel. Daniel is told that his people (Israel) will enjoy 70 weeks of time. This is interpreted as meaning 70 x 7 years. The period is split into 7 weeks, 62 weeks and 1 week. History now reveals that the first 69 weeks, being 483 years, ended with the coming of the ministry of Jesus. The Messiah was cut off. Jerusalem was destroyed. There remains one week unfulfilled.

There has been a gap for nearly 2,000 years – waiting for ‘the prince who is to come.’ He is the prince of the people who destroyed the city (verse 26) – he is thus of Rome, (the Romans destroyed Jerusalem in AD 70.) He is referred to as anti-christ. He will confirm a covenant (of peace) with Israel for the remaining week – 7 years.

The identity of anti-christ.

The church is unlikely to be able to identify the anti-christ as he is unlikely to be revealed whilst the church is still on the earth. There is simple logic to this – the church has authority over all the works of the enemy, it is the gift and calling of God to the church. The gift and calling of God is declared to be irrevocable in Romans 11:29. Anti-christ gets his power from satan.

Hence, were anti-christ to be revealed before the church is raptured he would only be able to operate in limited fashion. In Revelation 13:7 anti-christ is given power over the saints – that cannot be the church as stated above. Anti-christ’s power is over those who become believers during the Tribulation period after the church is raptured.

From this brief analysis we can see that the world was in a period we call the Age of Israel – when God was dealing predominantly through Israel. The age of the Old Testament. The Messiah, rejected by Israel, established His church and left.

The age of the gentiles – when God is working predominantly through gentiles. The age of the favour of the church and the New Testament began.

However, 1 week, or seven years, has still to be worked out for Israel. This is another reason showing that the church must be taken out of the way – raptured. The church is removed so that the earth can revert to the ‘Age of Israel’ to complete the time promised through Daniel.

God has made promises to Israel which are, as yet, unfulfilled. Consider, for example:

"Behold, the days are coming, says the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah-- "not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, though I was a husband to them, says the LORD. "But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put My law in their minds, and write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people.

"No more shall every man teach his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD,' for they all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them, says the LORD. For I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more."

Thus says the LORD, who gives the sun for a light by day, the ordinances of the moon and the stars for a light by night, who disturbs the sea, and its waves roar (The LORD of hosts is His name):

"If those ordinances depart from before Me, says the LORD, then the seed of Israel shall also cease from being a nation before Me forever."

Thus says the LORD: "If heaven above can be measured, and the foundations of the earth searched out beneath, I will also cast off all the seed of Israel for all that they have done, says the LORD'

. Jeremiah 31:31-37

Israel will be regathered - even in unbelief:

See Ezekiel 36:16-28

Ezekiel 20:33-42

This regathering is so that Israel can be refined. Unlike the age of the church when our refining is through trust in the effective work of the blood of Jesus, the refining of Israel is through tribulation and fire. (This is another indicator that the rapture has taken place beforehand. The church is refined through faith in the work of Christ and as a bride makes herself ready for the marriage to the Lamb in heaven. Israel is refined through the ‘Day of Jacob’s Trouble’ and through ‘refiners fire’ two systems of refinement are completely different and do not co-exist)

See:

Ezekiel 22:17-22 Malachi 3:2-5 Zechariah 13:8-9 Jeremiah 30:7

This week or seven years is known as 'The Tribulation.' It is also called in scripture 'The time of Jacob's Trouble,' indicating its particular relevance to Israel.

And so

'And the LORD shall be King over all the earth. In that day it shall be--" The LORD is one," and His name one.'

Zechariah 14:9

He will reign on earth.

'And it shall come to pass that everyone who is left of all the nations which came against Jerusalem shall go up from year to year to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, and to keep the Feast of Tabernacles.'

Zechariah 14:16

From Jerusalem – Israel has become the chief nation on earth.

Back to the text

At this point in the narrative (Revelation 7) John is shown that 144,000 people, specifically from the Tribes of Israel, are marked out by God with a seal as His servants.

The scripture goes on to view a great multitude gathered before the throne of God proclaiming, *'Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb.'*

One of the elders explains that John is now seeing those martyred in the Tribulation period. From this we know that, although all the believers were raptured before the Tribulation period, there will be many who come to believe during the Tribulation – through the work of the 144,000 and through the ministry of angels and so on. Of these many are martyred.

Chapter 5

Progressive revelation - trumpets

First seals, then trumpets

The seventh seal consists of seven angels with trumpets. These angels have not previously been in view – they could not be seen until the seventh seal was opened. Hence they follow on after the 6 seals.

This is the time line working through Revelation.

The first 6 trumpets

Now we are told of various outpourings of the wrath of God in judgement over the earth. Trumpets 1 – 4 affect one third of the environment of earth and the heavens with affliction. The meanings of these trumpets seem straight forward – the result of each trumpet is clearly stated and should be taken just as it is.

After 4 trumpets an angelic message is sounded:

'Woe, woe, woe to the inhabitants of the earth because of the remaining blasts of the trumpet of the three angels who are to sound.' (8: 13).

The fifth trumpet releases locusts with the power to torment mankind for 5 months. These locusts are described as coming from the bottomless pit. The description strongly indicated that these locusts are a form of demon. Their King is described as Abaddon, (Apollyon in Greek) meaning destroy. Satan is the one who is described in scripture as coming to rob, kill and destroy.

The sixth trumpet releases a mighty army of horsemen with breastplates of red, of blue and of yellow. By these three *plagues* one third of mankind is killed.

Here the scripture reports that the rest of mankind did not repent of their various sins.

John is shown another mighty angel with a little book in his hand. The angel stands one foot on sea, one foot on land and cries out. Seven thunders are heard from heaven – but although John hears and is ready to write down the message he is forbidden from doing so.

John is told to eat the little book and is then told there is more prophecy to come.

Chapter 6

God's witness on earth – (Chapter 11)

Another piece of back tracking reveals that God has maintained His witness on earth. (The church has already gone to meet with Jesus in the air – this is the period of time when the bride makes herself ready for the marriage to the Lamb – see Rev 19:7) God's witness on earth is the 144,000 specially selected from the tribes of Israel, who seem to have acted as evangelists, and there were two particular witnesses in Jerusalem.

These two are described as having 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. The length of their 'ministry' is specified as 1,260 days. There is no reason not to take this literally.

The description leads us to think that they are probably Elijah and Moses – though this cannot be said for certain. Certainly prophecy dictates that Elijah comes before the return of the Lord. (John the Baptist, who was not Elijah, is said to have come in the spirit of Elijah.)

At the end of the time the two witnesses are killed. Their bodies are left in the street for three and a half days – the whole world will see it and rejoice.

(This is a wonderful example of how the scripture foresees science. At the time Revelation was written there was no way that the whole world could see the dead bodies in the street of Jerusalem. In three and a half days the news would not have travelled more than the distance that could be covered on horseback! Yet we now know very clearly that through television the whole world will be able to see the dead bodies of the two witnesses instantly.)

After three and a half days the two witnesses are resurrected and taken up into heaven.

We have reached the half way point in the seven year period we call the Tribulation.

During this period we have seen:

Antichrist entering into a seven year covenant of peace with Israel.

The effect of the 7 seals which include wars, famines, and widespread death.

Extensive persecution of those who become believers during this time. ('The saints' in scripture. *****)

144,000 specially selected from Israel

The two witnesses.

***** here is another pointer to the fact that the rapture has taken place beforehand. These 'tribulation' saints are given into the hand of antichrist who derives his power from Satan. The church has power over all the works of Satan. The calling and gift of

God are irrevocable. Thus one must conclude that the church must have been removed before antichrist could emerge all powerful. In this context it is to be noted that the power over the works of Satan is concurrent with the infilling of the Holy Spirit. In the Old Testament the Holy Spirit would anoint people for their role but He did not unite with their human spirit and dwell in them. The tribulation period is an extension of this regime. Hence satan could have power over the tribulation saints.

Chapter 7

The Kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ is announced

The seventh trumpet sounds and the Kingdom is announced:

'Then the seventh angel sounded: And there were loud voices in heaven, announcing, "The kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever!"'

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."

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.

Revelation 11:15-19

The scripture now back tracks to fill in more background.

An amazing sign appears in heaven - a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a garland of twelve stars. Though it might sound like it, this sign has nothing to do the European Union!

The sign is a picture of Israel – we can establish this by looking at the first time such a sign was observed – by referring back to Genesis 37:9 we see that Joseph has a dream of the sun, the moon and eleven stars (himself the twelfth) bowing down to him. It is interpreted for us as representing Jacob, Rachel and Joseph's eleven brothers. The twelve brothers become the twelve tribes of Israel.

Satan is pictured as a great dragon with 7 heads and 10 horns who seeks to devour the woman and her children.

This passage in Chapter 12, verses 7 to the end speaks of what we know – Satan hates the Jews and hates all those 'have the testimony of Jesus Christ.' The scripture is covering all of time – and tells us that in the specific period of the 1260 days (also called 'a time, times and half a time) a place of safety is provided for Israel on earth.

So back in Revelation 12 Israel is depicted giving birth to a male child (the Messiah) who was caught up to God.

There is a significant gap in the story – this gap is the church age. After that Israel flees into the wilderness specifically for 1260 days to a place prepared by God. This is a place of safety hidden from the events. Many people think this place is Petra in Jordan.

Chapter 8

Beasts

Revelation is now providing more detail of the spiritual battleground. We have seen that the 'Tribulation' is a period of God's wrath as a result of His righteous judgement. During this period Satan is given power over the then saints – that is those who have come to believe in Jesus as their saviour after the rapture of the church.

Chapter 13 is going to show us the way in which Satan, the dragon, expresses his work on earth. A false trinity is established as we shall see. Satan is the dragon but now lets meet

The beast from the sea.

This beast obtains his power from the dragon (verse 2) and is described as being in the same image. He too has 7 heads and 10 horns. The description, 'from the sea,' represents the fact that this is a man taken out of the nations of the earth. We find the confirmation of this a little later when we come to chapter 17.

We call this man 'antichrist' using 'anti' in both its meanings – 'against' and 'instead of.' He is full of blasphemy and those who dwell on the earth worship him. He is given power over the saints for a while.

The beast from the earth.

Another beast – the third member of our false trinity – is now revealed. He is a worship leader, a healer, a deceiver and is described as one able to give breath to idols (Called 'the false prophet' in chapter 16:13). Here is the false spirit rather than the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is the guarantee of the believers inheritance and scripture tells us we are sealed or marked to that effect in Ephesians 1:13-14. Here the false spirit causes those on earth to be sealed also – this time with a number 666. The number 6 stands for man and his activity – so this number is man, man, man. In this case man without God.

This mark controls whether the inhabitants of the earth can buy and sell – whether they can use money. The system by which the world operates has become focused on, and indeed completely controlled by, money. The system is Babylonian.

The Babylonian system is the 'Big Lie,' that has deceived the whole earth. The founder of the system was Nimrod who appears in Genesis 10 as a mighty hunter who places himself before (in importance) the Lord. Nimrod establishes his own 'kingdom' of which Babel was the premier city.

From his time onwards man has believed that he can do without and does not need his creator. Man believes only in his own ability. This is the Babylonian system. As man is a fallen creature who cannot deny sin, this system is inherently full of sin and thus a rich feeding ground for every type of evil, evil spirit and demon.

Jesus stated plainly ‘ you cannot serve two masters, God and Mammon.’ Now the inhabitants of the earth are warned not to take the mark of the beast – it is like making their final choice.

As if by contrast, John is also shown a vision of the Lamb with the 144,000 we saw earlier in chapter 7.

Chapter 9

Progressive revelation - bowls

Angels give a prelude to the resumption of the time line of Revelation. We are about to enter into the last phase of God's judgement.

Three angels give their proclamations:

'Fear God and give glory to Him, for the hour of His judgement has come; and worship Him who made heaven and earth, the sea and springs of water.'

'Babylon is fallen, is fallen, that great city, because she has made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication.'

'If anyone worships the beast and his image, and receives his mark on his forehead or on his hand, he himself, shall also drink 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.'

More pronouncements of what is to come – the final outpouring of the wrath of God against the ungodly. Seven angels with the seven last plagues – golden bowls each filled with an element of the wrath of God are to be poured out over the earth.

(It is worth remembering at this point that God desires that none shall perish. Rather, that everyone would come to salvation through the personal knowledge of the forgiveness of their sins. He provided only one way – through belief in Jesus Christ. That way is available to everyone. 'It is the narrow way and few are they that take it.' We have already seen that many 'wash their robes in the blood of the Lamb' during this Tribulation period. (7:14) We are left with those who are steadfastly refusing to repent. (16:9))

The first 5 bowls

A series of terrible judgements are sent forth – and still those on earth did not repent of their deeds.

The sixth bowl

The scene is set for the final battle. All the nations will gather against Jerusalem for the Battle of Armageddon. We know from other scriptures that all the nations will gather against Israel. Zechariah 14 tells of this time and of the outcome.

The seventh bowl.

The earth is utterly shaken – and our time line will progress to the return of Jesus with His bride. But before we move on to that the scripture is again going to back track a little to fill in some more information.....

Chapter 10

So what happened to Babylon

We have reached Revelation chapter 17 and scripture is going to fill some missing detail with a review of what happened to Babylon in all of this.

First let's try to establish what Babylon represents:

In chapter 17 Babylon is viewed as a harlot sitting on a beast on many waters. In chapter 18 Babylon is seen as a physical city. As we shall see, the harlot sitting on the beast represents powerful influence over the nations of the world. You could describe it as a spirit force. Another description would be 'the Big Lie.' The 'Big Lie' that man can do without God – this was the position taken by Nimrod the founder of the Babel, the forerunner of Babylon. The 'Big Lie' dismisses creation, dismisses sin and the need for a saviour and rules by man's own capabilities. However, as each and every man has inherited sin through the male line, Babylon is full of all sorts of deceit. This is natural territory for the devil and his fallen angels, so we find the Babylonian system polluted by man's sin and infested by spiritual forces of darkness.

There is a comparison with the bride of Christ. The bride is the full number of believers who, by the time the marriage to the lamb takes place, will have received their glorified bodies and thus be in spirit form. The New city of Jerusalem in chapter 21 is also called the bride of Christ. There is no doubt that it will be a real city – for it is described in some detail.

So we see that both Babylon and the Bride of Christ have a sort of double manifestation as a powerful spiritual force and as a city.

The great harlot.

Chapter 17 verse 1-6:

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

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. 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.

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

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 marvelled with great amazement.'

So we see the harlot sitting on a beast. The beast is described as having a number of heads which represent kings or rulers (verse 10). When we see the description of the beast it will assist us in understanding who they could be.

Chapter 13 has the description – the beast I saw (rising out of the sea) having 7 heads and 10 horns ... was like a leopard, his feet were the feet of a bear, his mouth like the mouth of a lion.

We need to cross refer to the book of Daniel because there we find that Daniel had a vision which had similarities and will help us understand:

'Daniel spoke, saying, "I saw in my vision by night, and behold, the four winds of heaven were stirring up the Great Sea.

"And four great beasts came up from the sea, each different from the other.

"The first was like a lion, and had eagle's wings. I watched till its wings were plucked off; and it was lifted up from the earth and made to stand on two feet like a man, and a man's heart was given to it.

"And suddenly another beast, a second, like a bear. It was raised up on one side, and had three ribs in its mouth between its teeth. And they said thus to it: 'Arise, devour much flesh!'

"After this I looked, and there was another, like a leopard, which had on its back four wings of a bird. The beast also had four heads, and dominion was given to it.

"After this I saw in the night visions, and behold, a fourth beast, dreadful and terrible, exceedingly strong. It had huge iron teeth; it was devouring, breaking in pieces, and trampling the residue with its feet. It was different from all the beasts that were before it, and it had ten horns.

"I was considering the horns, and there was another horn, a little one, coming up among them, before whom three of the first horns were plucked out by the roots. And there, in this horn, were eyes like the eyes of a man, and a mouth speaking pompous words'

Daniel 7:2-8

In order to put all this together we need to also consider another vision – this time it is the dream that Nebuchadnezzar had in Babylon. He saw a huge statue with head of gold, chest and arms of silver, belly and sides of bronze, legs of iron and feet and toes part iron and part clay.

The interpretation of these visions is sure because it is given in the scripture – here is what the various elements represent:

The statue:	The beasts:	The meaning:
Head of gold	Lion	Nebuchadnezzar / Babylon
Chest and arms of silver	Bear	Media / Persia
Belly and sides of bronze	Leopard	Greece
Legs	Terrible beast	Rome
10 toes	10 horns	10 kings yet to come

(There is a much fuller description of this in the booklet ‘Explaining Daniel.’)

The sea upon which the harlot sits is the peoples, multitudes, nations and tongues (Revelation 17:15) – i.e. it is the population of the world. Out of that population these rulers emerge.

The harlot Babylon is a powerful force which is seen to be riding a beast which is described as being made up of these kingdoms (plus 2 un-named)

The kings of the earth are described as being intoxicated by the harlot spirit. The harlot spirit is described as being viciously opposed to God’s people. The harlot spirit is effectively ruling the world through its influence on economy, false religion, humanism and so on.

From Revelation 18 we see there is specific influence on trade. (verse 11-19)

Flashback

Now we can see that the information being given to us in Revelation 17 contains a significant amount of background information which relates to a large amount of world history.

Flash forward

However, it also includes some future elements:

Specifically we are told that, when John wrote Revelation, 5 of the rulers had already fallen. We have identified three of them - Babylon, Medo-Persia and Greece. John was told that ‘one was ruling at that time’ and we know that ruling power was Rome. From verses 9-12 of Revelation 17 we are told that there is a seventh head to emerge – it must be the one with 10 horns for history shows they have not yet emerged.

In the statue vision the ruler yet to emerge is represented by the feet – which of course have 10 toes.

So we are to expect to see 10 rulers or kings emerge. The toes are puny little objects when compared to the whole statue – so it is likely that these rulers are also rather puny in their visibility and their power – yet the statue would not remain standing upright without them.

(Indeed, the statue collapses when a stone, not cut with human hands, strikes the feet of the statue. (Daniel 2:34, 45))

For one hour

Verse 12 informs us that the ten kings rule for a very short time – described as one hour. Clearly this is not a literal hour – rather a biblical type is being used. Dr Grattan Guinness discovered that the Lord had allocated a specific amount of time to the gentiles before Israel would be restored. He discovered that the judgement of Nebuchadnezzar, that period of 7 years eating grass, represented 2520 years of gentile influence. With this knowledge he predicted a series of dates relevant to the restoration of Israel – there were truly significant events on each of the dates he predicted. [A Babylonian year is made up of 360 days. 7 years is thus 2520 days and Dr Guinness discovered that this is a biblical type in which each day represented a year, hence 2520 years.]

Following through the same logic then one hour would represent 15 years.

At some point the ten kings hand over their power to the eighth head – we refer to him as antichrist.

The ten kings destroy the harlot.....

Every kingdom divided against itself will be brought to desolation

.... So said Jesus in responding to the accusation that He was casting out demons by Beelzebub. (Matthew 12:24-25)

In verse 16 of our chapter we are told that the ten kings – who are the last but one ruling manifestation of the Babylonian system - turn against the harlot and destroy her. The satanic kingdom divided against itself. Thus according to Jesus prophecy it will be brought to desolation.

The complete fall of Babylon

Chapter 18 goes on to describe the physical outworking of what we have seen on the earth. The city of Babylon (probably now Rome as Peter seems to infer in 1 Peter 5:13) is completely destroyed. Among the main mourners are the merchants. So our scenario seems to be foretelling a downfall of economic domination being replaced by a political force. This switch from economic to political is actually seen in Europe. The move to

integrate Europe started with the European Economic Community, became the European Community, became the European Union.

Europe is the leading force in the GATT agreements which control and dominate world trade. Under the influence of the Club of Rome the world is being split into ten economic regions Watch this space!

Chapter 11

Progressive revelation – the Millennial Kingdom established

After going back to tell us what became of Babylon the scripture is going to tell us what was happening in heaven and take us to the next stage of the progressive revelation.

Chapter 19 sees heaven rejoicing over the judgement of Babylon because the system was evil in the sight of the Lord due to its unrighteous practices and its opposition to God's people.

So next we are shown that the bride of Christ (the born again believers who are indwelt by the Spirit – otherwise called the true church) has made herself ready (verse 7) for the great marriage of the Lamb. The text moves swiftly on and reveals that there will be a marriage feast to celebrate the union.

'Blessed are those who are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb.'

We can assume that this statement does not refer to the bride – there would be no marriage without a bride. So we can assume that there will be guests at the feast.

This brings us to a seemingly strange reference that Jesus made concerning John the Baptist.

Jesus said, '
"Assuredly, I say to you, among those born of women there has not risen one greater than John the Baptist; but he who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he."
Matthew 11:11

No one greater than John – yet the least in the Kingdom is greater than he. So far as one can understand it seems that there is a difference between those who believed in the Old Testament – John here being seen as the last in the line of prophets and the law – and those born again in the New Testament. We see the great difference being the fact that the Holy Spirit dwells in the latter and not the former. (This also accounts for the fact that nowhere in the Old Testament is anyone given or seen exercising authority over all the works of the devil.)

The guests at the wedding

So now we can see that there will be many whose destiny is eternal glory but who are not actually part of the bride of Christ. There will also be those who become believers during the Tribulation – when once again the Holy Spirit does not dwell within those who come to believe in that period.

This whole picture is nicely described for us in the gospel of Matthew:

*"Then the kingdom of heaven shall be likened to ten virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom.
"Now five of them were wise, and five were foolish.
"Those who were foolish took their lamps and took no oil with them, but the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps.
"But while the bridegroom was delayed, they all slumbered and slept. And at midnight a cry was heard: 'Behold, the bridegroom is coming; go out to meet him!'
"Then all those virgins arose and trimmed their lamps. And the foolish said to the wise, 'Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out.'
"But the wise answered, saying, 'No, lest there should not be enough for us and you; but go rather to those who sell, and buy for yourselves.'
"And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went in with him to the wedding; and the door was shut.
"Afterward the other virgins came also, saying, 'Lord, Lord, open to us!'
"But he answered and said, 'Assuredly, I say to you, I do not know you.'
"Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour in which the Son of Man is coming.'*

Matthew 25:1-13

The parable of the foolish virgins, when considered with known Jewish practice of the time, shows the process of the wedding – the bride groom collects the bride from her father's house and takes her to his own house for the feast.

The 'house' of the bride's father is heaven. Jesus 'house' is the earth where He sets up His kingdom.

The guests at the wedding form two parties – those who are already inside the 'house' waiting for the groom's return and those who have become believers during the Tribulation, represented by the wise virgins. The foolish virgins are religious people, on earth at His return, who have no oil – they have not been born again.

The feast

So the scene is set and the bride is ready to be taken from her father's house to the groom's house. And there it is in the next few verses of chapter 19. The Lord rides out on His white horse with the bride, now referred to as the armies of heaven. The Lord puts an end to the great battle, known as the battle of Armageddon. Satan is bound and cast into the bottomless pit for 1,000 years.

The Millennial Kingdom

It is from the length of the reign of Jesus – 1,000 years – that we get the name the Millennial Kingdom. For 1,000 years is a millennium. Those who had come through the Tribulation but did not believe even though there had been many, many opportunities to repent are now left in death for the whole period.

At the end of the 1,000 years Satan is released once more to deceive those who have been born during the Millennial Kingdom but have not placed their personal belief and trust in

Jesus as saviour, even though they live in perfect surroundings, ruled by the Saviour Himself.

Many are deceived, there is another rebellion and the Lord puts an end to it with fire from heaven.

Now is the moment for the final judgement of all who have ever lived on the earth and not believed in Jesus the Messiah. In the scripture it is called the 'Great White Throne Judgement' All the dead are raised. This is the 'double check' that no one has been overlooked. All those not found in the book of life – all the resurrected dead at this point, are cast into the lake of fire for eternity.

Now we are ready to move beyond the Millennial Kingdom and into eternity.

Chapter 12

Eternity

Chapter 21 sees the passing away of the 'old heaven and earth' to make way for a new heaven and new earth. This is now a perfect environment where there is no death, no sorrow, no crying, and no pain.

The new Jerusalem descends from heaven and is the dwelling place of the bride – so much so that the city is also referred to as the bride. (Just as we saw previously with Babylon being the name given to both the harlot [false bride] and the city.)

Read through chapter 21 and the first part of chapter 22 to get the description of the city – the way it is built and some of its features. This is where we will spend eternity.

No wonder we are called to look forward to the great coming of Jesus - ahead of us are many glorious things:

The Rapture of the church – caught up to meet Jesus in the air.

Preparation in heaven for 7 years whilst the Tribulation is worked out on earth.

The marriage and the marriage feast of the Lamb.

Reigning and ruling with Jesus over the Millennial Kingdom.

Eternity in the New Jerusalem – never to be separated from the Lord and to dwell in perfection.

Surely we can join with the Spirit and cry:

'Come'

Revelation 22:17