

Have you ever shown people a text message from a friend and they just couldn't seem to understand it? You may understand it perfectly, but others cannot because they weren't part of your conversation. Similarly, it is also hard to understand the message in the Book of Revelation. The symbols and visions that appear in this book are not always clear. Some people mistakenly think it is a frightening book about the end of the world. However, for the early Christian community and the Church today, the Book of Revelation is a message of hope that proclaims God's ultimate triumph over evil in history.

At a Glance

- I. Prologue (1:1–3).
- II. Letters to the Churches of Asia (1:4–3:22).
- III. God and the Lamb in Heaven (4:1–5:14).
- IV. The Seven Seals, Trumpets, and Plagues, with Interludes (6:1–16:21).
- V. The Punishment of Babylon and the Destruction of Pagan Nations (17:1–20:15).
- VI. The New Creation (21:1–22:5).
- VII. Epilogue (22:6–21).

Quick Facts

Inspired Author: a Jewish-Christian prophet named John
Date: probably from AD 92 to 96
Audience: Christian churches in Asia Minor during a time of Roman persecution

In Depth

This book is unique in that the author, who calls himself John, received a series of visions from God that form most of the content. The recorded visions take the form of apocalyptic literature (see “Apocalyptic Literature,” near Daniel, chapters 7–10) and are full of symbols. These symbols are like the language of a secret club. You use it when you want to keep people who do not belong to your club from understanding what you are saying.

Why was it important that the meaning of the visions be known to the Christian communities only? Because the Christians still remembered their persecution under the Roman emperor Nero Caesar (AD 54–68) and were suffering a new persecution under the Roman emperor Domitian (AD 81–96). This “coded language” allowed John to criticize the Roman emperor and empire without necessarily putting his readers at risk of persecution or even death. John himself was exiled to an island off Asia Minor for preaching the Gospel (see Rv 1:9).

Once the symbols are understood, it is clear that the Book of Revelation offers hope to a church under persecution. It expresses belief in God's justice and God's victory over evil—an evil that at John's time was embodied in the Roman Empire. But it also expresses the great Christian belief that God will ultimately be victorious, at the end of time, when Christ will come again in his full glory and power. It is a mistake for Christians to try to decipher Revelation as a prediction as to when and how that final coming will occur. But they can take great joy and hope in the promise of a new world where God will wipe away every tear, and suffering and death will be no more (see 21:4).

Revelation

5:1—6:11

I: Prologue

1^{1*†} The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave to him, to show his servants what must happen soon. He made it known by sending his angel to his servant John, ²who gives witness to the word of God and to the testimony of Jesus Christ by reporting what he saw. ^{3*}† Blessed is the one who reads aloud and blessed are those who listen to this prophetic message and heed what is written in it, for the appointed time is near.

II: Letters to the Churches of Asia

Greeting†

^{4*} John, to the seven churches in Asia:† grace to you and peace from him who is and who was and who is to come, and from the seven spirits before his throne, ^{5*}† and from Jesus Christ, the faithful

witness, the firstborn of the dead and ruler of the kings of the earth. To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood, ^{6*} who has made us into a kingdom, priests for his God and Father, to him be glory and power forever [and ever]. Amen.

^{7*} Behold, he is coming amid the clouds, and every eye will see him, even those who pierced him. All the peoples of the earth will lament him. Yes. Amen.

^{8*}† “I am the Alpha and the Omega,” says the Lord God, “the one who is and who was and who is to come, the almighty.”

The First Vision†

⁹I, John, your brother, who share with you the distress, the kingdom, and the endurance we

† **1:1–3** This prologue describes the source, contents, and audience of the book and forms an inclusion with the epilogue (22:6–21), with its similar themes and expressions.

1:3 *Blessed is the one*: this is the first of seven beatitudes in this book; the others are in 14:13; 16:15; 19:9; 20:6; 22:7, 14. *This prophetic message*: literally, “the words of the prophecy”; so 22:7, 10, 18, 19 by inclusion. *The appointed time*: when Jesus will return in glory; cf 1:7; 3:11; 22:7, 10, 12, 20.

1:4–8 Although Revelation begins and ends (22:21) with Christian epistolary formulae, there is nothing between chs 4 and 22 resembling a letter. The author here employs the standard word order for greetings in Greek letter writing: “N. to N., greetings . . .”; see the note on Rom 1:1.

1:4 *Seven churches in Asia*: Asia refers to the Roman province of that name in western Asia Minor (modern Turkey); these representative churches are mentioned by name in v 11, and each is the recipient of a message (2:1—3:22). *Seven* is the biblical number

suggesting fullness and completeness; thus the seer is writing for the whole church.

1:5 *Freed us*: the majority of Greek manuscripts and several early versions read “washed us”; but “freed us” is supported by the best manuscripts and fits well with Old Testament imagery, e.g., Is 40:2.

1:8 *The Alpha and the Omega*: the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet. In 22:13 the same words occur together with the expressions “the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End”; cf 17: 2:8; 21:6; Is 41:4; 44:6.

1:9–20 In this first vision, the seer is commanded to write what he

1:1 Rv 22:6–8, 20; Dn 2:28 / Rv 19:10.

1:3 Rv 22:7 / Lk 11:28.

1:4 Rv 1:8; 4:8; 11:17; 16:5; Ex 3:14.

1:5 Rv 3:14; 1 Cor 15:20; Col 1:18 / Heb 9:14;

1 Pt 1:19; 1 Jn 1:7.

1:6 Ex 19:6; 1 Pt 2:9.

1:7 Dn 7:13 / Zec 12:10; Mt 24:30; Jn 19:37.

1:8 Rv 17; 21:6; 22:13; Is 41:4; 44:6; 48:12.

have in Jesus, found myself on the island called Patmos† because I proclaimed God's word and gave testimony to Jesus. ^{10†} I was caught up in spirit on the Lord's day and heard behind me a voice as loud as a trumpet, ^{11†} which said, "Write on a scroll what you see and send it to the seven churches: to Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea." ^{12†} Then I turned to see whose voice it was that spoke to me, and when I turned, I saw seven gold lampstands ^{13*†} and in the midst of the lampstands one like a son of man, wearing an ankle-length robe, with a gold sash around his

chest. ^{14†} The hair of his head was as white as white wool or as snow, and his eyes were like a fiery flame. ^{15†} His feet were like polished brass refined in a furnace, and his voice was like the sound of rushing water. ^{16*†} In his right hand he held seven stars. A sharp two-edged sword came out of his mouth, and his face shone like the sun at its brightest.

^{17*†} When I caught sight of him, I fell down at his feet as though dead. He touched me with his right hand and said, "Do not be afraid. I am the first and the last, ^{18†} the one who lives. Once I was dead, but now I am alive forever and ever. I hold the keys to death and the netherworld. ^{19†} Write down, therefore, what you have seen, and what is happening, and what will happen afterwards. ^{20†} This is the secret meaning of the seven stars you saw in my right hand, and of

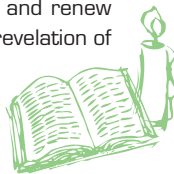
Pray It!

The Alpha and the Omega

In the first chapter of Revelation, John introduces God's message to the seven churches in Asia. After explaining that he received the message through a vision and that an angel instructed him to communicate it to them, John describes a vision of Christ.

A vision is like a dream. It cannot be interpreted literally; we must seek its deep meaning and be open to its message. For example, in the vision of Revelation 1:12–16, a magnificently robed Christ stands amid seven lampstands. The deeper meaning is that the resurrected Jesus in all his glory and power is watching over the seven churches. Here's another example: Revelation 1:8 has God saying, "I am the Alpha and the Omega." In the Greek alphabet, *alpha* is the first letter, and *omega* is the last letter. This passage is telling us that God and Jesus are in control of all history, from its beginning to its end.

In your prayer, think of any current event that frightens you or any harassments you experience because of your faith or moral principles. See the image of the risen Christ described by John. Feel Jesus lovingly touching your head. Hear Jesus telling you that history is always in God's hands. Let God strengthen your faith and renew your hope with this wonderful revelation of God's love.



► Rv 1:7–20

† sees to the seven churches (9–11). He sees Christ in glory, whom he depicts in stock apocalyptic imagery (12–16), and hears him describe himself in terms meant to encourage Christians by emphasizing his victory over death (17–20).

1:9 *Island called Patmos*: one of the Sporades islands in the Aegean Sea, some fifty miles south of Ephesus, used by the Romans as a penal colony. *Because I proclaimed God's word*: literally, "on account of God's word."

1:10 *The Lord's day*: Sunday. *As loud as a trumpet*: the imagery is derived from the theophany at Sinai (Ex 19:16, 19; cf Heb 12:19 and the trumpet in other eschatological settings in Is 27:13; Jl 2:1; Mt 24:31; 1 Cor 15:52; 1 Thes 4:16).

1:11 *Scroll*: a papyrus roll.

1:12–16 A symbolic description of Christ in glory. The metaphorical language is not to be understood literally; cf Introduction.

1:13 *Son of man*: see the note on Mk 8:31. *Ankle-length robe*: Christ is priest; cf Ex 28:4, 29:5; Wis 18:24; Zec 3:4. *Gold sash*: Christ is king; cf Ex 28:4; 1 Mc 10:89; 11:58; Dn 10:5.

1:14 *Hair . . . as white as white wool or as snow*: Christ is eternal, clothed with the dignity that belonged to the "Ancient of Days"; cf 18; Dn 7:9. *His eyes were like a fiery flame*: Christ is portrayed as all-knowing; cf 2:23; Ps 7:10; Jer 17:10; and similar expressions in 2:18; 19:12; cf Dn 10:6.

1:15 *His feet . . . furnace*: Christ is depicted as unchangeable; cf Ez 1:27; Dn 10:6. The Greek word translated "refined" is unconnected grammatically with any other word in the sentence. *His voice . . . water*: Christ speaks with divine authority; cf Ez 1:24.

1:16 *Seven stars*: in the pagan world, Mithras and the Caesars were represented with seven stars in their right hand, symbolizing their universal dominion. *A sharp two-edged sword*: this refers to the word of God (cf Eph 6:17; Heb 4:12) that will destroy unrepentant sinners; cf 2:16; 19:15; Wis 18:15; Is 11:4; 49:2. *His face . . . brightest*: this symbolizes the divine majesty of Christ; cf 10:1; 21:23; Jgs 5:31; Is 60:19; Mt 17:2.

1:17 It was an Old Testament belief that for sinful human beings to see God was to die; cf Ex 19:21; 33:20; Jgs 6:22–23; Is 6:5.

1:18 *Netherworld*: Greek Hades, Hebrew Sheol, the abode of the dead; cf 20:13–14; Nm 16:33.

1:19 *What you have seen, and what is happening, and what will happen afterwards*: the three parts of the Book of Revelation, the vision (10–20), the situation in the seven churches (chs 2–3), and the events of chs 6–22.

1:20 *Secret meaning*: literally, "mystery." *Angels*: these are the presiding spirits of the seven churches. Angels were thought to be in charge of the physical world (cf 7:1; 14:18; 16:5) and of nations (Dn 10:13; 12:1), communities (the seven churches), and individuals (Mt 18:10; Acts 12:15). Some have seen in the "angel" of each of the seven churches its pastor or a personification of the spirit of the congregation.

the seven gold lampstands: the seven stars are the angels of the seven churches, and the seven lampstands are the seven churches.

To Ephesus

2^{1†} “To the angel of the church † in Ephesus, † write this:

“The one who holds the seven stars in his right hand and walks in the midst of the seven gold lampstands says this: ^{2†} “I know your works, your labor, and your endurance, and that you cannot tolerate the wicked; you have tested those who call themselves apostles but are not, and discovered that they are impostors. ³ Moreover, you have endurance and have suffered for my name, and you have not grown weary. ⁴ Yet I hold this against you: you have lost the love you had at first. ⁵ Realize how far you have fallen. Repent, and do the works you did at first. Otherwise, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place, unless you repent. ^{6†} But you have this in your favor: you hate the works of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate.

^{7*†} “ “Whoever has ears ought to hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To the victor I will give the right to eat from the tree of life that is in the garden of God.”

To Smyrna†

⁸ “To the angel of the church in Smyrna, † write this:

“The first and the last, who once died but came to life, says this: ^{9*†} “I know your tribulation and poverty, but you are rich. I know the slander of those who claim to be Jews and are not, but rather are members of the assembly of Satan. ¹⁰ Do not be afraid of anything that you are going to suffer. Indeed, the devil will throw some of you



Did You Know?

The Seven Churches

The messages addressed to the seven churches in Asia Minor (modern Greece and Turkey) are not predictions of the future. Like the prophets of the Old Testament who called Israel to return to the covenant, John calls these communities to deeper faith. Two churches are praised (Smyrna and Philadelphia), two are scolded (Sardis and Laodicea), and the remaining three receive both praise and criticism. The churches are scolded because they have tolerated leaders whose teaching contradicts the true Gospel message and because their faith has become “lukewarm,” lacking the devotion it had when they first became Christians.

If the author of Revelation wrote such a prophecy to your local church, what would he praise and what would he criticize? Is your community on fire in living the Gospel, or is it lukewarm in its commitment?

▶ Rv 2:1—3:22

into prison, that you may be tested, and you will face an ordeal for ten days. Remain faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life.

^{11*†} “ “Whoever has ears ought to hear what the Spirit says to the churches. The victor shall not be harmed by the second death.”

2:7 *Victor*: referring to any Christian individual who holds fast to the faith and does God’s will in the face of persecution. *The tree of life that is in the garden of God*: this is a reference to the tree in the primeval paradise (Gn 2:9); cf 22:2, 14, 19. The decree excluding humanity from the tree of life has been revoked by Christ.

2:8–11 The letter to Smyrna encourages the Christians in this important commercial center by telling them that although they are impoverished, they are nevertheless rich, and calls those Jews who are slandering their members of the assembly of Satan (9). There is no admonition; rather, the Christians are told that they will suffer much, even death, but the time of tribulation will be short compared to their eternal reward (10), and they will thus escape final damnation (11).

2:8 *Smyrna*: modern Izmir, ca. thirty miles north of Ephesus, and the chief city of Lydia, with a temple to the goddess Roma. It was renowned for its loyalty to Rome, and it also had a large Jewish community very hostile toward Christians.

2:9–10 The church in Smyrna was materially poor but spiritually rich. Accusations made by Jewish brethren there occasioned the persecution of Christians; cf Acts 14:2, 19; 17:5, 13.

2:11 *The second death*: this refers to the eternal death, when sinners will receive their final punishment; cf 20:6, 14–15; 21:8.

† **2:1—3:22** Each of the seven letters follows the same pattern: address; description of the exalted Christ; blame and/or praise for the church addressed; threat and/or admonition; final exhortation and promise to all Christians.

2:1–7 The letter to Ephesus praises the members of the church there for their works and virtues, including discerning false teachers (2–3), but admonishes them to repent and return to their former devotion (4–5). It concludes with a reference to the Nicolaitans (see the note on 6) and a promise that the victor will have access to eternal life (7).

2:1 *Ephesus*: this great ancient city had a population of ca. 250,000; it was the capital of the Roman province of Asia and the commercial, cultural, and religious center of Asia. The other six churches were located in the same province, situated roughly in a circle; they were selected for geographical reasons rather than for the size of their Christian communities. *Walks in the midst of the seven gold lampstands*: this signifies that Christ is always present in the church; see the note on 1:4.

2:2 *Who call themselves . . . impostors*: this refers to unauthorized and perverse missionaries; cf Acts 20:29–30.

2:6 *Nicolaitans*: these are perhaps the impostors of v 2; see the note on vv 14–15. There is little evidence for connecting this group with Nicolaus, the proselyte from Antioch, mentioned in Acts 6:5.

“The one who has the seven spirits of God and the seven stars says this: “I know your works, that you have the reputation of being alive, but you are dead. ²Be watchful and strengthen what is left, which is going to die, for I have not found your works complete in the sight of my God. ^{3*} Remember then how you accepted and heard; keep it, and repent. If you are not watchful, I will come like a thief, and you will never know at what hour I will come upon you. ^{4*} However, you have a few people in Sardis who have not soiled their garments; they will walk with me dressed in white, because they are worthy.

^{5*}† “ “The victor will thus be dressed in white, and I will never erase his name from the book of life but will acknowledge his name in the presence of my Father and of his angels.

^{6*} “ “Whoever has ears ought to hear what the Spirit says to the churches.”

To Philadelphia†

^{7*} “To the angel of the church in Philadelphia,† write this:

“The holy one, the true,
who holds the key of David,
who opens and no one shall close,
who closes and no one shall open,

says this:

^{8†} “ “I know your works (behold, I have left an open door before you, which no one can close). You have limited strength, and yet you have kept my word and have not denied my name. ^{9*} Behold, I will make those of the assembly of Satan who claim to be Jews and are not, but are lying, behold I will make them come and fall prostrate at your feet, and they will realize that I love you. ^{10†} Because you have kept my message of endurance, I will keep you safe in the time of trial that is going to come to

† ^{3:5} *In white*: white is a sign of victory and joy as well as resurrection; see the note on 2:17. *The book of life*: the roll in which the names of the redeemed are kept; cf 13:8; 17:8; 20:12, 15; 21:27; Phil 4:3; Dn 12:1. They will be acknowledged by Christ in heaven; cf Mt 10:32.

^{3:7–13} The letter to Philadelphia praises the Christians there for remaining faithful even with their limited strength (8). Members of the assembly of Satan are again singled out (9; see 2:9 above). There is no admonition; rather, the letter promises that they will be kept safe at the great trial (10–11) and that the victors will become pillars of the heavenly temple, upon which three names will be inscribed: God, Jerusalem, and Christ (12).

^{3:7} *Philadelphia*: modern Alasehir, ca. thirty miles southeast of Sardis, founded by Attalus II Philadelphus of Pergamum to be an “open door” (8) for Greek culture; it was destroyed by an earthquake in A.D. 17. Rebuilt by money from the Emperor Tiberius, the city was renamed Neo-Caesarea; this may explain the allusions to “name” in v 12. *Key of David*: to the heavenly city of David (cf Is 22:22), “the

Live It!

Opening the Door

The image in Revelation 3:20 inspired an artist to depict our relationship with Christ in a popular painting. The painting shows a door overgrown with vines. The door obviously has not been opened in a long time. As you examine it, you realize it has no outside latch or knob—it can be opened only from the inside. At the door stands Jesus, knocking—not pounding, just knocking patiently.

What is your relationship with Christ like right now? Is the door of your life open to let Christ in, or has it been closed for a while? Jesus will not force his way into your life. Jesus seeks a close friendship with you, and real friendship—real love—always involves a free choice. No one can choose to open the door but you.

▶ Rv 3:14–22



the whole world to test the inhabitants of the earth. ^{11*} I am coming quickly. Hold fast to what you have, so that no one may take your crown.

^{12*}† “ “The victor I will make into a pillar in the temple of my God, and he will never leave it again. On him I will inscribe the name of my God and the name of the city of my God, the new Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven from my God, as well as my new name.

^{13*} “ “Whoever has ears ought to hear what the Spirit says to the churches.”

new Jerusalem” (12), over which Christ has supreme authority.

^{3:8} *An open door*: opportunities for sharing and proclaiming the faith; cf Acts 14:27; 1 Cor 16:9; 2 Cor 2:12.

^{3:10} *My message of endurance*: this does not refer to a saying of Jesus about patience but to the example of Christ’s patient endurance. *The inhabitants of the earth*: literally, “those who live on the earth.” This expression, which also occurs in 6:10; 8:13; 11:10; 13:8, 12, 14; 17:2, 8, always refers to the pagan world.

^{3:12} *Pillar*: this may be an allusion to the rebuilding of the city; see the note on v 7. *New Jerusalem*: it is described in 21:10–22:5.

^{3:3} Mt 24:42–44; Mk 13:33; 1 Thes 5:2; 2 Pt 3:10.

^{3:4} Rv 7:13–14.
^{3:5} Ps 69:29; Dn 12:1 / Mt 10:32.

^{3:7} Is 22:22; Mt 16:19.
^{3:9} Rv 2:9 / Is 45:14; 60:14.
^{3:11} Rv 2:25; 22:7, 20.
^{3:12} Rv 21:2–3; Ez 48:35 / Rv 19:13.

To Laodicea†

14*† “To the angel of the church in Laodicea, write this:

“The Amen, the faithful and true witness, the source of God’s creation, says this: 15† “I know your works; I know that you are neither cold nor hot. I wish you were either cold or hot. 16† So, because you are lukewarm, neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of my mouth. 17*† For you say, ‘I am rich and affluent and have no need of anything,’ and yet do not realize that you are wretched, pitiable, poor, blind, and naked. 18† I

advise you to buy from me gold refined by fire so that you may be rich, and white garments to put on so that your shameful nakedness may not be exposed, and buy ointment to smear on your eyes so that you may see. 19* Those whom I love, I reprove and chastise. Be earnest, therefore, and repent.

20† “ “Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, [then] I will enter his house and dine with him, and he with me. 21* I will give the victor the right to sit with me on my throne, as I myself first won the victory and sit with my Father on his throne.

22 “ “Whoever has ears ought to hear what the Spirit says to the churches.” “

Live It!

Jesus Christ Is the Lord of History

After the messages to the churches in Asia, John presents several visions that reveal God’s action in history. Read Revelation 4:1–11. The vision of God’s throne is the background of the whole Book of Revelation. It symbolizes God’s authority over history. The vision is enhanced by a heavenly worship in which God is proclaimed and praised:

“Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God almighty,
who was, and who is, and who is to come.”
(Rv 4:8)

Read 5:1–14. The vision continues. Two symbols stand out: a sealed scroll and a lamb. God holds a scroll, whose meaning was hidden to the Christian communities in their persecution. A lamb appears. It is the risen Jesus, carrying in his body the signs of his Passion. He receives the scroll from God. He is the only one who can open the scroll and reveal the mystery of death and life.

Read both visions again and experience the honor, glory, and power of Christ. Let these visions reinforce your faith and renew your hope every time you wonder about the meaning of an event you cannot make sense of.

► Revelation, chapters 4–5



III: God and the Lamb in Heaven

Vision of Heavenly Worship†

4¹After this I had a vision of an open door† to heaven, and I heard the trumpetlike voice that had spoken to me before, saying, “Come up here and I will show you what must happen afterwards.” 2*† At once I was caught up in spirit.

† **3:14–22** The letter to Laodicea reprimands the community for being lukewarm (15–16), but no particular faults are singled out. Their material prosperity is contrasted with their spiritual poverty, the violet tunics that were the source of their wealth with the white robe of baptism, and their famous eye ointment with true spiritual perception (17–18). But Christ’s chastisement is inspired by love and a desire to be allowed to share the messianic banquet with his followers in the heavenly kingdom (19–21).

3:14 *Laodicea*: ca. forty miles southeast of Philadelphia and ca. eighty miles east of Ephesus, a wealthy industrial and commercial center, with a renowned medical school. It exported fine woolen garments and was famous for its eye salves. It was so wealthy that it was proudly rebuilt without outside aid after the devastating earthquake of A.D. 60/61. *The Amen*: this is a divine title (cf Hebrew text of Is 65:16) applied to Christ; cf 2 Cor 1:20. *Source of God’s creation*: literally, “the beginning of God’s creation,” a concept found also in Jn 1:3; Col 1:16–17; Heb 1:2; cf Prv 8:22–31; Wis 9:1–2.

3:15–16 Halfhearted commitment to the faith is nauseating to Christ; cf Rom 12:11.

3:16 *Spit*: literally, “vomit.” The image is that of a beverage that should be either hot or cold. Perhaps there is an allusion to the hot springs of Hierapolis across the Lycus river from Laodicea, which would have been lukewarm by the time they reached Laodicea.

3:17 Economic prosperity occasioned spiritual bankruptcy.

3:18 *Gold . . . fire*: God’s grace. *White garments*: symbol of an upright life; the city was noted for its violet/purple cloth. *Ointment . . . eyes*: to remove spiritual blindness; one of the city’s exports was eye ointment (see the note on 3:14).

3:20 Christ invites all to the messianic banquet in heaven; cf Is 25:6; Lk 14:15; 22:30.

4:1–11 The seer now describes a vision of the heavenly court in worship of God enthroned. He reverently avoids naming or describing God but pictures twenty-four elders in priestly and regal attire (4) and God’s throne and its surroundings made of precious gems and other symbols that traditionally express the majesty of God (5–6). Universal creation is represented by the four living creatures (6–7). Along with the twenty-four elders, they praise God unceasingly in humble adoration (8–11).

4:1 The ancients viewed heaven as a solid vault, entered by way of actual doors.

4:2–8 Much of the imagery here is taken from Ez 1 and 10.

3:14 Rv 1:5.
3:17 Prv 13:7; Lk 12:21.
3:19 Prv 3:11–12; 1 Cor

11:32; Heb 12:5–11.
3:21 Lk 22:28–30; Mt 19:28.
4:2–3 Is 6:17; Ez 1:26–28.

A throne was there in heaven, and on the throne sat ³one whose appearance sparkled like jasper and carnelian. Around the throne was a halo as brilliant as an emerald. ⁴*† Surrounding the throne I saw twenty-four other thrones on which twenty-four elders sat, dressed in white garments and with gold crowns on their heads. ⁵† From the throne came flashes of lightning, rumblings, and peals of thunder. Seven flaming torches burned

in front of the throne, which are the seven spirits of God. ⁶*† In front of the throne was something that resembled a sea of glass like crystal.

In the center and around the throne, there were four living creatures covered with eyes in front and in back. ⁷† The first creature resembled a lion, the second was like a calf, the third had a face like that of a human being, and the fourth looked like an eagle in flight. ⁸*† The four living

† **4:4** *Twenty-four elders*: these represent the twelve tribes of Israel and the twelve apostles; cf 21:12–14.

† **4:5** *Flashes of lightning, rumblings, and peals of thunder*: as in other descriptions of God's appearance or activity; cf 8:5; 11:19; 16:18; Ex 19:16; Ez 1:4, 13. *The seven spirits of God*: the seven "angels of the presence" as in 8:2 and Tb 12:15.

† **4:6** *A sea of glass like crystal*: an image adapted from Ez 1:22–26. *Four living creatures*: these are symbols taken from Ez 1:5–21; they

are identified as cherubim in Ez 10:20. *Covered with eyes*: these suggest God's knowledge and concern.

† **4:7** *Lion . . . calf . . . human being . . . eagle*: these symbolize, respectively, what is noblest, strongest, wisest, and swiftest in creation. *Calf*: traditionally translated "ox," the Greek word refers to a heifer or young bull. Since the second century, these four creatures have been used as symbols of the evangelists Mark, Luke, Matthew, and John, respectively.

† **4:8** *Six wings*: like the seraphim of Is 6:2.

4:4 Is 24:23.
4:6 Ex 24:10.

4:8 Is 6:2–3 / Rv 1:4, 8;
11:17; 16:5.

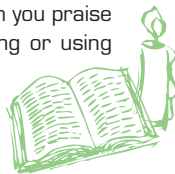
Pray It!

Enthusiastic Praise!

Over and over in John's vision of heaven, we find enthusiastic praise being offered to God, or to the Lamb of God, who is Christ Jesus. There are angels, incense, fantastic creatures, jewels, gold, elders, white-robed martyrs, and a crowd too great to number. The scenes of this vision inspire us to add our voice to theirs, to praise the majesty of God and the saving sacrifice of Jesus Christ.

In some Christian traditions, including some Catholic traditions, loud, spontaneous praise of God is common. However, for other Catholics and Christians, praise is also expressed through more solemn prayers and music. Whatever our expression, we should be enthusiastic with our praise!

How does the vision of the "countless in number" crying out "in a loud voice" in Revelation 5:11–12 encourage you to be more bold in your praise of God? Can you sing out more loudly in Mass? Can you participate more from your heart in saying common prayers with others? In your private prayer, can you praise God without asking for anything or using memorized prayers?



▶ Rv 4:1–5:14



Did You Know?

Symbolic Numbers and Colors

To understand the Book of Revelation, we need to understand the symbolism of its numbers and colors. The numbers seven and twelve symbolize fullness or perfection. The number four symbolizes universality (as in the four compass directions). The number one thousand symbolizes a multitude or a quantity too big to count. Thus, the twenty-four elders (see Rv 4:4) represent the perfection of the twelve Tribes of Israel and the Twelve Apostles. The Lamb with horns and eyes (see 5:6) represents the risen Christ, who has the fullness of power (seven horns) and perfect knowledge (seven eyes). The 144,000 who will be saved (see 7:4) represent a chosen multitude too big to count, because 144,000 equals 12 times 12 times 1,000.

The color white symbolizes victory, and red symbolizes bloodshed. Thus, the people who are slaughtered and given white robes (see 6:9–11) are the martyrs, who gave up their lives for their faith. They are victorious in martyrdom because God raised them to eternal life.

▶ Rv 4:1–7:17

creatures, each of them with six wings, were covered with eyes inside and out. Day and night they do not stop exclaiming:

“Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God almighty,
who was, and who is, and who is to come.”

⁹Whenever the living creatures give glory and honor and thanks to the one who sits on the throne, who lives forever and ever, ¹⁰the twenty-four elders fall down before the one who sits on the throne and worship him, who lives forever and ever. They throw down their crowns before the throne, exclaiming:

^{11*} “Worthy are you, Lord our God,
to receive glory and honor and power,
for you created all things;
because of your will they came to be and
were created.”

The Scroll and the Lamb†

5^{1*} I saw a scroll† in the right hand of the one who sat on the throne. It had writing on both sides and was sealed with seven seals. ²Then I saw a mighty angel who proclaimed in a loud voice, “Who is worthy to open the scroll and break its seals?” ³But no one in heaven or on earth or under the earth was able to open the scroll or to examine it. ⁴I shed many tears because no one was found worthy to open the scroll or to examine it. ^{5*}† One of the elders said to me, “Do not weep. The lion of the tribe of Judah, the root of David, has triumphed, enabling him to open the scroll with its seven seals.”

^{6*}† Then I saw standing in the midst of the throne and the four living creatures and the elders a Lamb that seemed to have been slain. He had seven horns and seven eyes; these are the [seven] spirits of God sent out into the whole world. ⁷He came and received the scroll from the right hand of the one who sat on the throne. ⁸When he took it, the four living creatures and

the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb. Each of the elders held a harp and gold bowls filled with incense, which are the prayers of the holy ones. ⁹They sang a new hymn:

“Worthy are you to receive the scroll
and to break open its seals,
for you were slain and with your blood you
purchased for God
those from every tribe and tongue, people
and nation.

^{10*} You made them a kingdom and priests for
our God,
and they will reign on earth.”

^{11*†} I looked again and heard the voices of many angels who surrounded the throne and the living creatures and the elders. They were countless in number, ¹²and they cried out in a loud voice:

“Worthy is the Lamb that was slain
to receive power and riches, wisdom and
strength,
honor and glory and blessing.”

¹³Then I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea, everything in the universe, cry out:

“To the one who sits on the throne and to the
Lamb
be blessing and honor, glory and might,
forever and ever.”

¹⁴The four living creatures answered, “Amen,” and the elders fell down and worshiped.

IV: The Seven Seals, Trumpets, and Plagues, with Interludes†

The First Six Seals†

6^{1†} Then I watched while the Lamb broke open the first of the seven seals, and I heard

Gn 49:9; Is 11:1, 10; Mt 1:1.

5:6 Christ is the Paschal Lamb without blemish, whose blood saved the new Israel from sin and death; cf Ex 12; Is 53:7; Jn 1:29, 36; Acts 8:32; 1 Pt 1:18–19. This is the main title for Christ in Revelation, used twenty-eight times. *Seven horns and seven eyes*: Christ has the fullness (see the note on 1:4) of power (horns) and knowledge (eyes); cf Zec 4:10. [*Seven spirits*]: as in 1:4; 3:1; and 4:5.

5:11 *Countless*: literally, “100,000,000 plus 1,000,000,” used by the author to express infinity.

6:1–16:21 A series of seven disasters now begins as each seal is broken (6:1–8:1), followed by a similar series as seven trumpets sound (8:2–11:19) and as seven angels pour bowls on the earth causing plagues (15:1–16:21). These gloomy sequences are inter-

† **5:1–14** The seer now describes a papyrus roll in God’s right hand (1) with seven seals indicating the importance of the message. A mighty angel asks who is worthy to open the scroll, i.e., who can accomplish God’s salvific plan (2). There is despair at first when no one in creation can do it (3–4). But the seer is comforted by an elder who tells him that Christ, called the lion of the tribe of Judah, has won the right to open it (5). Christ then appears as a Lamb, coming to receive the scroll from God (6–7), for which he is acclaimed as at a coronation (8–10). This is followed by a doxology of the angels (11–12) and then finally by the heavenly church united with all of creation (13–14).

5:1 *A scroll*: a papyrus roll possibly containing a list of afflictions for sinners (cf Ez 2:9–10) or God’s plan for the world. *Sealed with seven seals*: it is totally hidden from all but God. Only the Lamb (7–9) has the right to carry out the divine plan.

5:5 *The lion of the tribe of Judah, the root of David*: these are the messianic titles applied to Christ to symbolize his victory; cf 22:16;

4:11 Rom 4:17; 16:27.

5:1 Is 29:11.

5:5 Is 11:1, 10; Rom 15:12.

5:6 Jn 1:29.

5:10 Rv 1:6; Ex 19:6; Is 61:6.

5:11 Dn 7:10; Jude 14–15.

one of the four living creatures cry out in a voice like thunder, “Come forward.” ^{2*}† I looked, and there was a white horse, and its rider had a bow. He was given a crown, and he rode forth victoriously to further his victories.

³When he broke open the second seal, I heard the second living creature cry out, “Come forward.” ^{4*}† Another horse came out, a red one. Its rider was given power to take peace away from the earth, so that people would slaughter one another. And he was given a huge sword.

⁵† When he broke open the third seal, I heard the third living creature cry out, “Come forward.” I looked, and there was a black horse, and its rider held a scale in his hand. ^{6*}† I heard what seemed to be a voice in the midst of the four living creatures. It said, “A ration of wheat costs a day’s pay, and three rations of barley cost a day’s pay. But do not damage the olive oil or the wine.”

⁷When he broke open the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth living creature cry out, “Come forward.” ^{8*}† I looked, and there was a pale green horse. Its rider was named Death, and Hades accompanied him. They were given authority over a quarter of the earth, to kill with

sword, famine, and plague, and by means of the beasts of the earth.

⁹† When he broke open the fifth seal, I saw



Did You Know?

The Seven Seals and Seven Trumpets

The vision continues. In chapters 6–8 of Revelation, the Lamb opens the seven seals on the scroll and thus reveals the great forces in salvation history. The opening of the first four seals reveals the four horses of the apocalypse that bring conquest, strife, famine, and plagues. These are the things that throughout history have made people yearn for God’s salvation.

The opening of the fifth seal reveals the souls of the martyrs, who demand justice. Their white robes indicate that they are already with the risen Christ. They are waiting for other martyrs, but this stage will end soon.

The opening of the sixth seal reveals how God will get justice for the martyrs. History will change, and all people, even the powerful, will suffer. The visions of the census and of the great crowd in 7:1–17 reveal the destiny of Christians. The vision contains many reminders of the Exodus story. After this, a multitude that cannot be counted, from all nations, tribes, peoples, and languages, will experience God’s salvation and sing of God’s glory.

Finally, the Lamb opens the last seal. Seven more trumpets are revealed. When they are blown by angels, a new series of plagues is released (see 8:6–9:21). One-third of the people are destroyed by these plagues so that those remaining might repent. But in spite of these warnings, many people do not change.

Apocalyptic writing, as in the Book of Revelation, used symbolic language because it was addressed to Christians who were being persecuted. Its meaning could not be taken at face value but held a deeper meaning for those who believed. This vision tells us that no matter what evil besets us, God saves the faithful.

► Revelation, chapters 6–9

† rupted by longer or shorter scenes suggesting the triumph of God and his witnesses (e.g., chs 7, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14).

6:1–17 This chapter provides a symbolic description of the contents of the sealed scroll. The breaking of the first four seals reveals four riders. The first rider (of a white horse) is a conquering power (1–2), the second (red horse) a symbol of bloody war (3–4), the third (black horse) a symbol of famine (5–6), the fourth (pale green horse) a symbol of Death himself, accompanied by Hades (the underworld) as his page (7–8). Verse 8b summarizes the role of all four riders. The breaking of the fifth seal reveals Christian martyrs in an attitude of sacrifice as blood poured out at the foot of an altar begging God for vindication, which will come only when their quota is filled; but they are given a white robe symbolic of victory (9–11). The breaking of the sixth seal reveals typical apocalyptic signs in the sky and the sheer terror of all people at the imminent divine judgment (12–17).

6:1–8 The imagery is adapted from Zec 1:8–10; 6:1–8.

6:2 *White horse . . . bow*: this may perhaps allude specifically to the Parthians on the eastern border of the Roman empire. Expert in the use of the bow, they constantly harassed the Romans and won a major victory in A.D. 62; see the note on 9:13–21. But the Old Testament imagery typifies the history of oppression of God’s people at all times.

6:4 *Huge sword*: this is a symbol of war and violence; cf Ez 21:14–17.

6:5 *Black horse*: this is a symbol of famine, the usual accompaniment of war in antiquity; cf Lv 26:26; Ez 4:16–17. The *scale* is a symbol of shortage of food with a corresponding rise in price.

6:6 *A day’s pay*: literally, “a denarius,” a Roman silver coin that constitutes a day’s wage in Mt 20:2. Because of the famine, food was rationed and sold at an exorbitant price. A liter of flour was considered a day’s ration in the Greek historians Herodotus and Diogenes Laertius. *Barley*: food of the poor (Jn 6:9, 13; cf 2 Kgs 7:1, 16, 18); it was also used to feed animals; cf 1 Kgs 5:8. *Do not damage*: the olive and the vine are to be used more sparingly in time of famine.

6:8 *Pale green*: symbol of death and decay; cf Ez 14:21.

6:9 *The altar*: this altar corresponds to the altar of holocausts in the temple in Jerusalem; see also 11:1. *Because of the witness . . . word of God*: literally, “because of the word of God and the witness they had borne.”

underneath the altar the souls of those who had been slaughtered because of the witness they bore to the word of God. ^{10†} They cried out in a loud voice, “How long will it be, holy and true master, before you sit in judgment and avenge our blood on the inhabitants of the earth?” ¹¹ Each of them was given a white robe, and they were told to be patient a little while longer until the number was filled of their fellow servants and brothers who were going to be killed as they had been.

^{12*†} Then I watched while he broke open the sixth seal, and there was a great earthquake; the sun turned as black as dark sackcloth† and the whole moon became like blood. ^{13†} The stars in the sky fell to the earth like unripe figs shaken loose from the tree in a strong wind. ^{14*†} Then the sky was divided like a torn scroll curling up, and every mountain and island was moved from its place. ^{15†} The kings of the earth, the nobles, the military officers, the rich, the powerful, and every slave and free person hid themselves in caves and among mountain crags. ^{16*} They cried out to the mountains and the rocks, “Fall on us and hide us from the face of the one who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb, ^{17†} because the great day of their wrath has come and who can withstand it?”

The 144,000 Sealed

7 ^{1*†} After this I saw four angels standing at the four corners of the earth,† holding back the four winds of the earth so that no wind could blow on land or sea or against any tree. ^{2†} Then I saw another angel come up from the East, holding the seal of the living God. He cried out in

a loud voice to the four angels who were given power to damage the land and the sea, ^{3*} “Do not damage the land or the sea or the trees until we put the seal on the foreheads of the servants of our God.” ^{4*†} I heard the number of those who had been marked with the seal, one hundred and forty-four thousand marked from every tribe of the Israelites: ^{5†} twelve thousand were marked from the tribe of Judah, twelve thousand from the tribe of Reuben, twelve thousand from the tribe of Gad, ⁶ twelve thousand from the tribe of Asher, twelve thousand from the tribe of Naphtali, twelve thousand from the tribe of Manasseh, ⁷ twelve thousand from the tribe of Simeon, twelve thousand from the tribe of Levi, twelve thousand from the tribe of Issachar, ⁸ twelve thousand from the tribe of Zebulun, twelve thousand from the tribe of Joseph, and twelve thousand were marked from the tribe of Benjamin.

Triumph of the Elect

^{9†} After this I had a vision of a great multitude, which no one could count, from every nation, race, people, and tongue. They stood before the throne and before the Lamb, wearing white robes and holding palm branches in their hands. ^{10†} They cried out in a loud voice:

“Salvation comes from our God, who is seated on the throne, and from the Lamb.”

¹¹ All the angels stood around the throne and around the elders and the four living creatures. They prostrated themselves before the throne, worshiped God, ¹² and exclaimed:

on earth to persevere to the end, even to death.

7:1 *The four corners of the earth:* the earth is seen as a table or rectangular surface.

7:2 *East:* literally, “rising of the sun.” The east was considered the source of light and the place of paradise (Gn 2:8). *Seal:* whatever was marked by the impression of one’s signet ring belonged to that person and was under his protection.

7:4–9 *One hundred and forty-four thousand:* the square of twelve (the number of Israel’s tribes) multiplied by a thousand, symbolic of the new Israel (cf 14:1–5; Gal 6:16; Jas 1:1) that embraces people from every nation, race, people, and tongue (9).

7:5–8 Judah is placed first because of Christ; cf “the Lion of the tribe of Judah” (5:5). Dan is omitted because of a later tradition that the antichrist would arise from it.

7:9 *White robes . . . palm branches:* symbols of joy and victory; see the note on 3:5.

7:10 *Salvation comes from:* literally, “(let) salvation (be ascribed) to.” A similar hymn of praise is found at the fall of the dragon (12:10) and of Babylon (19:1).

† **6:10** *Holy and true master:* Old Testament usage as well as the context indicates that this is addressed to God rather than to Christ.

6:12–14 Symbolic rather than literal description of the cosmic upheavals attending the day of the Lord when the martyrs’ prayer for vindication (10) would be answered; cf Am 8:8–9; Is 34:4; 50:3; Jl 2:10; 3:3–4; Mt 24:4–36; Mk 13:5–37; Lk 21:8–36.

6:12 *Dark sackcloth:* for mourning, sackcloth was made from the skin of a black goat.

6:13 *Unripe figs:* literally, “summer (or winter) fruit.”

6:14 *Was divided:* literally, “was split,” like a broken papyrus roll torn in two, each half then curling up to form a roll on either side.

6:15 *Nobles:* literally, “courtiers,” “grandeens.” *Military officers:* literally, “commanders of 1,000 men,” used in Josephus and other Greek authors as the equivalent of the Roman *tribunus militum*. The listing of various ranks of society represents the universality of terror at the impending doom.

6:17 *Their:* this reading is attested in the best manuscripts, but the vast majority read “his” in reference to the wrath of the Lamb in the preceding verse.

7:1–17 An interlude of two visions precedes the breaking of the seventh seal, just as two more will separate the sixth and seventh trumpets (ch 10). In the first vision (1–8), the elect receive the seal of the living God as protection against the coming cataclysm; cf 14:1; Ez 9:4–6; 2 Cor 1:22; Eph 1:13; 4:30. The second vision (9–17) portrays the faithful Christians before God’s throne to encourage those

6:12 Jl 3:4; Mt 24:29.

6:14 Is 34:4 / Rv 16:20.

6:16 Is 2:19; Hos 10:8; Lk

23:30.

7:1 Jer 49:36; Zec 6:5.

7:3 Ex 12:7–14; Ez 9:4;

2 Cor 1:22; Eph 1:13;

4:30.

7:4 Rv 14:1.



The Communion of Saints

What do you do when things get really difficult? John is answering that question for his readers. John describes a looming ordeal and how the faithful will be marked on the forehead as a sign of God's protection. This sign does not remove them from the trials ahead but calls them to trust in God during the trials. John then describes a multitude in heaven that have already survived the ordeal and remained faithful to God. The important message for John's audience is how those in heaven survived. The angel says that they were made pure through the blood of the Lamb. That is, they united their lives with the Passion, death, and Resurrection of Jesus Christ and remained faithful throughout.

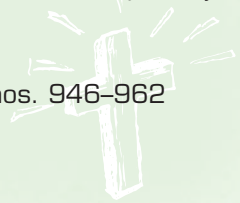
It is the union of those on earth facing life's ordeals and those already in heaven, along with those who have died and are being purified, that make up the Church. The Church refers to this body of believers as the communion of saints. As a communion of saints, we are all united to one another, and the good that any one of us does benefits all of us. Therefore, our prayers for the dead are effective, just as the prayers of those in heaven help us on earth.

As a Church, we often ask for the prayers of those in heaven, especially the saints—those who have been canonized or officially recognized by the Church. These women and men lived extraordinary, often heroic, lives of faith. The process of canonization can take many years, even centuries. During the process, the Church investigates the individual's life, writings, and any miracles attributed to her or him. If there is sufficient evidence of the person's holiness, the Church beatifies the individual, which is an intermediate step toward canonization. Then over time, if there are more confirmed miracles, the Church may then decide to canonize the person, making her or him an official saint.

The saints also serve as models for how we are to face trials and remain faithful throughout our lives. Just like the saints and the faithful in John's vision, we too are called to resist sin and offer our lives to God, even if it means facing the discipline of suffering. We are called to be the new generation of witnesses—the saints of our day whose example calls and strengthens others on the journey.

► **Rv 7:2-14**

Catechism, nos. 946-962



Pray It!

R
V

Sing God's Glory

The Book of Revelation contains beautiful prayers of praise. Among them are the hymn to the Lamb (see 5:9–14), the hymn of the multitude from every nation (see 7:10–17), the song of the Lamb (see 15:3–4), and the victory song (see 19:1–8).

In your prayer, read these prayers slowly and carefully. Imagine the awe-inspiring scenes of God's glory they describe. Quietly reflect on how you have experienced the glory and power of God in your life. Look at the events you experience day to day; can you find the extraordinary in the ordinary? End your reflection by letting these songs inspire your own prayer of praise to God.



▶ Rv 7:10–17

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

¹³Then one of the elders spoke up and said to me, "Who are these wearing white robes, and where did they come from?" ¹⁴*† I said to him, "My lord, you are the one who knows." He said to me, "These are the ones who have survived the time of great distress; they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

¹⁵ "For this reason they stand before God's throne

† **7:14** *Time of great distress*: fierce persecution by the Romans; cf Introduction.

7:17 *Life-giving water*: literally, "the water of life," God's grace, which flows from Christ; cf 21:6; 22:1, 17; Jn 4:10, 14.

8:1–13 The breaking of the seventh seal produces at first silence and then seven symbolic disasters, each announced by a trumpet blast, of which the first four form a unit as did the first four seals. A minor liturgy (3–5) is enclosed by a vision of seven angels (2, 6). Then follow the first four trumpet blasts, each heralding catastrophes modeled on the plagues of Egypt affecting the traditional prophetic third (cf Ez 5:12) of the earth, sea, fresh water, and stars (7–12). Finally, there is a vision of an eagle warning of the last three trumpet blasts (13).

8:1 *Silence in heaven*: as in Zep 1:7, a prelude to the eschatological woes that are to follow; cf Introduction.

8:3 *Altar*: there seems to be only one altar in the heavenly temple,

and worship him day and night in his temple.

The one who sits on the throne will shelter them.

¹⁶* They will not hunger or thirst anymore, nor will the sun or any heat strike them.

¹⁷*† For the Lamb who is in the center of the throne will shepherd them and lead them to springs of life-giving water, and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes."

The Seven Trumpets

8¹*† When he broke open the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven† for about half an hour. ²* And I saw that the seven angels who stood before God were given seven trumpets.

The Gold Censer

³*† Another angel came and stood at the altar, holding a gold censer. He was given a great quantity of incense to offer, along with the prayers of all the holy ones, on the gold altar that was before the throne. ⁴The smoke of the incense along with the prayers of the holy ones went up before God from the hand of the angel. ⁵* Then the angel took the censer, filled it with burning coals from the altar, and hurled it down to the earth. There were peals of thunder, rumblings, flashes of lightning, and an earthquake.

The First Four Trumpets

⁶* The seven angels who were holding the seven trumpets prepared to blow them.

⁷† When the first one blew his trumpet, there came hail and fire mixed with blood, which was hurled down to the earth. A third of the land was burned up, along with a third of the trees and all green grass.

⁸*† When the second angel blew his trumpet, something like a large burning mountain was hurled into the sea. A third of the sea turned to blood, ⁹† a third of the creatures living in the sea died, and a third of the ships were wrecked.

corresponding to the altar of holocausts in 6:9, and here to the altar of incense in Jerusalem; cf also 9:13; 11:1; 14:18; 16:7.

8:7 This woe resembles the seventh plague of Egypt (Ex 9:23–24); cf Jl 3:3.

8:8–11 The background of these two woes is the first plague of Egypt (Ex 7:20–21).

8:9 *Creatures living in the sea*: literally, "creatures in the sea that had souls."

7:14 Mt 24:21.

7:16 Is 49:10.

7:17 Rv 21:4; Is 25:8.

8:1 Hb 2:20; Zep 1:7; Zec

2:17.

8:2 Rv 4:5; Tb 12:15.

8:3 Ps 141:2; Tb 12:12.

8:5 Ez 10:2; Ps 11:6 / Rv

4:5; 11:19; 16:18.

8:6 Rv 16:1–21.

8:8 Ex 7:20.

¹⁰* When the third angel blew his trumpet, a large star burning like a torch fell from the sky. It fell on a third of the rivers and on the springs of water. ¹¹*† The star was called “Wormwood,” and a third of all the water turned to wormwood. Many people died from this water, because it was made bitter.

¹²* When the fourth angel blew his trumpet, a third of the sun, a third of the moon, and a third of the stars were struck, so that a third of them became dark. The day lost its light for a third of the time, as did the night.

¹³† Then I looked again and heard an eagle flying high overhead cry out in a loud voice, “Woe! Woe! Woe to the inhabitants of the earth from the rest of the trumpet blasts that the three angels are about to blow!”

The Fifth Trumpet†

9 ¹*† Then the fifth angel blew his trumpet, and I saw a star that had fallen from the sky to the earth. It was given the key for the passage to the abyss. ²* It opened the passage to the abyss, and smoke came up out of the passage like smoke from a huge furnace. The sun and the air were darkened by the smoke from the passage. ³*† Locusts came out of the smoke onto the land, and they were given the same power as scorpions of the earth. ⁴They were told not to harm the grass of the earth or any plant or any tree, but only those people who did not have the seal of God on their foreheads. ⁵† They were not allowed to kill them but only to torment them for five months; the torment they inflicted was like that of a scorpion when it stings a person. ⁶* During that time these people will seek death but will not find it, and they will long to die but death will escape them.

† **8:11** *Wormwood*: an extremely bitter and malignant plant symbolizing the punishment God inflicts on the ungodly; cf Jer 9:12–14; 23:15.

8:13 *Woe! Woe! Woe*: each of the three woes pronounced by the angel represents a separate disaster; cf 9:12; 11:14. The final woe, released by the seventh trumpet blast, includes the plagues of ch 16.

9:1–12 The fifth trumpet heralds a woe containing elements from the eighth and ninth plagues of Egypt (Ex 10:12–15, 21–23) but specifically reminiscent of the invasion of locusts in Jl 1:4–2:10.

9:1 *A star*: late Judaism represented fallen powers as stars (Is 14:12–15; Lk 10:18; Jude 13), but a comparison with 1:20 and 20:1 suggests that here it means an angel. *The passage to the abyss*: referring to Sheol, the netherworld, where Satan and the fallen angels are kept for a thousand years, to be cast afterwards into the pool of fire; cf 20:7–10. The abyss was conceived of as a vast subterranean cavern full of fire. Its only link with the earth was a kind of passage or mine shaft, which was kept locked.

9:3 *Scorpions*: their poisonous sting was proverbial; Ez 2:6; Lk 11:12.

9:5 *For five months*: more or less corresponding to the life-span of locusts.

9:7–10 Eight characteristics are listed to show the eschatological and diabolical nature of these locusts.

9:11 *Abaddon*: Hebrew (more precisely, Aramaic) for destruction

⁷*† The appearance of the locusts was like that of horses ready for battle. On their heads they wore what looked like crowns of gold; their faces were like human faces, ⁸* and they had hair like women’s hair. Their teeth were like lions’ teeth, ⁹ and they had chests like iron breastplates. The sound of their wings was like the sound of many horse-drawn chariots racing into battle. ¹⁰They had tails like scorpions, with stingers; with their tails they had power to harm people for five months. ¹¹† They had as their king the angel of the abyss, whose name in Hebrew is Abaddon and in Greek Apollyon.

¹² The first woe has passed, but there are two more to come.

The Sixth Trumpet†

¹³* Then the sixth angel blew his trumpet, and I heard a voice coming from the [four]† horns of the gold altar before God, ¹⁴† telling the sixth angel who held the trumpet, “Release the four angels who are bound at the banks of the great river Euphrates.” ¹⁵ So the four angels were released, who were prepared for this hour, day, month, and year to kill a third of the human race. ¹⁶ The number of cavalry troops was two hundred million; I heard their number. ¹⁷*† Now in my vision this is how I saw the horses and their riders. They wore red, blue, and yellow breastplates, and the horses’ heads were like heads of lions, and out of their mouths came fire, smoke, and sulfur. ¹⁸ By these three plagues of fire, smoke, and sulfur that came out of their mouths a third of the human race was killed. ¹⁹ For the power of the horses is in their mouths and in their tails; for their tails are like snakes, with heads that inflict harm.

²⁰*† The rest of the human race, who were

or ruin. *Apollyon*: Greek for the “Destroyer.”

9:13–21 The sixth trumpet heralds a woe representing another diabolical attack symbolized by an invasion by the Parthians living east of the Euphrates; see the note on 6:2. At the appointed time (15), the frightful horses act as God’s agents of judgment. The imaginative details are not to be taken literally; see Introduction and the note on 6:12–14.

9:13 [*Four*]: many Greek manuscripts and versions omit the word. The horns were situated at the four corners of the altar (Ex 27:2; 30:2–3); see the note on 8:3.

9:14–15 *The four angels*: they are symbolic of the destructive activity that will be extended throughout the universe.

9:17 *Blue*: literally, “hyacinth-colored.” *Yellow*: literally, “sulfurous.”

9:20 *The works of their hands*: i.e., the gods their hands had made.

8:10 Is 14:12.

8:11 Jer 9:14.

8:12 Ex 10:21–23.

9:1 Rv 20:1.

9:2 Gn 19:28.

9:3 Ex 10:12–15; Wis 16:9.

9:6 Jb 3:21.

9:7 || 2:4.

9:8 || 1:6.

9:13 Ex 30:1–3.

9:17 Jb 41:10–13.

9:20 Ps 135:15–17; Is 17:8;

Dn 5:4.

not killed by these plagues, did not repent of the works of their hands, to give up the worship of demons and idols made from gold, silver, bronze, stone, and wood, which cannot see or hear or walk.²¹ Nor did they repent of their murders, their magic potions, their unchastity, or their robberies.

The Angel with the Small Scroll

10^{1†} Then I saw another mighty angel come down from heaven wrapped in a cloud, with a halo around his head;† his face was like the sun and his feet were like pillars of fire.^{2†} In his hand he held a small scroll that had been opened. He placed his right foot on the sea and his left foot on the land,^{3*} and then he cried out in a loud voice as a lion roars. When he cried out, the seven thunders raised their voices, too.⁴ When the seven thunders had spoken, I was about to write it down; but I heard a voice from heaven say, “Seal up what the seven thunders have spoken, but do not write it down.”⁵ Then the angel I saw standing on the sea and on the land raised his right hand to heaven^{6*†} and swore by the one who lives forever and ever, who created heaven and earth and sea and all that is in them, “There shall be no more delay.^{7*†} At the time when you hear the seventh angel blow his trumpet, the mysterious plan of God shall be fulfilled, as he promised to his servants the prophets.”

⁸ Then the voice that I had heard from heaven spoke to me again and said, “Go, take the scroll that lies open in the hand of the angel who is

standing on the sea and on the land.”^{9†} So I went up to the angel and told him to give me the small scroll. He said to me, “Take and swallow it. It will turn your stomach sour, but in your mouth it will taste as sweet as honey.”^{10*} I took the small scroll from the angel’s hand and swallowed it. In my mouth it was like sweet honey, but when I had eaten it, my stomach turned sour.^{11†} Then someone said to me, “You must prophesy again about many peoples, nations, tongues, and kings.”

The Two Witnesses

11^{1*†} Then I was given a measuring rod like a staff and I was told, “Come and measure the temple of God and the altar, and count those who are worshiping in it.^{2†} But exclude the outer court of the temple; do not measure it, for it has been handed over to the Gentiles, who will trample the holy city for forty-two months.^{3†} I will commission my two witnesses to prophesy for those twelve hundred and sixty days, wearing sackcloth.”^{4*†} These are the two olive trees and the two lampstands that stand before the Lord of the earth.^{5†} If anyone wants to harm them, fire comes out of their mouths and devours their enemies. In this way, anyone wanting to harm them is sure to be slain.^{6*} They have the power to close up the sky so that no rain can fall during the time of their prophesying. They also have power to turn water into blood and to afflict the earth with any plague as often as they wish.

^{7*†} When they have finished their testimony, the beast that comes up from the abyss will wage

† **10:1–11:14** An interlude in two scenes (10:1–11 and 11:1–14) precedes the sounding of the seventh trumpet; cf 7:1–17. The first vision describes an angel astride sea and land like a colossus, with a small scroll open, the contents of which indicate that the end is imminent (ch 10). The second vision is of the measuring of the temple and of two witnesses, whose martyrdom means that the kingdom of God is about to be inaugurated.

10:1–4 *The seven thunders*: God’s voice announcing judgment and doom; cf Ps 29:3–9, where thunder, as the voice of Yahweh, is praised seven times.

10:2 *He placed . . . on the land*: this symbolizes the universality of the angel’s message, as does the figure of the small scroll open to be read.

10:6 *Heaven and earth and sea*: the three parts of the universe. *No more delay*: cf Dn 12:7; Hb 2:3.

10:7 *The mysterious plan of God*: literally, “the mystery of God,” the end of the present age when the forces of evil will be put down (17:1–19:4, 11–21; 20:7–10; cf 2 Thes 2:6–12; Rom 16:25–26), and the establishment of the reign of God when all creation will be made new (21:1–22:5).

10:9–10 The small scroll was sweet because it predicted the final victory of God’s people; it was sour because it also announced their sufferings. Cf Ez 3:1–3.

10:11 This further prophecy is contained in chs 12–22.

11:1 The temple and altar symbolize the new Israel; see the note on 7:4–9. The worshipers represent Christians. The measuring of the temple (cf Ez 40:3–42:20; 47:1–12; Zec 2:5–6) suggests that God will preserve the faithful remnant (cf Is 4:2–3) who remain true to Christ (14:1–5).

11:2 *The outer court*: the Court of the Gentiles. *Trample . . . forty-two months*: the duration of the vicious persecution of the Jews by Antiochus IV Epiphanes (Dn 7:25; 12:7); this persecution of three and a half years (half of seven, counted as 1260 days in 3; 12:6) became the prototype of periods of trial for God’s people; cf Lk 4:25; Jas 5:17. The reference here is to the persecution by the Romans; cf Introduction.

11:3 The two witnesses, wearing sackcloth symbolizing lamentation and repentance, cannot readily be identified. Do they represent Moses and Elijah, or the Law and the Prophets, or Peter and Paul? Most probably they refer to the universal church, especially the Christian martyrs, fulfilling the office of witness (two because of Dt 19:15; cf Mk 6:7; Jn 8:17).

11:4 *The two olive trees and the two lampstands*: the martyrs who stand in the presence of the Lord; the imagery is taken from Zec 4:1–3, 11–14, where the olive trees refer to Zerubbabel and Joshua.

11:5–6 These details are derived from stories of Moses, who turned *water into blood* (Ex 7:17–20), and of Elijah, who called down fire from heaven (1 Kgs 18:36–40; 2 Kgs 1:10) and closed up the sky for three years (1 Kgs 17:1; cf 18:1).

11:7 *The beast . . . from the abyss*: the Roman emperor Nero, who symbolizes the forces of evil, or the antichrist (13:1, 8; 17:8); cf Dn 7:2–8, 11–12, 19–22 and Introduction.

10:3 Ps 29:3–9; Jer 25:30; Am 3:8.

10:6 Dt 32:40; Dn 12:7 / Ez 12:28.

10:7 Am 3:7.

10:10 Ez 3:1–3.

11:1 Ez 40:3–5 / Zec 2:5–9.

11:4 Zec 4:3, 14.

11:6 Ex 7:17.

11:7 Dn 7:21.

war against them and conquer them and kill them. ^{8†} Their corpses will lie in the main street of the great city, which has the symbolic names “Sodom” and “Egypt,” where indeed their Lord was crucified. ^{9†} Those from every people, tribe, tongue, and nation will gaze on their corpses for three and a half days, and they will not allow their corpses to be buried. ¹⁰ The inhabitants of the earth will gloat over them and be glad and exchange gifts because these two prophets tormented the inhabitants of the earth. ^{11*} But after the three and a half days, a breath of life from God entered them. When they stood on their feet, great fear fell on those who saw them. ^{12*} Then they heard a loud voice from heaven say to them, “Come up here.” So they went up to heaven in a cloud as their enemies looked on. ^{13†} At that moment there was a great earthquake, and a tenth of the city fell in ruins. Seven thousand people were killed during the earthquake; the rest were terrified and gave glory to the God of heaven.

¹⁴ The second woe has passed, but the third is coming soon.

The Seventh Trumpet

^{15†} Then the seventh angel blew his trumpet. There were loud voices in heaven, saying, “The kingdom of the world now belongs to our Lord and to his Anointed, and he will reign forever and ever.” ¹⁶ The twenty-four elders who sat on their thrones before God prostrated themselves and worshiped God ¹⁷ and said:

“We give thanks to you, Lord God almighty,
who are and who were.

For you have assumed your great power
and have established your reign.

^{18*} The nations raged,
but your wrath has come,
and the time for the dead to be judged,
and to recompense your servants, the
prophets,
and the holy ones and those who fear your
name,

[†] **11:8** *The great city*: this expression is used constantly in Revelation for Babylon, i.e., Rome; cf 14:8; 16:19; 17:18; 18:2, 10, 21. “Sodom” and “Egypt”: symbols of immorality (cf Is 1:10) and oppression of God’s people (cf Ex 1:11–14). *Where indeed their Lord was crucified*: not the geographical but the symbolic Jerusalem that rejects God and his witnesses, i.e., Rome, called Babylon in chs 16–18; see the note on 17:9 and Introduction.

11:9–12 Over the martyrdom (7) of the two witnesses, now called prophets, the ungodly rejoice for three and a half days, a symbolic period of time; see the note on v 2. Afterwards they go in triumph to heaven, as did Elijah (2 Kgs 2:11).

11:13 *Seven thousand people*: a symbolic sum to represent all social classes (seven) and large numbers (thousands); cf Introduction.

11:15–19 The seventh trumpet proclaims the coming of God’s

Live It!

God in Control

The world is a wonderful place, full of life and hope. At the same time, it is full of pain and suffering, illness and death. It can seem frightening and out of control. Wars break out, a drought threatens the lives of millions, a friend dies in a senseless car accident, terrorists attack and kill innocent people, global warming threatens the existence of life as we know it. We can be left wondering why God allows such things.

The Book of Revelation was written to encourage the people of John’s time that despite the evil that happens, God is in control. It can do the same for us too. The song in 11:15–18 reminds us that there will come a time when the just will be rewarded and the wicked punished. And although God’s Reign is not yet fully realized, as members of God’s family, we are called to be people of justice, peace, and hope to a world desperately seeking these things.

▶ Rv 11:15–18



the small and the great alike,
and to destroy those who destroy the earth.”

¹⁹ Then God’s temple in heaven was opened, and the ark of his covenant could be seen in the temple. There were flashes of lightning, rumblings, and peals of thunder, an earthquake, and a violent hailstorm.

The Woman and the Dragon

12 ^{1*†} A great sign appeared in the sky, a woman† clothed with the sun, with the

reign after the victory over diabolical powers; see the note on 10:7.

12:1—14:20 This central section of Revelation portrays the power of evil, represented by a dragon, in opposition to God and his people. First, the dragon pursues the woman about to give birth, but her son is saved and “caught up to God and his throne” (12:5). Then Michael and his angels cast the dragon and his angels out of heaven (12:7–9). After this, the dragon tries to attack the boy indirectly by attacking members of his church (12:13–18). A beast, symbolizing the Roman empire, then becomes the dragon’s agent, mortally wounded but restored to life and worshiped by all the world (13:1–10). A second beast arises from the land, symbolizing the antichrist, which leads

11:11 Ez 37:5, 10.

11:12 Kgs 2:11.

11:18 Ps 2:1, 5 / Am 3:7.

12:1 Gn 37:9.



Did You Know?

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The Woman and the Dragon

The vision in chapter 12 of Revelation symbolizes the great battle between Christ and Satan. In the opening scene, the pregnant woman represents Israel, from which the Messiah will come. The dragon waiting to devour her child is a symbol for Satan (see verse 9). This child, who will rule all the nations, is the Messiah, Jesus Christ. Therefore, the woman has also been equated with Mary, the mother of Jesus.

The conflict moves from heaven to earth when Satan fails to devour the child and is thrown down from his place in heaven. The dragon continues his pursuit of the woman on earth. The woman now represents the Church. The “rest of her offspring” (verse 17) represent its members whom the dragon angrily persecutes because he did not succeed in devouring her child. In this vision, John is telling the persecuted Christians of his time to have hope because in the end, Christ will totally and completely destroy Satan (see also 20:1–10).

▶ Rv 12:1–18

moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars. ²† She was with child and wailed aloud in pain as she labored to give birth. ³* † Then another sign appeared in the sky; it was a huge red dragon, with seven heads and ten horns, and on its heads were seven diadems.

† people astray by its prodigies to idolize the first beast (13:11–18). This is followed by a vision of the Lamb and his faithful ones, and the proclamation of imminent judgment upon the world in terms of the wine of God’s wrath (14:1–20).

12:1–6 The woman adorned with the sun, the moon, and the stars (images taken from Gn 37:9–10) symbolizes God’s people in the Old and the New Testament. The Israel of old gave birth to the Messiah (5) and then became the new Israel, the church, which suffers persecution by the dragon (6, 13–17); cf Is 50:1; 66:7; Jer 50:12. This corresponds to a widespread myth throughout the ancient world that a goddess pregnant with a savior was pursued by a horrible monster; by miraculous intervention, she bore a son who then killed the monster.

12:2 Because of Eve’s sin, the woman gives birth in distress and pain (Gn 3:16; cf Is 66:7–14).

12:3 *Huge red dragon*: the Devil or Satan (cf v 9; 20:2), symbol of the forces of evil, a mythical monster known also as Leviathan (Ps 74:13–14) or Rahab (Jb 26:12–13; Ps 89:11). *Seven diadems*: these are symbols of the fullness of the dragon’s sovereignty over the kingdoms of this world; cf Christ with many diadems (19:12).

⁴* Its tail swept away a third of the stars in the sky and hurled them down to the earth. Then the dragon stood before the woman about to give birth, to devour her child when she gave birth. ⁵* † She gave birth to a son, a male child, destined to rule all the nations with an iron rod. Her child was caught up to God and his throne. ⁶† The woman herself fled into the desert where she had a place prepared by God, that there she might be taken care of for twelve hundred and sixty days.

⁷† Then war broke out in heaven; Michael† and his angels battled against the dragon. The dragon and its angels fought back, ⁸but they did not prevail and there was no longer any place for them in heaven. ⁹* † The huge dragon, the ancient serpent, who is called the Devil and Satan, who deceived the whole world, was thrown down to earth, and its angels were thrown down with it.

¹⁰† Then I heard a loud voice in heaven say:

“Now have salvation and power come,
and the kingdom of our God
and the authority of his Anointed.

For the accuser of our brothers is cast out,
who accuses them before our God day and
night.

¹¹ They conquered him by the blood of the
Lamb
and by the word of their testimony;
love for life did not deter them from
death.

¹² Therefore, rejoice, you heavens,
and you who dwell in them.
But woe to you, earth and sea,
for the Devil has come down to you in
great fury,
for he knows he has but a short time.”

¹³* When the dragon saw that it had been

12:5 *Rule . . . iron rod*: fulfilled in 19:15; cf Ps 2:9. *Was caught up to God*: reference to Christ’s ascension.

12:6 God protects the persecuted church in the desert, the traditional Old Testament place of refuge for the afflicted, according to the typology of the Exodus; see the note on 11:2.

12:7–12 Michael, mentioned only here in Revelation, wins a victory over the dragon. A hymn of praise follows.

12:7 *Michael*: the archangel, guardian and champion of Israel; cf Dn 10:13, 21; 12:1; Jude 9. In Hebrew, the name Michael means “Who can compare with God?”; cf 13:4.

12:9 *The ancient serpent*: who seduced Eve (Gn 3:1–6), mother of the human race; cf 20:2; Eph 6:11–12. *Was thrown down*: allusion to the expulsion of Satan from heaven; cf Lk 10:18.

12:10 *The accuser*: the meaning of the Hebrew word “Satan,” found in v 9; Jb 1–2; Zec 3:1; 1 Chr 21:1; he continues to accuse Christ’s disciples.

12:3 Dn 7:7.

12:4 Dn 8:10.

12:5 Is 66:7 / Ps 2:9.

12:9 Gn 3:1–4 / Lk 10:18.

12:13 Gn 3:15.



Cultural Connection

Mary Has a Vital Mission in Salvation History

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The New Testament links Mary's mission intimately to the mystery of Christ. In Luke 1:38, Mary's yes to the angel Gabriel allows the Son of God to enter the world as a human being. At a wedding in Cana (see Jn 2:1–11), Mary is a model for the Church as she intercedes before Jesus, has faith in him, points to him as the source of life, and leads others to follow his words. Jesus' words to Mary and the Beloved Disciple at the cross (see Jn 19:26–27) name Mary mother of the universal Church, which is symbolized by the Beloved Disciple.

Over the centuries, some Christians have seen in the unnamed woman mentioned in chapter 12 of Revelation representations of Mary and the Church, who both share in Jesus' messianic mission. For Catholics on the feast of the Assumption, this passage is one of the readings that celebrates Mary's entrance into heaven as the first disciple. Mary is a symbol of the triumphant Church that awaits and intercedes for us, the pilgrim Church.

Catholics of Latino origin have a long tradition of linking Mary to their history of salvation. She

is their companion on their journey of faith and a very dear member of their community. Hispanic popular piety draws strength from Mary's example in daily life, in situations of need and suffering, and in times of celebration.

Reflect on the ways Mary teaches us to be servants of the Reign of God. Pray that we are as willing to fulfill our mission in salvation history as she is.

► Revelation, chapter 12



thrown down to the earth, it pursued the woman who had given birth to the male child. ^{14*}† But the woman was given the two wings of the great eagle, so that she could fly to her place in the desert, where, far from the serpent, she was taken care of for a year, two years, and a half-year. ¹⁵† The serpent, however, spewed a torrent of water out of his mouth after the woman to sweep her away with the current. ¹⁶ But the earth helped the woman and opened its mouth and swallowed the flood that the dragon spewed out of its mouth. ^{17*}† Then the dragon became angry with the woman and went off to wage war against the rest of her offspring, those who keep God's commandments and bear witness to Jesus. ¹⁸† It took its position on the sand of the sea.

† **12:14** *Great eagle*: symbol of the power and swiftness of divine help; cf Ex 19:4; Dt 32:11; Is 40:31.

† **12:15** The serpent is depicted as the sea monster; cf 13:1; Is 27:1; Ez 32:2; Ps 74:13–14.

† **12:17** Although the church is protected by God's special providence (16), the individual Christian is to expect persecution and suffering.

† **12:18** *It took its position*: many later manuscripts and versions read "I took my position," thus connecting the sentence to the following paragraph.

† **13:1–10** This wild beast, combining features of the four beasts in Dn 7:2–28, symbolizes the Roman empire; the seven heads represent the emperors; see the notes on 17:10 and 17:12–14. The blasphemous names are the divine titles assumed by the emperors.

† **13:2** Satan (12:9), the prince of this world (Jn 12:31), commissioned the beast to persecute the church (5–7).

The First Beast

13 ^{1*}† Then I saw a beast come out of the sea with ten horns and seven heads; on its horns were ten diadems, and on its heads blasphemous name[s]. ^{2*}† The beast I saw was like a leopard, but it had feet like a bear's, and its mouth was like the mouth of a lion. To it the dragon gave its own power and throne, along with great authority. ³† I saw that one of its heads seemed to have been mortally wounded, but this mortal wound was healed. Fascinated, the whole world followed after the beast. ⁴† They worshiped the dragon because it gave its authority to the beast; they also worshiped the beast and said, "Who can compare with the beast or who can fight against it?"

^{5*}† The beast was given a mouth uttering

† **13:3** This may be a reference to the popular legend that Nero would come back to life and rule again after his death (which occurred in A.D. 68 from a self-inflicted stab wound in the throat); cf v 14; 17:8. Domitian (A.D. 81–96) embodied all the cruelty and impiety of Nero. Cf Introduction.

† **13:4** *Worshiped the beast*: allusion to emperor worship, which Domitian insisted upon and ruthlessly enforced. *Who can compare with the beast*: perhaps a deliberate parody of the name Michael; see the note on 12:7.

† **13:5–6** Domitian, like Antiochus IV Epiphanes (Dn 7:8, 11, 25), demanded that he be called by divine titles such as "our lord and god" and "Jupiter." See the note on 11:2.

* **12:14** Ex 19:4; Dn 7:25; 12:7.

* **12:17** Gn 3:15.

* **13:1** 2 Thes 2:3–12.

* **13:2** Dn 7:3–6.

* **13:5** Dn 7:8, 11, 25; 8:14; 9:27; 11:36; 12:7.

proud boasts and blasphemies, and it was given authority to act for forty-two months.† ⁶It opened its mouth to utter blasphemies against God, blaspheming his name and his dwelling and those who dwell in heaven. ⁷* It was also allowed to wage war against the holy ones and conquer them, and it was granted authority over every tribe, people, tongue, and nation. ⁸* All the inhabitants of the earth will worship it, all whose names were not written from the foundation of the world in the book of life, which belongs to the Lamb who was slain.



Did You Know?

The Number of the Beast

The vision of the two beasts in chapter 13 of Revelation is a continuation of the vision about the woman and the dragon in chapter 12. The beasts represent the Roman Empire and its emperor, which at the time threatened the true practice of Christianity. Roman leaders expected all citizens, including Christians, to offer sacrifices to the Roman gods and to worship the emperor as though he were a god. This may have been especially true in the cities in Asia Minor, which were trying to prove their loyalty to the Roman emperor.

In Revelation 13:18, we are told that the number of the second beast is 666. Most scholars believe that this stands for Nero Caesar, who was the emperor of Rome from AD 54 to 68. Their reasoning is that when you convert the Greek letters for Nero's name and title into Hebrew letters, which also stand for numbers, and then add them up, you get the number 666. Six is one less than seven, the perfect number, so 666 represents something less than perfect or evil itself. Nero was responsible for some especially vicious attacks on Christians in Rome. The Book of Revelation was written after Nero committed suicide, but many people thought that he had not died and had come out of hiding in the East to lead this new wave of persecution against Christians (see verse 3).

► Revelation, chapter 13

- ⁹* Whoever has ears ought to hear these words.
- ¹⁰* Anyone destined for captivity goes into captivity.
Anyone destined to be slain by the sword shall be slain by the sword.

Such is the faithful endurance of the holy ones.

The Second Beast

¹¹† Then I saw another beast come up out of the earth; it had two horns like a lamb's but spoke like a dragon. ¹²It wielded all the authority of the first beast in its sight and made the earth and its inhabitants worship the first beast, whose mortal wound had been healed. ¹³* It performed great signs, even making fire come down from heaven to earth in the sight of everyone. ¹⁴It deceived the inhabitants of the earth with the signs it was allowed to perform in the sight of the first beast, telling them to make an image for the beast who had been wounded by the sword and revived. ¹⁵* It was then permitted to breathe life into the beast's image, so that the beast's image could speak and [could] have anyone who did not worship it put to death. ¹⁶* It forced all the people, small and great, rich and poor, free and slave, to be given a stamped image on their right hands or their foreheads, ¹⁷so that no one could buy or sell except one who had the stamped image of the beast's name or the number that stood for its name.

¹⁸*† Wisdom is needed here; one who understands can calculate the number of the beast, for it is a number that stands for a person. His number is six hundred and sixty-six.

† **13:5** *Forty-two months*: this is the same duration as the profanation of the holy city (11:2), the prophetic mission of the two witnesses (11:3), and the retreat of the woman into the desert (12:6, 14).

13:11–18 The second beast is described in terms of the false prophets (cf 16:13; 19:20; 20:10) who accompany the false messiahs (the first beast); cf Mt 24:24; Mk 13:22; 2 Thes 2:9; cf also Dt 13:2–4. Christians had either to worship the emperor and his image or to suffer martyrdom.

13:18 Each of the letters of the alphabet in Hebrew as well as in Greek has a numerical value. Many possible combinations of letters will add up to 666, and many candidates have been nominated for this infamous number. The most likely is the emperor Caesar Nero (see the note on 13:3), the Greek form of whose name in Hebrew letters gives the required sum. (The Latin form of this name equals 616, which is the reading of a few manuscripts.) Nero personifies the emperors who viciously persecuted the church. It has also been observed that “6” represents imperfection, falling short of the perfect number “7,” and is represented here in a triple or superlative form.

13:7 Dn 7:21.
13:8 Rv 3:5; 17:8; 20:12.
13:9 Mt 13:9.
13:10 Jer 15:2.
13:13 Dt 13:2–4; Mt 24:24;

2 Thes 2:9–10.
13:15 Dn 3:5–7, 15.
13:16 Rv 14:9; 16:2; 19:20; 20:4.
13:18 Rv 17:9.

The Lamb's Companions†

14^{1*} Then I looked and there was the Lamb standing on Mount Zion,† and with him a hundred and forty-four thousand who had his name and his Father's name written on their foreheads. ²I heard a sound from heaven like the sound of rushing water or a loud peal of thunder. The sound I heard was like that of harpists playing their harps. ^{3*} They were singing [what seemed to be] a new hymn before the throne, before the four living creatures and the elders. No one could learn this hymn except the hundred and forty-four thousand who had been ransomed from the earth. ^{4*}† These are they who were not defiled with women; they are virgins and these are the ones who follow the Lamb wherever he goes. They have been ransomed as the firstfruits of the human race for God and the Lamb. ^{5*}† On their lips no deceit has been found; they are unblemished.

The Three Angels†

⁶Then I saw another angel flying high overhead, with everlasting good news† to announce to those who dwell on earth, to every nation, tribe, tongue, and people. ^{7*} He said in a loud voice, "Fear God and give him glory, for his time has come to sit in judgment. Worship him who made heaven and earth and sea and springs of water."

^{8*}† A second angel followed, saying:

"Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great,
that made all the nations drink
the wine of her licentious passion."

⁹A third angel followed them and said in a loud

voice, "Anyone who worships the beast or its image, or accepts its mark on forehead or hand, ¹⁰† will also drink the wine of God's fury, poured full strength into the cup of his wrath, and will be tormented in burning sulfur before the holy angels and before the Lamb. ^{11*} The smoke of the fire that torments them will rise forever and ever, and there will be no relief day or night for those who worship the beast or its image or accept the mark of its name." ^{12*}† Here is what sustains the holy ones who keep God's commandments and their faith in Jesus.

^{13*}† I heard a voice from heaven say, "Write this: Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on." "Yes," said the Spirit, "let them find rest from their labors, for their works accompany them."

The Harvest of the Earth

^{14*}† Then I looked and there was a white cloud, and sitting on the cloud one who looked like a son of man, with a gold crown on his head and a sharp sickle in his hand. ^{15*} Another angel came out of the temple, crying out in a loud voice to the one sitting on the cloud, "Use your sickle and reap the harvest, for the time to reap has come, because the earth's harvest is fully ripe." ¹⁶ So the one who was sitting on the cloud swung his sickle over the earth, and the earth was harvested.

¹⁷Then another angel came out of the temple in heaven who also had a sharp sickle. ¹⁸† Then another angel [came] from the altar, [who] was in charge of the fire, and cried out in a loud voice to the one who had the sharp sickle, "Use your sharp sickle and cut the clusters from the earth's vines, for its grapes are ripe." ^{19*} So the angel swung his

† **14:1–5** Now follows a tender and consoling vision of the Lamb and his companions.

14:1 *Mount Zion*: in Jerusalem, the traditional place where the true remnant, the Israel of faith, is to be gathered in the messianic reign; cf 2 Kgs 19:30–31; Jl 3:5; Ob 17; Mi 4:6–8; Zep 3:12–20. *A hundred and forty-four thousand*: see the note on 7:4–9. *His Father's name . . . foreheads*: in contrast to the pagans who were marked with the name or number of the beast (13:16–17).

14:4 *Virgins*: metaphorically, because they never indulged in any idolatrous practices, which are considered in the Old Testament to be adultery and fornication (2:14–15, 20–22; 17:1–6; cf Ez 16:1–58; 23:1–49). The parallel passages (7:3; 22:4) indicate that the 144,000 whose foreheads are sealed represent all Christian people.

14:5 *No deceit*: because they did not deny Christ or do homage to the beast. Lying is characteristic of the opponents of Christ (Jn 8:44), but the Suffering Servant spoke no falsehood (Is 53:9; 1 Pt 2:22). *Unblemished*: a cultic term taken from the vocabulary of sacrificial ritual.

14:6–13 Three angels proclaim imminent judgment on the pagan world, calling all peoples to worship God the creator. Babylon (Rome) will fall, and its supporters will be tormented forever.

14:6 *Everlasting good news*: that God's eternal reign is about to begin; see the note on 10:7.

14:8 This verse anticipates the lengthy dirge over Babylon (Rome) in 18:1–19:4. The oracle of Is 21:9 to Babylon is applied here.

14:10–11 *The wine of God's fury*: image taken from Is 51:17; Jer 25:15–16; 49:12; 51:7; Ez 23:31–34. Eternal punishment in the fiery pool of burning sulfur (or "fire and brimstone"; cf Gn 19:24) is also reserved for the Devil, the beast, and the false prophet (19:20; 20:10; 21:8).

14:12 In addition to *faith in Jesus*, the seer insists upon the necessity and value of works, as in 2:23; 20:12–13; 22:12; cf Mt 16:27; Rom 2:6.

14:13 See the note on 1:3. According to Jewish thought, people's actions followed them as witnesses before the court of God.

14:14–20 The reaping of the harvest symbolizes the gathering of the elect in the final judgment, while the reaping and treading of the grapes symbolizes the doom of the ungodly (cf Jl 4:12–13; Is 63:1–6) that will come in 19:11–21.

14:18 *Altar*: there was only one altar in the heavenly temple; see the notes above on 6:9; 8:3; 11:1.

14:1 Jl 3:5; Ob 17; Acts 2:21.

14:3 Pss 33:3; 96:1; 98:1; Is

42:10.

14:4 Jer 2:2; Jas 1:18.

14:5 Zep 3:13.

14:7 Rv 2:10; Mt 10:28.

14:8 Rv 18:2–3; Is 21:9; Jer

51:8 / Is 51:17.

Jer 25:15–17.

14:11 Rv 19:3.

14:12 Rv 12:17.

14:13 Mt 11:28–29; 2Thes

1:7; Heb 4:10.

14:14 Rv 1:7; Dn 7:13.

14:15 Jl 4:13; Mt 13:36–43.

14:19 Rv 19:15; Is 63:1–6.

sickle over the earth and cut the earth's vintage. He threw it into the great wine press of God's fury. ^{20†} The wine press was trodden outside the city and blood poured out of the wine press to the height of a horse's bridle for two hundred miles.

The Seven Last Plagues

15 ^{1†} Then I saw in heaven another sign, [†] great and awe-inspiring: seven angels with the seven last plagues, for through them God's fury is accomplished.

^{2*†} Then I saw something like a sea of glass mingled with fire. On the sea of glass were standing those who had won the victory over the beast and its image and the number that signified its name. They were holding God's harps, ^{3*†} and they sang the song of Moses, the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb:

"Great and wonderful are your works,
Lord God almighty.
Just and true are your ways,
O king of the nations.

^{4*} Who will not fear you, Lord,
or glorify your name?

For you alone are holy.
All the nations will come
and worship before you,
for your righteous acts have been revealed."

^{5†} After this I had another vision. The temple that is the heavenly tent of testimony[†] opened, ^{6*} and the seven angels with the seven plagues came out of the temple. They were dressed in clean white linen, with a gold sash around their chests. ⁷ One of the four living creatures gave the seven angels seven gold bowls filled with the fury of God, who lives forever and ever. ^{8*} Then the temple became so filled with the smoke from God's glory and might that no one could enter it until the seven plagues of the seven angels had been accomplished.

[†] **14:20** *Two hundred miles*: literally sixteen hundred stades. The *stadion*, a Greek unit of measurement, was about 607 feet in length, approximately the length of a furlong.

15:1—16:21 The seven bowls, the third and last group of seven after the seven seals and the seven trumpets, foreshadow the final cataclysm. Again, the series is introduced by a heavenly prelude, in which the victors over the beast sing the canticle of Moses (15:2–4).

15:1–4 A vision of the victorious martyrs precedes the vision of woe in 15:5–16:21; cf 7:9–12.

15:2 *Mingled with fire*: fire symbolizes the sanctity involved in facing God, reflected in the trials that have prepared the victorious Christians or in God's wrath.

15:3 *The song of Moses*: the song that Moses and the Israelites sang after their escape from the oppression of Egypt (Ex 15:1–18). The martyrs have escaped from the oppression of the Devil. *Nations*: many other Greek manuscripts and versions read "ages."

15:5–8 Seven angels receive the bowls of God's wrath.

15:5 *Tent of testimony*: the name of the meeting tent in the Greek

The Seven Bowls

16 ^{1†} I heard a loud voice speaking from the temple to the seven angels, "Go and pour out the seven bowls of God's fury upon the earth."

^{2†} The first angel went and poured out his bowl on the earth. Festering and ugly sores broke out on those who had the mark of the beast or worshiped its image.

^{3†} The second angel poured out his bowl on the sea. The sea turned to blood like that from a corpse; every creature living in the sea died.

^{4*} The third angel poured out his bowl on the rivers and springs of water. These also turned to blood. ^{5*} Then I heard the angel in charge of the waters say:

"You are just, O Holy One,
who are and who were,
in passing this sentence.

^{6*} For they have shed the blood of the holy ones
and the prophets,
and you [have] given them blood to drink;
it is what they deserve."

^{7*} Then I heard the altar cry out,

"Yes, Lord God almighty,
your judgments are true and just."

⁸ The fourth angel poured out his bowl on the sun. It was given the power to burn people with fire. ^{9*} People were burned by the scorching heat and blasphemed the name of God who had power over these plagues, but they did not repent or give him glory.

^{10*†} The fifth angel poured out his bowl on the throne of the beast. Its kingdom was plunged into darkness, and people bit their tongues in pain ^{11*} and blasphemed the God of heaven because of their pains and sores. But they did not repent of their works.

text of Ex 40. Cf 2 Mc 2:4–7.

16:1–21 These seven bowls, like the seven seals (6:1–17; 8:1) and the seven trumpets (8:2–9:21; 11:15–19), bring on a succession of disasters modeled in part on the plagues of Egypt (Ex 7–12). See the note on 6:12–14.

16:2 Like the sixth Egyptian plague (Ex 9:8–11).

16:3–4 Like the first Egyptian plague (Ex 7:20–21). The same woe followed the blowing of the second trumpet (8:8–9).

16:10 *The throne of the beast*: symbol of the forces of evil. *Darkness*: like the ninth Egyptian plague (Ex 10:21–23); cf 9:2.

15:2 Rv 7:9, 14; 13:15–18.

15:3 Pss 92:6; 98:1/ Dt 32:4;

Ps 145:17.

15:4 Ps 86:9–10; Jer 10:7.

15:6 Rv 19:8.

15:8 1 Kgs 8:10; Is 6:4.

16:4 Rv 7:14–24.

16:5 Rv 1:4.

16:6 Ez 35:6; Mt 23:34–35.

16:7 Dn 3:27; Tb 3:2.

16:9 Am 4:6.

16:10 Ex 10:21–23.

16:11 Ex 9:8–11/ Jer 5:3.

¹²† The sixth angel emptied his bowl on the great river Euphrates. Its water was dried up to prepare the way for the kings of the East. ¹³*† I saw three unclean spirits like frogs come from the mouth of the dragon, from the mouth of the beast, and from the mouth of the false prophet. ¹⁴* These were demonic spirits who performed signs. They went out to the kings of the whole world to assemble them for the battle on the great day of God the almighty. ¹⁵*† (“Behold, I am coming like a thief.” Blessed is the one who watches and keeps his clothes ready, so that he may not go naked and people see him exposed.) ¹⁶† They then assembled the kings in the place that is named Armageddon in Hebrew.

¹⁷* The seventh angel poured out his bowl into the air. A loud voice came out of the temple from the throne, saying, “It is done.” ¹⁸* Then there were lightning flashes, rumblings, and peals of thunder, and a great earthquake. It was such a violent earthquake that there has never been one like it since the human race began on earth. ¹⁹† The great city was split into three parts, and the gentile cities fell. But God remembered great Babylon, giving it the cup filled with the wine of his fury and wrath. ²⁰† Every island fled, and mountains disappeared. ²¹* Large hailstones like huge weights came down from the sky on people, and they blasphemed God for the plague of hail because this plague was so severe.

V: The Punishment of Babylon and the Destruction of Pagan Nations

Babylon the Great

17 ¹*† Then one of the seven angels who were holding the seven bowls came and said to me, “Come here. I will show you the judgment on the great harlot† who lives near the many waters.

† **16:12** *The kings of the East:* Parthians; see the notes on 6:2 and 17:12–13. *East:* literally, “rising of the sun,” as in 7:2.

16:13 *Frogs:* possibly an allusion to the second Egyptian plague (Ex 7:26–8:11). *The false prophet:* identified with the two-horned second beast (13:11–18 and the note there).

16:15 *Like a thief:* as in 3:3 (cf Mt 24:42–44; 1 Thes 5:2). *Blessed:* see the note on 1:3.

16:16 *Armageddon:* in Hebrew, this means “Mountain of Megiddo.” Since Megiddo was the scene of many decisive battles in antiquity (Jgs 5:19–20; 2 Kgs 9:27; 2 Chr 35:20–24), the town became the symbol of the final disastrous rout of the forces of evil.

16:19 *The great city:* Rome and the empire.

16:20–21 See the note on 6:12–14. *Hailstones:* as in the seventh Egyptian plague (Ex 9:23–24); cf 8:7. *Like huge weights:* literally, “weighing a talent,” about one hundred pounds.

17:1–19:10 The punishment of Babylon is now described as a past event and, metaphorically, under the image of the great harlot who leads people astray into idolatry.

17:1–6 Babylon, the symbolic name (5) of Rome, is graphically described as “the great harlot.”

17:2 *Intercourse . . . harlotry:* see the note on 14:4. The pagan kings subject to Rome adopted the cult of the emperor.

17:3 *Scarlet beast:* see the note on 13:1–10. *Blasphemous*

²*† The kings of the earth have had intercourse with her, and the inhabitants of the earth became drunk on the wine of her harlotry.” ³*† Then he carried me away in spirit to a deserted place where I saw a woman seated on a scarlet beast that was covered with blasphemous names, with seven heads and ten horns. ⁴*† The woman was wearing purple and scarlet and adorned with gold, precious stones, and pearls. She held in her hand a gold cup that was filled with the abominable and sordid deeds of her harlotry. ⁵ On her forehead was written a name, which is a mystery, “Babylon the great, the mother of harlots and of the abominations of the earth.” ⁶† I saw that the woman was drunk on the blood of the holy ones and on the blood of the witnesses to Jesus.

Meaning of the Beast and Harlot

When I saw her I was greatly amazed. ⁷ The angel said to me, “Why are you amazed? I will explain to you the mystery of the woman and of the beast that carries her, the beast with the seven heads and the ten horns. ⁸*† The beast that you saw existed once but now exists no longer. It will come up from the abyss and is headed for destruction. The inhabitants of the earth whose names have not been written in the book of life from the foundation of the world shall be amazed when they see the beast, because it existed once but exists no longer, and yet it will come again. ⁹*† Here is a clue for one who has wisdom. The seven heads represent seven hills upon which the woman sits. They also represent seven kings: ¹⁰† five have already fallen, one still lives, and the last has not yet come, and when he comes he must remain only a short while. ¹¹† The beast that existed once but exists no longer is an eighth king, but really belongs to the seven and is headed for destruction. ¹²*† The ten

names: divine titles assumed by the Roman emperors; see the note on 13:5–6.

17:4 Reference to the great wealth and idolatrous cults of Rome.

17:6b–18 An interpretation of the vision is here given.

17:8 Allusion to the belief that the dead Nero would return to power (11); see the note on 13:3.

17:9 *Here is a clue:* literally, “Here a mind that has wisdom.” *Seven hills:* of Rome.

17:10 There is little agreement as to the identity of the Roman emperors alluded to here. The number seven (9) suggests that all the emperors are meant; see the note on 1:4.

17:11 *The beast:* Nero; see the note on v 8.

17:12–13 *Ten kings who have not yet been crowned:* perhaps Parthian satraps who are to accompany the revived Nero (the beast) in his march on Rome to regain power; see the note on 13:3. In 19:11–21, the Lamb and his companions will conquer them.

16:13 Ex 8:2–3.

16:14 1 Cor 1:8.

16:15 Mt 24:42–44 / Rv 3:17.

16:17 Is 66:6.

16:18 Mk 13:19.

16:21 Ex 9:22–26.

17:1 Jer 50:38; 51:13.

17:2 Jer 51:7.

17:3 Rv 13:1.

17:4 Rv 18:16.

17:8 Rv 13:3–4 / Rv 3:5;

13:8; 20:12.

17:9 Rv 13:18.

17:12 Dn 7:24.

horns that you saw represent ten kings who have not yet been crowned; they will receive royal authority along with the beast for one hour. ¹³They are of one mind and will give their power and authority to the beast. ^{14*} They will fight with the Lamb, but the Lamb will conquer them, for he is Lord of lords and king of kings, and those with him are called, chosen, and faithful."

Live It!

The Sins of Empires

In John's coded language, the whore called Babylon in chapter 17 is Rome, a city built on seven hills. She is dressed in colors that symbolize her royalty (purple) and her obscene and immoral behavior (scarlet). Her gold and pearls are signs of her wealth and excessive luxury. The blasphemous names on her forehead are the titles that should be given to God but are given to the emperor instead. By calling her Babylon, John is creating a tie with the capital of another evil empire from the Old Testament (see "The Fall of Jerusalem," near 2 Kgs 25:1–21).

The whore is drunk on the blood of the saints she killed because of their faith. John indicates that her evil is caused by her unrestrained desire for wealth and luxury and her abuse of power (see Rv 18:3–19). He tells his Christian readers that they can be hopeful, even amid so much suffering, because in the end, the Lamb (Christ) will conquer the beast (see 17:14).

Since Revelation was written, many other countries have abused their power, including the United States. Consider, for example, its treatment of Native Americans, practice of slavery, and lack of care for the environment.

Reflect for a moment.

- In what areas does your country need to take more responsibility to ensure justice for all people? Where has the desire for wealth and luxury gone too far?
- What can you do locally to take greater responsibility in these areas?

► Revelation, chapter 17



¹⁵Then he said to me, "The waters that you saw where the harlot lives represent large numbers of peoples, nations, and tongues. ^{16*}† The ten horns that you saw and the beast will hate the harlot; they will leave her desolate and naked; they will eat her flesh and consume her with fire. ¹⁷For God has put it into their minds to carry out his purpose and to make them come to an agreement to give their kingdom to the beast until the words of God are accomplished. ¹⁸The woman whom you saw represents the great city that has sovereignty over the kings of the earth."

The Fall of Babylon

18 ^{1*†} After this I saw another angel coming down from heaven, having great authority, and the earth became illumined by his splendor.

^{2*†} He cried out in a mighty voice:

"Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great.

She has become a haunt for demons.

She is a cage for every unclean spirit,

a cage for every unclean bird,

[a cage for every unclean] and disgusting [beast].

^{3*†} For all the nations have drunk

the wine of her licentious passion.

The kings of the earth had intercourse with her,

and the merchants of the earth grew rich from her drive for luxury."

^{4*†} Then I heard another voice from heaven say:

"Depart from her, my people,

so as not to take part in her sins

and receive a share in her plagues,

^{5*} for her sins are piled up to the sky,

† **17:16–18** *The ten horns:* the ten pagan kings (12) who unwittingly fulfill God's will against harlot Rome, the great city; cf Ez 16:37.

18:1–19:4 A stirring dirge over the fall of Babylon-Rome. The perspective is prophetic, as if the fall of Rome had already taken place. The imagery here, as elsewhere in this book, is not to be taken literally. The vindictiveness of some of the language, borrowed from the scathing Old Testament prophecies against Babylon, Tyre, and Nineveh (Is 23; 24; 27; Jer 50–51; Ez 26–27), is meant to portray symbolically the inexorable demands of God's holiness and justice; cf Introduction. The section concludes with a joyous canticle on the future glory of heaven.

18:2 Many Greek manuscripts and versions omit *a cage for every unclean . . . beast*.

18:3–24 Rome is condemned for her immorality, symbol of idolatry (see the note on 14:4), and for persecuting the church; cf 19:2.

18:4 *Depart from her:* not evacuation of the city but separation from sinners, as always in apocalyptic literature.

17:14 Rv 19:11–21; 2Mc

13:4; 1Tm 6:15 / Rom

1:6; 1Pt 2:9; Jude 1.

17:16 Ez 16:37–41; 23:25–29.

18:1 Ez 43:2.

18:2 Rv 14:8; Is 21:9; Jer

50:2–3; 51:8.

18:3 Rv 17:2; Jer 51:7.

18:4 Is 48:20; Jer 50:8.

18:5 Jer 51:9.

and God remembers her crimes.

- 6* Pay her back as she has paid others.
Pay her back double for her deeds.
Into her cup pour double what she poured.
- 7* To the measure of her boasting and wantonness
repay her in torment and grief;
for she said to herself,
'I sit enthroned as queen;
I am no widow,
and I will never know grief.'
- 8 Therefore, her plagues will come in one day,
pestilence, grief, and famine;
she will be consumed by fire.
For mighty is the Lord God who judges her."

⁹The kings of the earth who had intercourse with her in their wantonness will weep and mourn over her when they see the smoke of her pyre.

¹⁰They will keep their distance for fear of the torment inflicted on her, and they will say:

"Alas, alas, great city,
Babylon, mighty city.
In one hour your judgment has come."

¹¹† The merchants of the earth will weep and mourn for her, because there will be no more markets for their cargo: ¹²their cargo of gold, silver, precious stones, and pearls; fine linen, purple silk, and scarlet cloth; fragrant wood of every kind, all articles of ivory and all articles of the most expensive wood, bronze, iron, and marble; ¹³† cinnamon, spice, incense, myrrh, and frankincense; wine, olive oil, fine flour, and wheat; cattle and sheep, horses and chariots, and slaves, that is, human beings.

- 14* "The fruit you craved
has left you.
All your luxury and splendor are gone,
never again will one find them."

¹⁵The merchants who deal in these goods, who grew rich from her, will keep their distance for fear of the torment inflicted on her. Weeping and mourning, ¹⁶* they cry out:

"Alas, alas, great city,
wearing fine linen, purple and scarlet,

adorned [in] gold, precious stones, and pearls.

- 17 In one hour this great wealth has been ruined."

Every captain of a ship, every traveler at sea, sailors, and seafaring merchants stood at a distance ¹⁸and cried out when they saw the smoke of her pyre, "What city could compare with the great city?" ¹⁹* They threw dust on their heads and cried out, weeping and mourning:

"Alas, alas, great city,
in which all who had ships at sea
grew rich from her wealth.

In one hour she has been ruined.

- 20* Rejoice over her, heaven,
you holy ones, apostles, and prophets.
For God has judged your case against her."

²¹* A mighty angel picked up a stone like a huge millstone and threw it into the sea and said:

"With such force will Babylon the great city
be thrown down,
and will never be found again.

- 22* No melodies of harpists and musicians,
flutists and trumpeters,
will ever be heard in you again.
No craftsmen in any trade
will ever be found in you again.
No sound of the millstone
will ever be heard in you again.

- 23* No light from a lamp
will ever be seen in you again.
No voices of bride and groom
will ever be heard in you again.
Because your merchants were the great ones
of the world,
all nations were led astray by your magic
potion.

- 24* In her was found the blood of prophets and holy ones
and all who have been slain on the earth."

19 ¹† After this I heard what sounded like the loud voice of a great multitude in heaven, saying:

"Alleluia!
Salvation, glory, and might belong to our God,

† **18:11** Ironically, the merchants weep not so much for Babylon-Rome, but for their lost markets; cf Ez 27:36.

18:13 *Spice*: an unidentified spice plant called in Greek *amōmon*.

19:1, 3, 4, 6 *Alleluia*: found only here in the New Testament, this frequent exclamation of praise in the Hebrew psalms was important in Jewish liturgy.

18:6 Jer 50:15 / Jer 16:18.

18:7 Is 47:8–9.

18:14 Hos 10:5 / Am 6:7.

18:16 Rv 17:4.

18:19 Ez 27:27–32.

18:20 Rv 19:1–2; Dt 32:43.

18:21 Jer 51:63–64; Ez 26:21.

18:22 Is 24:8; Ez 26:13.

18:23 Jer 7:34; 16:9; 25:10.

18:24 Rv 16:6.

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2* for true and just are his judgments.
He has condemned the great harlot
who corrupted the earth with her harlotry.
He has avenged on her the blood of his
servants."

3*They said a second time:

"Alleluia! Smoke will rise from her forever
and ever."

4The twenty-four elders and the four living crea-
tures fell down and worshiped God who sat on
the throne, saying, "Amen. Alleluia."

The Victory Song

5*† A voice coming from the throne said:

"Praise our God, all you his servants,
[and] you who revere him, small and
great."

6Then I heard something like the sound of a
great multitude or the sound of rushing water or
mighty peals of thunder, as they said:

"Alleluia!
The Lord has established his reign,
[our] God, the almighty.

7*† Let us rejoice and be glad
and give him glory.

For the wedding day of the Lamb has come,
his bride has made herself ready.

8*† She was allowed to wear
a bright, clean linen garment."

(The linen represents the righteous deeds of the
holy ones.)

9*† Then the angel said to me, "Write this:
Blessed are those who have been called to the

wedding feast of the Lamb." And he said to me,
"These words are true; they come from God."
10*† I fell at his feet to worship him. But he said
to me, "Don't! I am a fellow servant of yours
and of your brothers who bear witness to Jesus.
Worship God. Witness to Jesus is the spirit of
prophecy."

The King of Kings

11*† Then I saw the heavens opened, and there
was a white horse; its rider was [called] "Faithful
and True." He judges and wages war in righteous-
ness. 12*† His eyes were [like] a fiery flame, and on
his head were many diadems. He had a name in-
scribed that no one knows except himself. 13*† He
wore a cloak that had been dipped in blood, and
his name was called the Word of God. 14* The ar-
mies of heaven followed him, mounted on white
horses and wearing clean white linen. 15*† Out of
his mouth came a sharp sword to strike the na-
tions. He will rule them with an iron rod, and he
himself will tread out in the wine press the wine
of the fury and wrath of God the almighty. 16* He
has a name written on his cloak and on his thigh,
"King of kings and Lord of lords."

17† Then I saw an angel standing on the sun.
He cried out [in] a loud voice to all the birds fly-
ing high overhead, "Come here. Gather for God's
great feast, 18* to eat the flesh of kings, the flesh
of military officers, and the flesh of warriors, the
flesh of horses and of their riders, and the flesh
of all, free and slave, small and great." 19Then I
saw the beast and the kings of the earth and their
armies gathered to fight against the one riding
the horse and against his army. 20*† The beast
was caught and with it the false prophet who had
performed in its sight the signs by which he led
astray those who had accepted the mark of the
beast and those who had worshiped its image.
The two were thrown alive into the fiery pool

† **19:5-10** A victory song follows, sung by the entire church, celebrating the marriage of the Lamb, the union of the Messiah with the community of the elect.

19:7 *The wedding day of the Lamb*: symbol of God's reign about to begin (21:1-22:5); see the note on 10:7. *His bride*: the church; cf 2 Cor 11:2; Eph 5:22-27. Marriage is one of the biblical metaphors used to describe the covenant relationship between God and his people; cf Hos 2:16-22; Is 54:5-6; 62:5; Ez 16:6-14. Hence, idolatry and apostasy are viewed as adultery and harlotry (Hos 2:4-15; Ez 16:15-63); see the note on 14:4.

19:8 See the note on 14:12.

19:9 *Blessed*: see the note on 1:3.

19:10 *The spirit of prophecy*: as the prophets were inspired to proclaim God's word, so the Christian is called to give witness to the Word of God (13) made flesh; cf 1:2; 6:9; 12:17.

19:11-16 Symbolic description of the exalted Christ (cf 1:13-16) who together with the armies of heaven overcomes the beast and its followers; cf 17:14.

19:12 *A name*: in Semitic thought, the name conveyed the reality of the person; cf Mt 11:27; Lk 10:22.

19:13 *Had been dipped in*: other Greek manuscripts and versions

read "had been sprinkled with"; cf v 15. *The Word of God*: Christ is the revelation of the Father; cf Jn 1:1, 14; 1 Jn 2:14.

19:15 The treading of the wine press is a prophetic symbol used to describe the destruction of God's enemies; cf Is 63:1-6; Jl 4:13.

19:17-21 The certainty of Christ's victory is proclaimed by an angel, followed by a reference to the mustering of enemy forces and a fearsome description of their annihilation. The gruesome imagery is borrowed from Ez 39:4, 17-20.

19:20 *Beast . . . false prophet*: see the notes on ch 13. *The fiery pool . . . sulfur*: symbol of God's punishment (14:10; 20:10, 14-15), different from the abyss; see the note on 9:1.

19:2 Dn 3:27 / Jer 51:48-49.
19:3 Rv 14:11; Is 34:10.
19:5 Rv 11:18; Ps 115:13.
19:7 Mt 22:9; Eph 5:27.
19:8 Rv 15:6; Is 61:10; Mt 22:11-12.
19:9 Mt 8:11; Lk 14:15.
19:10 Rv 22:8-9.
19:11 Is 11:4.
19:12 Rv 1:14-16; 2:18 / Lk 10:22.
19:13 Is 63:1 / Jn 1:1.
19:14 Rv 15:6; 19:8.
19:15 Rv 14:20; Is 63:3.
19:16 Rv 17:14; 2Mc 13:4.
19:18 Ez 39:17-20.
19:20 Rv 14:10.

burning with sulfur. ²¹The rest were killed by the sword that came out of the mouth of the one riding the horse, and all the birds gorged themselves on their flesh.

The Thousand-year Reign

20^{1*†} Then I saw an angel come down from heaven, holding in his hand the key to the abyss† and a heavy chain. ^{2*†} He seized the dragon, the ancient serpent, which is the Devil or Satan, and tied it up for a thousand years ³ and threw it into the abyss, which he locked over it and sealed, so that it could no longer lead the nations astray until the thousand years are completed. After this, it is to be released for a short time.

^{4*†} Then I saw thrones; those who sat on them were entrusted with judgment. I also saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for their witness to Jesus and for the word of God, and who had not worshiped the beast or its image nor had accepted its mark on their foreheads or hands. They came to life and they reigned with Christ for a thousand years. ⁵ The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were over. This is the first resurrection. ^{6†} Blessed and holy is the one who shares in the first resurrection. The second death has no power over these; they will be priests of God and of Christ, and they will reign with him for [the] thousand years.

^{7†} When the thousand years are completed, Satan will be released from his prison. ^{8*†} He will go out to deceive the nations at the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them for battle; their number is like the sand of the sea. ^{9*†} They invaded the breadth of the earth and surrounded the camp of the holy ones

† **20:1–6** Like the other numerical values in this book, the thousand years are not to be taken literally; they symbolize the long period of time between the chaining up of Satan (a symbol for Christ's resurrection-victory over death and the forces of evil) and the end of the world. During this time God's people share in the glorious reign of God that is present to them by virtue of their baptismal victory over death and sin; cf Rom 6:1–8; Jn 5:24–25; 16:33; 1 Jn 3:14; Eph 2:1.

20:1 *Abyss*: see the note on 9:1.

20:2 *Dragon . . . serpent . . . Satan*: see the notes on 12:3, 9, 10, 15.

20:4 *Beast . . . mark*: see ch 13 and its notes.

20:6 *Blessed*: see the note on 1:3. *Second death*: see the note on 2:11. *Priests*: as in 1:6; 5:10; cf 1 Pt 2:9.

20:7–10 A description of the symbolic battle to take place when Satan is released at the end of time, when the thousand years are over; see the note on vv 1–6.

20:8 *Gog and Magog*: symbols of all pagan nations; the names are taken from Ez 38:1–39:20.

20:9 *The breadth of the earth*: Palestine. *The beloved city*: Jerusalem; see the note on 14:1.

20:1 Rv 9:1.

20:2 Gn 3:1.

20:4 Mt 19:28.

20:8 Ez 38:2, 9, 16.

20:9 Ez 38:22.

and the beloved city. But fire came down from heaven and consumed them. ¹⁰ The Devil who had led them astray was thrown into the pool

Live It!

The New Jerusalem

The last three chapters of Revelation contain John's visions of the Reign of God, the end of history, and eternal life. In chapter 20, Satan is alive but has limited power. This is symbolized by the dragon's thousand-year imprisonment, during which the martyrs reign with Christ. The thousand-year reign has been interpreted in many different ways over the centuries, but no one knows its true significance. At the end of the thousand years, Satan is defeated, and Christ sits in final judgment over all the dead.

In chapter 21, John describes a new heaven and a new earth. The Bible begins in Genesis with the story of the creation of a world in which everything is good. It ends in Revelation with a new creation where God's goodness again overflows. A holy city, the New Jerusalem, comes down out of heaven. The New Jerusalem is described as a beautiful bride who is preparing to marry Jesus Christ. John tells his Christian readers that they should look forward to the time of this new city with joy, because when it comes, God and Christ will live in their midst. The whole city will be God's temple. The sun will always shine, a river of living water will flow from God's throne, and the trees will produce fruit year-round recalling the Garden of Eden where Adam and Eve lived before their sin. The New Jerusalem is a symbol for the new world that God will establish when evil is destroyed and suffering is banished.

These visions helped Christians at the end of the first century to maintain their hope by focusing on the glorious victory of God in history. They can also help us to renew our commitment to Christ and keep our hope alive, especially when we are misunderstood or harassed because of our faith.

▶ Rv 20:1–22:5



of fire and sulfur, where the beast and the false prophet were. There they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.

The Large White Throne

¹¹*† Next I saw a large white throne and the one who was sitting on it. The earth and the sky fled from his presence and there was no place for them. ¹²*† I saw the dead, the great and the lowly, standing before the throne, and scrolls were opened. Then another scroll was opened, the book of life. The dead were judged according to their deeds, by what was written in the scrolls. ¹³† The sea gave up its dead; then Death and Hades gave up their dead. All the dead were judged according to their deeds. ¹⁴*† Then Death and Hades were thrown into the pool of fire. (This pool of fire is the second death.) ¹⁵ Anyone whose name was not found written in the book of life was thrown into the pool of fire.

VI: The New Creation†

The New Heaven and the New Earth

21¹* Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth. The former heaven and the former earth had passed away, and the sea was no more.† ²*† I also saw the holy city, a new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. ³* I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Behold, God’s dwelling is with the human race. He will dwell with them and they will be his people† and God himself will always be with them [as their God].† ⁴* He will wipe every tear from their eyes, and there shall be no more death or mourning, wailing or pain, [for] the old order has passed away.”

† **20:11–15** A description of the final judgment. After the intermediate reign of Christ, all the dead are raised and judged, thus inaugurating the new age.

20:12 *The book of life*: see the note on 3:5. *Judged . . . scrolls*: see the note on 14:12.

20:13 *Hades*: the netherworld; see the note on 1:18.

20:14 *Second death*: see the note on 2:11.

21:1–22:5 A description of God’s eternal kingdom in heaven under the symbols of a new heaven and a new earth; cf Is 65:17–25; 66:22; Mt 19:28.

21:1 *Sea . . . no more*: because as home of the dragon it was doomed to disappear; cf Jb 7:12.

21:2 *New Jerusalem . . . bride*: symbol of the church (Gal 4:26); see the note on 19:7.

21:3 *People*: other ancient manuscripts read a plural, “peoples.”

21:3–4 Language taken from Ez 37:27; Is 25:8; 35:10; cf 7:17.

21:5 *The one . . . on the throne*: God himself; cf 4:1–11.

21:6 *They are accomplished*: God’s reign has already begun; see the note on 20:1–6. *Alpha . . . Omega*: see the note on 1:8. *Life-giving water*: see the note on 7:17.

21:7 *The victor*: over the forces of evil; see the conclusions of the seven letters (2:7, 11, 17, 26; 3:5, 12, 21). *He will be my son*: the victorious Christian enjoys divine affiliation by adoption (Gal 4:4–7; Rom 8:14–17); see the note on 2:26–28.

21:8 *Cowards*: their conviction is so weak that they deny Christ in time of trial and become traitors. *Second death*: see the note on 2:11.

⁵*† The one who sat on the throne said, “Behold, I make all things new.” Then he said, “Write these words down, for they are trustworthy and true.” ⁶*† He said to me, “They are accomplished. I [am] the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. To the thirsty I will give a gift from the spring of life-giving water. ⁷*† The victor will inherit these gifts, and I shall be his God, and he will be my son. ⁸*† But as for cowards, the unfaithful, the depraved, murderers, the unchaste, sorcerers, idol-worshippers, and deceivers of every sort, their lot is in the burning pool of fire and sulfur, which is the second death.”

The New Jerusalem†

⁹ One of the seven angels who held the seven bowls filled with the seven last plagues came and said to me, “Come here. I will show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb.”† ¹⁰* He took me in spirit to a great, high mountain and showed me the holy city Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God. ¹¹* It gleamed with the splendor of God. Its radiance was like that of a precious stone, like jasper, clear as crystal. ¹² It had a massive, high wall, with twelve gates where twelve angels were stationed and on which names were inscribed, [the names] of the twelve tribes of the Israelites. ¹³* There were three gates facing east, three north, three south, and three west. ¹⁴*† The wall of the city had twelve courses of stones as its foundation, on which were inscribed the twelve names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.

¹⁵† The one who spoke to me held a gold measuring rod to measure the city, its gates, and its wall. ¹⁶† The city was square, its length the same as [also] its width. He measured the city with the rod and found it fifteen hundred miles in

21:9–22:5 Symbolic descriptions of the new Jerusalem, the church. Most of the images are borrowed from Ez 40–48.

21:9 *The bride, the wife of the Lamb*: the church (2), the new Jerusalem (10); cf 2 Cor 11:2.

21:14 *Courses of stones . . . apostles*: literally, “twelve foundations”; cf Eph 2:19–20.

21:15–17 The city is shaped like a gigantic cube, a symbol of perfection (cf 1 Kgs 6:19–20). The measurements of the city and its wall are multiples of the symbolic number twelve; see the note on 7:4–9.

21:16 *Fifteen hundred miles*: literally, twelve thousand stades, about 12,000 furlongs (see the note on 14:20); the number is symbolic: twelve (the apostles as leaders of the new Israel) multiplied by 1,000 (the immensity of Christians); cf Introduction. *In length and width and height*: literally, “its length and width and height are the same.”

20:11 2 Pt 3:7, 10, 12.

20:12 Rom 2:6.

20:14 1 Cor 15:26, 54–55.

21:1 Is 65:17; 66:22; Rom

8:19–23; 2 Pt 3:13.

21:2 Rv 19:7–9.

21:3 Ez 37:27.

21:4 Rv 7:17; Is 25:8; 35:10.

21:5 Is 43:19; 2 Cor 5:17.

21:6 Rv 22:17; Ps 36:8–9; Is 55:1.

21:7 2 Sm 7:14.

21:8 Rv 22:15; Rom

1:29–32.

21:10 Ez 40:2.

21:11 Heb 11:10.

21:13 Ez 48:31–35.

21:14 Eph 2:20.

length and width and height. ^{17†} He also measured its wall: one hundred and forty-four cubits according to the standard unit of measurement the angel used. ^{18†} The wall was constructed of jasper, while the city was pure gold, clear as glass. ^{19*} The foundations of the city wall were decorated with every precious stone; the first course of stones was jasper, the second sapphire, the third chalcedony, the fourth emerald, ²⁰ the fifth sardonyx, the sixth carnelian, the seventh chrysolite, the eighth beryl, the ninth topaz, the tenth chrysoprase, the eleventh hyacinth, and the twelfth amethyst. ²¹ The twelve gates were twelve pearls, each of the gates made from a single pearl; and the street of the city was of pure gold, transparent as glass.

^{22*}† I saw no temple in the city, for its temple is the Lord God almighty and the Lamb. ^{23*}† The city had no need of sun or moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gave it light, and its lamp was the Lamb. ^{24*}† The nations will walk by its light, and to it the kings of the earth will bring their treasure. ²⁵ During the day its gates will never be shut, and there will be no night there. ²⁶ The treasure and wealth of the nations will be brought there, ^{27*} but nothing unclean will enter it, nor any[one] who does abominable things or tells lies. Only those will enter whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life.

22 ^{1*}† Then the angel showed me the river of life-giving water, sparkling like crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb ^{2†} down the middle of its street. On either side of the river grew the tree of life that produces fruit twelve times a year, once each month; the leaves of the trees serve as medicine for the nations. ³ Nothing accursed will be found there anymore. The throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and his servants will worship him. ^{4†} They will look upon his face, and his name will be on their foreheads. ^{5*} Night will be no more, nor will they need light from lamp or sun, for the Lord God shall give them light, and they shall reign forever and ever.

† **21:17** *One hundred and forty-four cubits*: the cubit was about eighteen inches in length. *Standard unit of measurement the angel used*: literally, "by a human measure, i.e., an angel's."

21:18–21 The gold and precious gems symbolize the beauty and excellence of the church; cf Ex 28:15–21; Tb 13:16–17; Is 54:11–12.

21:22 Christ is present throughout the church; hence, no temple is needed as an earthly dwelling for God; cf Mt 18:20; 28:20; Jn 4:21.

21:23 *Lamp . . . Lamb*: cf Jn 8:12.

21:24–27 All men and women of good will are welcome in the church; cf Is 60:1, 3, 5, 11. *The . . . book of life*: see the note on 3:5.

22:1, 17 *Life-giving water*: see the note on 7:17.

22:2 *The tree of life*: cf v 14; see the note on 2:7. *Fruit . . . medicine*: cf Ez 47:12.

Live It!

Come, Lord Jesus!

Most young children want immediate gratification. Waiting for Christmas or a birthday is nearly impossible. Saving a piece of candy for after dinner is downright torture. And a long trip in a car produces a familiar and persistent question: Are we there yet?

The Bible tells us that Jesus will return. In the creed, Christians proclaim, "He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead, / and his kingdom will have no end" (*Sacramentary*, p. 368). When will this happen? Like impatient children, some people have tried to predict the Lord's Second Coming. "But of that day and hour no one knows, . . . but the Father alone" (Mt 24:36).

Can we say, with John, "Amen! Come, Lord Jesus!" (Rv 22:20) and really hope that Jesus will come today? We may hesitate, wanting to hang on to the life we know here and now. Yet, the coming of Christ will be the most glorious event imaginable for those who have put their trust in God. So keep preparing and praying for the return of Christ!

▶ Rv 22:7–21



VII: Epilogue

^{6*}† And he said to me, "These words are trustworthy and true, and the Lord, the God of prophetic spirits, sent his angel to show his servants what must happen soon." ^{7*} "Behold, I am coming soon."† Blessed† is the one who keeps the prophetic message of this book.

22:4 *Look upon his face*: cf Mt 5:8; 1 Cor 13:12; 1 Jn 3:2.

22:6–21 The book ends with an epilogue consisting of a series of warnings and exhortations and forming an inclusion with the prologue by resuming its themes and expressions; see the note on 1:1–3.

22:7, 12, 20 *I am coming soon*: Christ is the speaker; see the note on 1:3.

22:7, 14 *Blessed*: see the note on 1:3.

21:19 Is 54:11–12.

21:22 Jn 2:19–20.

21:23 Is 60:1–2, 19–20.

21:24 Is 60:11.

21:27 Is 35:8; 52:1; Zec 13:2/

Rv 3:5; 20:12.

22:1 Ez 47:1–12.

22:5 Is 60:20.

22:6 Rv 1:1.

22:7 Rv 22:12, 20 / Rv 1:3.

R
V


AMEN!

In Hebrew, *amen* means “so be it” or “yes, it is true.” So saying “Amen” in your prayers is the same as saying, “Yes, I believe!” It is an appropriate way to conclude the last book of the Bible, and it should not be said lightly. Are you able to say “Amen” to all you have read, prayed, and reflected on in this Bible? Have the stories and the poems, the teachings and the parables, the songs and the sayings led you to believe in a God who is with you every step of your journey, every minute of the day and night?



Each of us is invited to join the great Amen, to say: “Yes, I believe in a loving God who is father and mother to us all! Yes, I believe in God’s Son, Jesus Christ, who is my Lord and Savior! Yes, I believe in the Holy Spirit, who will help me to continue Jesus’ mission of justice, reconciliation,

and love!” But these words remain just words until people with courage and conviction take the risk to live them out in their own corner of the world. Take the risk; heaven awaits you! Amen!

 **Rv 22:20**

⁸It is I, John, who heard and saw these things, and when I heard and saw them I fell down to worship at the feet of the angel who showed them to me. ⁹* But he said to me, “Don’t! I am a fellow servant of yours and of your brothers the prophets and of those who keep the message of this book. Worship God.”

¹⁰† Then he said to me, “Do not seal up the prophetic words of this book, for the appointed time is near. ¹¹Let the wicked still act wickedly, and the filthy still be filthy. The righteous must still do right, and the holy still be holy.”

¹²* “Behold, I am coming soon. I bring with me the recompense I will give to each according to his deeds. ¹³*† I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end.”

¹⁴*† Blessed are they who wash their robes so as to have the right to the tree of life and enter the city through its gates. ¹⁵* Outside are the dogs, the sorcerers, the unchaste, the murderers, the idol-worshippers, and all who love and practice deceit.

¹⁶*† “I, Jesus, sent my angel to give you this testimony for the churches. I am the root and offspring of David, the bright morning star.”

¹⁷*† The Spirit and the bride say, “Come.” Let the hearer say, “Come.” Let the one who thirsts come forward, and the one who wants it receive the gift of life-giving water.

¹⁸I warn everyone who hears the prophetic words in this book: if anyone adds to them, God will add to him the plagues described in this book, ¹⁹* and if anyone takes away from the words in this prophetic book, God will take away his share in the tree of life and in the holy city described in this book.

²⁰*† The one who gives this testimony says, “Yes, I am coming soon.” Amen! Come, Lord Jesus!

²¹The grace of the Lord Jesus be with all.

the parousia; see the note on 1:3.

† **22:10** *The appointed time*: see the note on 1:3.
22:13 Christ applies to himself words used by God in 1:8.
22:14 *The city*: heavenly Jerusalem; see the note on 21:2.
22:16 *The root . . . of David*: see the note on 5:5. *Morning star*: see the note on 2:26–28.
22:17 *Bride*: the church; see the note on 21:2.
22:20 *Come, Lord Jesus*: a liturgical refrain, similar to the Aramaic expression *Marana tha*—“Our Lord, come!”—in 1 Cor 16:22; cf the note there. It was a prayer for the coming of Christ in glory at

* **22:9** Rv 19:10.
22:12 Rv 22:7, 20 / Ps 62:12; 2Tm 4:14.
22:13 Rv 1:8; 21:6; Is 41:4; 44:6.
22:14 Rv 7:14–15; 22:2.
22:15 Rv 21:8; Rom 1:29–32.
22:16 Rv 1:1, 11–12; 22:6 / Rv 2:28.
22:17 Rv 21:6; Is 55:1.
22:19 Dt 4:2.
22:20 Rv 22:7, 12 / Acts 3:20–21; 1 Cor 15:23; 16:22.