

Bible Survey - Apocalyptic 1.2 - Revelation of John

1. **INTRODUCTION** - The book of Revelation represents God's last words until Jesus returns and brings about an end to time and history as we know it, and along with it something so wonderful and beyond any expectation.
 - a. Most popular Christian views focus on the last battle between God and the forces of evil at Armageddon.
 - i. These views deal primarily with the rapture of the church – as with the “Left Behind” series, or about the expected anarchy and chaos which the anti-Christ will bring about.
 - ii. These views also deal with God's people fighting God's fight against the spiritual realm of Satan.
 - iii. The conflict in the political and Spiritual realm is real, and it will be a horrible turn of events to witness let alone to live through. Evil will eventually be revealed and the majority of hapless humanity will wind up being crushed in the conflicts.
 - iv. Most people get caught up in the unknowable aspects of how the millennial age will come about and where the tribulation and rapture fit in. Hopefully, as we work through this difficult book we will come away with a better informed understanding of what God is doing in redemptive history, and how we as his disciples ought to live and work in furthering the advancement of the Kingdom of God.
 - b. Revelation speaks mainly about Jesus returning as KING of Heaven and Creation. While the events leading up to Jesus' return will be tragic and brutal, the message of Messiah Jesus transforming and re-creating Heaven and earth will be wonderful and marvelous to behold.
 - i. Christians should not get too hung up in trying to decipher the meaning of the events leading up to these troubling times. Instead we should be aware these times are coming and will in a sense always be with us in this age on corrupted sin-cursed earth.
 - ii. The focus for God's people should always be in enduring difficulties in obedience to God's Word in faith.
 - iii. Humanity will enter eternity either at our natural physical death in this age, or in the supernatural cataclysmic events leading into the next age. Our focus should always be upon the Kingdom of God and eternity that awaits us all.
 - c. Numerology is present throughout the Book of Revelation – the numbers 12 & 7, also 4 & 3 [as a 7], 666, 144,000, & 1,000 are each numerical themes that are repeated in the text and most of these throughout Scripture.
 - i. 7 is a perfect number because of creation and also because of the days in a week. Derivatives of 7 also include 14, & 28.
 - ii. 12 is a perfect number because of the tribes of Israel. Derivatives also include 24, & 144,000.
 - iii. These numbers have prophetic significance, but the main point of apocalyptic thought is the conclusion of the sin-cursed earth and the inherent imperfection it entails, and the perfection coming in the new age with God in our midst.
 - d. Apocalypse as a result is inherently hopeful, even though the events leading up to it are distressing and painful. The apocalyptic message is to hold on to your faith and purposefully live your life in a manner pleasing to God.
 - e. As you work through the text, you'll discover that John's main or key thoughts are as follows:

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- i. The time is short – “end is near” – 1:1, 3. The “end” comes for all of us... as in the end of life or the end of the age.
- ii. The book of Revelation as written in the Greek is deliberately ambiguous... but this is the nature of apocalyptic writings. In this case John’s use of ambiguity was also intended to produce a double entendre – the Book is both ‘*from*’ Jesus and ‘*about*’ Jesus.
- iii. The flow of the Revelation is introduced in 1:1-2 => revelation of => from God => to His bondservants [angels & John] => word of God => testimony of God => for God’s people of every age.
- iv. The immanence of His coming is an important key focus:
 1. V7 – look here He comes!
 2. V10 – Prophets hear and see visions, and relate them to God’s people.
 3. V12 – I turned to see... Jesus. Understand how poignant this is... John Loves Jesus, John is the Disciple who Jesus loves. In this vision John sees His Lord and Savior... the culmination of all his hopes and dreams and is completely overwhelmed.
 4. The book is about seeing Jesus.
- f. John’s message has precursors to Revelation from his Gospel & Epistles:
 - i. “To be born of God” - speaks to the origin of a believer. Our true existence begins and ends in God through Jesus Messiah [Christos]. John 1:13; 3:3-21; 1 John 2:29; 3:9; 4:7; 5:1ff.
 - ii. “A new life in righteousness” - Christians are the result of a new creative act by God that results in righteousness... this means doing what is right before God is now made possible through this new creation. 1 John 2:29.
 - iii. “A new life apart from sin” - a Christian’s moral character results because of God’s redemptive work being fleshed out in the individual, and causes an abhorrence toward persistent sin. This does not mean sin has ended nor does it mean that Christian won’t sin, because that won’t occur until Jesus returns and the old world order is destroyed and a new one is created. In the meantime, the new work of recreation in being “born again” means Christians should be uncomfortable with sin and choose to shun it. 1 John 3:9; 5:18.
 - iv. “A new life results in love” - God’s transforming love allows believers to love others with God’s love. 1 John 4:7; 5:1-12.
 - v. “A new life results in victorious faith” - such faith takes God at His Word and makes believers victorious over the world and its many deceptions, temptations, trials and troubles. 1 John 5:1, 4.
 - vi. “A new life results in a new community” - Christians are the redeemed that constitute the Church who together triumph over the world in Christ. New life in a new community is accomplished through inner transformation by the Spirit. This empowering aspect of the Spirit is what was missing in the Law... the law had the power to convict and condemn, but the Spirit adds the power to be transformed in the inner man and live differently.
- g. Revelation is made reasonably clear if you allow the author to reveal his macro exegesis and then follow the themes.
 - i. Hermeneutics is about starting with the macro interpretation and then drilling down to the micro interpretation.

- ii. You cannot dive into specific verses in the micro and extract truth apart from the context in the macro.
- iii. Correct hermeneutics and exegesis are critical especially in apocalyptic and prophetic literature. [See “Interpreting Scripture - Hermeneutics” at the beginning of Biblical Literacy tab. See also “Theology 3.3 - End of Days Eschatology”.]
- h. There are 4 main approaches that have been employed for interpreting the book of Revelation. Each method has its strengths and weaknesses, but when taken together you can observe a much larger perspective. In my opinion, each is partly true and taken together helps provide a more balanced perspective. Remember that all Scripture is theological - meaning the author is revealing something about God that the Spirit has disclosed to them and that God wants His people to know. With this in mind, let’s look at the 4 methods of interpreting Revelation and the conclusions each method would suggest.
 - i. The “Allegorical Method” approaches Scripture as “Spiritual Literature.” The argument goes that to be rightly understood you must “Spiritualize” the text. This method would hold that the text should not to be taken literally, but instead as allegory... meaning that the text should be seen as primarily symbolic.
 1. This approach would tend to lead to an “Idealist perspective” – indicating that the book is primarily about good vs. evil.
 2. This approach would also lead to a “moralist perspective” - indicating the book is primarily about right and wrong.
 3. While these 2 approaches are both reasonable and true, its weakness is that this is not all that Scripture is... there is a much greater message being revealed in the text about God.
 4. The logical result of the Allegorical method would indicate that the conflict between the Church and the forces of evil has no real prophetic value. It is reasonably clear in a close reading of Revelation that John is teaching about the conflict of the church and the world, and why it is happening. The prophetic nature extends to this fundamental conflict throughout time, and inspiration plus revelation renders this new to each generation of believers. Thus the allegorical method presents an insufficient view of the Scripture as inspired literature.
 - ii. The “Preterist Method” – approaches the book from the standpoint of current events occurring in real time. This method would suggest that the author’s readers would have understood that these events depicted as having been already fulfilled. This approach provides two perspectives based upon when the book was written:
 1. The first perspective is about the “what” of the conflict - since Revelation has both a Jewish edged confrontation and a Pagan edged confrontation, holders of the Preterist method would argue that the first part of Revelation chapters 4-11 would be descriptive of victory over the church’s Jewish enemies; and the second part chapters 12-19 would be descriptive of victory over the churches Pagan enemies. The end of the book chapters 20-22 would be descriptive of the churches’ present power and victory. Again, while not untrue, this doesn’t really hold up well as a summary judgment of the inspired message of Revelation.

2. The second perspective has to do with the “when” of the writing. If Revelation was written around 70 AD, then Revelation would have spoken to the known events that occurred in and around Jerusalem where:
 - a. Nero launched a major persecution of the church, especially in Rome and in Jerusalem.
 - b. In AD 72 the temple was destroyed and 1-1/2 million Jews and Christians were killed.
 - c. Nero was looked upon as a type of beast, and it was known that he had murdered his pregnant wife and later committed suicide to escape being executed, thus it was rumored he would come back... this could speak to the beast that appeared dead but came back to life (Rev 13:14).
 3. If Revelation was written around 90-95 AD as most scholars believe:
 - a. Domitian launched a major persecution of the church that ranged throughout the Middle East and Achaia including the 7 churches John references.
 - b. The 7 churches were predominantly Greek communities that had an infusion of Messianic Jews [Christians] as well as Pagan converts.
 - c. John at the time was in the Roman penal colony on the Island of Patmos and wrote to encourage these churches to stand firm.
 4. This later date may be more accurate than the earlier date of writing, but in speaking only to the present circumstances, it omits the inspiration of revelation to succeeding generations... thus this approach falls short of what we expect from inspired Scripture. Also, the imagery John employed resonated directly out of the Book of Daniel which was written some 600 years earlier. When Daniel and Revelation are taken together they complement each other and speak to something God is doing in the redemption of humanity and the restoration of creation throughout time, not just the immediate circumstances.
- iii. The “Historicist Method” – approaches the book as being a symbolical description of the present history of the church era from the 1st century to the present. This method would argue that:
1. John was writing to 7 churches that he knew were struggling under difficult circumstances.
 2. It is reasoned that John and other Biblical authors and Church fathers expected that Jesus return would be during their lifetime. By the middle of the 1st century as Christians realized Jesus return might be delayed, they started writing the New Testament documents we now hold to preserve the integrity of the faith. The weakness of the historicist method is that it entails a near-term historical view of the end times. As time went on it became more clear of what we now take for granted... that is that God’s plan of redemption entailed a two step approach in Messiah’s work to redeem humanity - 1st spiritually which was accomplished with Jesus’ resurrection and Pentecost, and 2nd at the end of the age when creation would be redeemed.
 3. The long-term approach we are accustomed to is due to our perspective in looking back, and not necessarily about John looking forward. Though the future aspect is

clearly seen by us, it was not necessarily a distant future to those living at the time.

4. The reality is that the text encouraged believers to endure through the trials and hold on to their hope in eternity. It is now considered clear that Revelation was intended for the entirety of the church era which began at Pentecost and will end with Jesus return at the end of the age. Thus, then as now we are in the Church age which began at Pentecost. However, the conclusion of Revelation as written does not fit well with any presently known events or symbols... arguing that it must be seen in a long term view.
- iv. The “Futurist Method” – approaches the book as the future culmination of history at an undisclosed but certain future date. This fits the context much more completely.
 1. This method is eminently reasonable, and it speaks to the Apocalyptic expected conclusion of history prophesized throughout Scripture and especially in Daniel, Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel.
 2. The text makes numerous references to this “Ultimacy of Revelation” in the end times. Throughout Scripture prophetic revelations spoke of “those days” or “that day” meaning a future certain date when God would act.
 - a. Futurist approach can accommodate much of the Preterist position, but the opposite is not so.
 - b. 1st century fall of Jerusalem was not the cataclysmic worldwide event that Revelation speaks of.
 - c. Scripture says that “every eye” will see Him coming – and this event has obviously not yet occurred. Though Jesus was seen in Jerusalem, and His disciples watched Him go up into Heaven, this was a localized and not a worldwide event. It is reasonable to conclude this ultimate conclusion is still coming.
 3. “Ultimate” events are clearly understood as the concluding events, while “Penultimate” events are those leading up to the concluding events. It is reasonable to see many events through the ages that fall into the historicist-penultimate perspective. However, the conclusion of the age is certainly yet to come. The futurist method therefore holds the most reasonable interpretative method, though the other methods are certainly interesting and help provide a more balanced and better understanding of the text, but they must be accepted as inconclusive. All in all, the futurist method makes the most sense.

2. BACKGROUND:

- a. Authorship - the ancient consensus was very strong that the Apostle John wrote this book while imprisoned on the Island of Patmos. The early church fathers held John’s authorship as authoritative. The internal testimony of the book claims John having received the Revelation while on the island of Patmos (Rev 1:9). The case is made stronger as it follows the unique Johannine writing style with his love of employing images of absolute antithesis - such as light vs dark, truth vs falsehood, God vs Satan, saints vs world, etc. Also, John’s reference to Jesus as the “Logos” is unique to John’s Gospel 1:1, 14; and Revelation 19:13. Thus, the case for the Apostle John as the author of Revelation is very old, very strong, and very coherent.

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- b. **Date of writing - New Testament scholars generally understand Revelation to have been written at the end of Domitian's reign as Roman Emperor around 90-95 AD.**
- i. **It is understood by Biblical scholars of most denominations that all Scripture is written to speak God's truth to His people in their present circumstances, but it is validated as divinely inspired because it also speaks to successive generations throughout the ages. This present and future aspect is consistent of all Scripture and certainly holds true of Revelation.**
 - ii. **John wrote to encourage and comfort Christians who were being severely persecuted by Rome, with a vision of the greater conflict going on between God and Satan which focused on the people of the Kingdom of God and the people of the kingdom of man presently usurped by Satan.**
 - iii. **Nero in the mid to late 60's persecuted Jews and Christians, and Domitian particularly persecuted Christians and was especially brutal in the 90's. Nero's persecution centered mainly in Rome and Israel, while Domitian's persecution extended into the region of Achaia where the 7 churches John wrote to resided.**
 - iv. **Nero is credited for executing both Apostles Paul and Peter in Rome in 67 AD.**
 - v. **Domitian was Emperor of Rome from 81-96 AD. Domitian's father Vespasian was appointed by Nero to quell the Jewish rebellion. Vespasian and his older son Titus [who both preceded Domitian as Emperor] are credited with ending the Great Jewish Revolt known as the First Jewish-Roman War 66-73 AD. The war ended with the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple built by Herod the Great in 70 AD. The stronghold of Masada was the last stand of the revolt which was conquered in 73 AD. Roman-Jewish Historian Josephus reported that over a million Jews were killed in the revolt. In the succession of Roman Emperors, Titus was 10th and Domitian 11th.**
 - vi. **Domitian was vilified by ending the rule of the Senate and proclaiming himself the divine imperial ruler. Both Jews and Christians were heavily persecuted under Domitian for their refusal to capitulate to traditional Roman Emperor worship. Domitian died in 96 AD.**
 - vii. **Given the historical nature of the times, the internal and external witness of John's authorship and lifetime, it thus makes sense that an authorship date of 90-95 AD holds most probable.**
3. **New Testament Themes resonating in Revelation:**
- a. **Jesus is coming - is a prominent theme:**
 - i. **1st coming was the announcement and inauguration of the Kingdom of God. Jesus' Atonement death as the "Passover Lamb of God" secures the opportunity for redemption to all who would accept it and apply it. Salvation is proclaimed as being in Jesus alone, and He provides both Spiritual renewal [new birth] and the bestowing of the Holy Spirit [empowering confirmation] as a token of His promise to return for His people and lead them into Paradise.**
 - ii. **2nd coming is the basis for the Christian's hope – it is the final emancipation of humanity from evil, the judgment and eradication of all evil, and the redemptive renewal of Heaven and earth as God's Paradise where man and God live together forever in peace, purity, and abundance.**
 - iii. **The "Coming" of Jesus is repeated throughout the text for added emphasis – the author made sure it was hard to miss his message that Jesus would return.**

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- iv. Specifically however, the rapture means that Jesus is coming for “His people” - that is those who have been sealed by the Spirit. This is a continuation of the sheep (godly) and goat (worldly) theme of the Gospels and epistles (2 Cor 6:14-15).
- v. Jesus came the 1st time as “Savior of humanity” - to open the way for sinful man to live in context with a perfect and holy God. Pentecost’s outpouring of the Spirit means God is no longer distant in Heaven, and the way to God is not merely localized in the Temple. Instead the Temple of God is the human heart of receptive believers of every age (2 Cor 6:16).
- vi. Jesus is coming the 2nd time as “King and Ruler of creation.” The usurper Satan will be utterly destroyed as will all who are aligned with him, and those not sealed with the indwelling Spirit.
- vii. Matt 11:2-3 – the question posed is “are you the Coming One?” This is looking in fulfillment of OT prophesy of the Messiah.
- viii. John 11:27 – “Lord”, “Messiah”, “Son of God”, “Coming One” are all identifying terms used interchangeably – they are all titles for “God’s Anointed King.”
- ix. Rev 6:1-2 – “Come” – Jesus is revealed as Lord on a white horse [Zec 1:8-17, 6:1-8].
- x. Rev 6:16-17 – hide us from the wrath to come....
- b. King & Kingdom – is another prominent theme:
 - i. Rev 1:4 – from Him who is, was, and is coming...
 - 1. “Is” – this is in reference to present tense.
 - 2. “Was” – this is in reference to past tense.
 - 3. “Coming” – this is in reference to future tense. This particular word is a different verb indicating “an unknown but certain future event.”
 - 4. The combination flows from the Alpha-Omega notion of first and last... or “all encompassing.”
 - ii. Rev 1:7 – is reminiscent of Dan 7:13-14, “King is coming” – Dan 2:44.
 - iii. Many of the Psalms have God as King as a prominent theme, especially Psalm 2.
 - iv. Rev 11:15 – clearly speaks to “Kingdom.”
 - v. Rev 13:1-2 – the descriptions of the dragon and beasts are symbolic of the “kings of earth” – they have a realm with dominion and thrones [Dan 7:2-7].
 - vi. Rev 19:16 – Jesus is revealed as “King of kings, and Lord of lords” – meaning Jesus rules over all other world leaders and powers. In essence, there is no higher authority but the Father who has granted Jesus dominion over everything.
 - vii. 19:19 – beasts & his kings. The beasts are introduced in the Apocalyptic Book of Daniel, where they are placed in conjunction with one who appears to be a “Son of Man.” It was always God’s intent that man [humanity] would rule creation; it takes a man to rule over the beasts. It is not by accident that Jesus favored the “Son of Man” as a self designation.
 - viii. 20:4-6 – this is about thrones & reigning.
 - ix. 22:3 – this throne is particular for Father & Son.
 - x. 22:5 – for humanity eternity is about reigning with Jesus or suffering the consequences with the dragon.
 - xi. As Christian leaders – we need to teach more about “The King” and probably less about “The Kingdom.” We need to focus on Jesus as the King and align ourselves purposefully

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with His purposes, accomplishing “Kingdom of God” building as He did... as a humble servant-leader.

- c. **Good vs. evil** - is another prominent theme in all of John’s writings. John’s writings consistently demonstrated “an old man’s theology” - where everything was dualistic... it was black or white, bad or good, worldly or Spiritual, etc.
 - i. In John’s thinking there is only good and evil.
 - ii. Good is symbolically represented as white, and evil as red.
 - iii. In John’s theology, evil cannot masquerade as good as in Pauline teaching; in the clarity of end times there is no deception here.

4. Internal Structure of Revelation:

- a. There are several distinct structural markers which the author employs to organize his material:
 - i. “What must come to pass” or similar statement - 1:1; 1:19; 4:1; 22:6.
 - ii. “In the Spirit” - 1:10; 4:2; 17:3; 21:10.
 - iii. “Therefore write the things which you have seen, and the things which are, and the things which will take place after these things.”
 - 1. Past is what “you have seen” - 1:19.
 - 2. Present is “things that are” - chapters 2-3.
 - 3. Future is what “will take place after these things” - chapters 4-22.
 - iv. “Come up here” is an invitation to come and see and witness - 4:1; 11:12.

b. Content Outline:

- i. Prologue - 1:1-20.
 - 1. Introduction - 1:1-3
 - 2. Salutation - 1:4-6
 - 3. Summary & announcement of the “Coming One” - 1:7-8
- ii. The Things which you have seen - 1:9-19
 - 1. Introduction - 1:9-11
 - 2. The vision - 1:12-18
 - 3. The command to write - 1:19
- iii. The Things which are - 2:1-3:22.
 - 1. Introduction - 1:20
 - 2. Church of Ephesus - 2:1-7
 - 3. Church of Smyrna - 2:8-11
 - 4. Church of Pergamum - 2:12-17
 - 5. Church of Thyatira - 2:18-29
 - 6. Church of Sardis - 3:1-6
 - 7. Church of Philadelphia - 3:7-13
 - 8. Church of Laodicea - 3:14-22
- iv. The things that will take place after these things - 4:1-22:5.
 - 1. Jesus as Lamb/King commissioned in Heaven - 4-5
 - a. Vision of God’s Throne room - 4
 - b. Vision of the scroll - 5:1-12
 - 2. The Lamb/King coming to earth - 6-20
 - a. The seven seals - 6:1-8:5
 - i. 1st seal - the White horse conquering - 6:1-2

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- ii. 2nd seal - the Red horse of the sword - 6:3-4
- iii. 3rd seal - the Black horse of limited destruction of food - 6:5-6
- iv. 4th seal - the pale horse of death, pestilence & chaos - 6:7-8
- v. 5th seal - Martyrs consoled - 6:9-11
- vi. 6th seal - cosmic disturbance & wrath - 6:12-17
- vii. Sealing of the faithful - 7:1-17
- viii. 7th seal - silence & trumpets prepared 8:1-11:19
- b. The seven trumpets - 8:6-11:19
 - i. 1st trumpet - announcing burning of 1/3 of earth - 8:7
 - ii. 2nd trumpet - announcing pollution of 1/3 of sea - 8:8-9
 - iii. 3rd trumpet - announcing pollution of 1/3 fresh water - 8:10-11
 - iv. 4th trumpet - announcing darkening of 1/3 stars - 8:12
 - v. 5th trumpet - announcing locusts of non-mortal destruction & end of 1st woe - 9:1-12
 - vi. 6th trumpet - last chance for repentance - 9:13-11:14
 - 1. Army from the east - 9:13-21
 - 2. Mighty angel & little scroll - 10
 - 3. 2 witnesses - 11:1-13
 - 4. End of 2nd woe - 11:14
 - vii. 7th trumpet announcing Jesus' 2nd coming, victory accomplished, earth reclaimed - 11:15-19
- c. The seven signs - God's wrath against the arch-villains - 12:1-14:20.
 - i. Dragon introduced - 12
 - 1. Woman & the dragon - 12:1-6
 - 2. Dragon defeated in heaven - 12:7-12
 - 3. Dragon's persecution of woman - 12:13-17
 - ii. Beasts introduced - 13
 - 1. Beast from the sea - 13:1-10
 - 2. Beast from the earth - 13:11-18
 - iii. 144,000 - and the Lamb - 14:1-5
 - iv. 3 Angelic messages - 14:6-13
 - v. The harvest of the earth - 14:14-20
- d. The seven bowls - 15:1-16:21
 - i. Preparation - 15:1-16:1
 - ii. 1st bowl - sores on the beast's subjects - 16:2
 - iii. 2nd bowl - death in the sea - 16:3
 - iv. 3rd bowl - waters turned to blood - 16:4-7
 - v. 4th bowl - scorched by the sun - 16:8-9
 - vi. 5th bowl - darkness and pain on the beast's kingdom - 16:10-11
 - vii. 6th bowl - great river dried & the call for Armageddon - 16:12-16
 - viii. 7th bowl - earth turns against God's enemy in earthquake & hail - 16:17-21
- e. Babylon is the prostitute and counterfeit bride - 17:-18:24
 - i. The prostitute's rise & fall - 17

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- ii. The nations mourning Babylon's fall - 18:1-19:5
 - f. The Triumph & Judgments of Jesus - 19:1-21:8.
 - i. The Lamb's return to heaven and wedding to the true Bride the Church - 19:6-16
 - ii. The Lamb's destruction of evil, establishment of Millennial Kingdom, and righteous judgments - 19:17-20:15
 - 3. The New Heaven & Earth - 21:9-22:9
 - a. The New Creation - 21:1-8
 - b. The New Jerusalem - 21:9-22:5
 - v. Epilogue - the validity and imminence of the 2nd coming - 22:6-21
- 5. Old Testament Themes - that land in the New Testament:
 - a. King and Kingdom - are themes that course throughout Scripture and are brought to a head in the New Testament and in particular to consummation in Revelation. The Old Testament concept was of "an Anointed One" - a leader set apart by God for His particular purposes. The Hebrew word translated as Messiah [anointed one] is *Mesiah* and means "to be smeared with oil" - the primary use was preparation of the work as "King" (1 Sam 26:11; Psalms 89:20).
 - i. It was also used to as an honorary title for a prophet commissioned by God (1 Kings 19:16).
 - ii. It was also used for a foreign King who demonstrated godly wisdom and mercy and was applied to Cyrus the King of the Mede-Persian Empire (Isaiah 45:1).
 - iii. It was also used to consecrate an inanimate object as a place of worship for God in the example of the Altar consecration (Exodus 29:36).
 - iv. However the prevalent use of the word was in terms of consecrating the King of the Jewish nation in the context of the Archetype ideal of Jewish Kings, King David (1 Sam 16:13); and for continuation of the Davidic line and specifically One who would be revealed as the eschatological Messiah from the lineage of David.
 - v. Jesus was anointed as the Messianic King in the direct line of David, and adopted the title "Son of David" validating His calling (Mark 10:47-49; Matt 21:9, 15; Matt 16:16). Jesus also adopted the title "Son of Man" used in Daniel to describe a Heavenly Ruler/Ambassador for the Kingdom of God... Dan 7:13 reads, "In my vision at night I looked, and there before me was one like a son of man, coming with the clouds of heaven. He approached the Ancient of Days and was led into his presence."
 - vi. This vision of the Son of Man is recalled numerous times in the New Testament and especially conspicuously in Matt 24:30 - "At that time the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and all the nations of the earth will mourn. They will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky, with power and great glory."; and Revelation 1:13 - "and among the lampstands was someone 'like a son of man,' dressed in a robe reaching down to his feet and with a golden sash around his chest."; and 14:14 - "I looked, and there before me was a white cloud, and seated on the cloud was one 'like a son of man' with a crown of gold on his head and a sharp sickle in his hand."
 - b. Eschatology or "End Times" these and other such terms are used to refer to the end of history and the advancement of the Kingdom of God common in OT and NT eschatology.
 - i. Jewish eschatological expectations called for a King who would also be an eschatological King who would appear at the end of time. The OT had many prophecies of this anticipated leader, but the OT writers focused on the "ultimate events" rather than on

- the “Penultimate events.” Ultimate events were at the end of time, the penultimate events were these precursor events leading up to the end of times. It is distinctive that in the NT the penultimate events were made clearer by Jesus and the NT writers.
- ii. **Jewish prophets anticipated a time when what we now know as the “Church Age” would be launched by God with the pouring out of the Spirit through the Messiah - Joel 2:28-29**
“It will come about after this That I will pour out My Spirit on all mankind; And your sons and daughters will prophesy, Your old men will dream dreams, Your young men will see visions. Even on the male and female servants I will pour out My Spirit in those days.”
 - iii. **Attendant with the promise of Grace through the Spirit was the forecast of Judgment - Joel 2:30-32** - “I will display wonders in the sky and on the earth, Blood, fire and columns of smoke. The sun will be turned into darkness And the moon into blood Before the great and awesome day of the LORD comes. And it will come about that whoever calls on the name of the LORD Will be delivered; “
- c. **Martyrdom - Is a sub-theme of the text, though the term has meaning somewhat different from the modern concept of merely giving your life for your faith or your social/political cause. Because this is a difficult and often misunderstood topic, I have included an excerpt from an excellent article by W.S. Reid from the Zondervan Encyclopedia of the Bible, where “martyr” is explained as follows:**
- The term “MARTYR” is derived from the Greek [μάρτυς] meaning “a witness,” or more explicitly one who can assert what he himself has seen and heard. In this sense it was the same as the Hebrew [עֵד] which signifies to repeat and therefore to testify and even admonish (Gen 21:30; Num 35:30; Deut 17:6; Ruth 4:9). In referring to the OT law, both Christ and the apostles equate עֵד with μάρτυς, (Matt 18:16; 19:18; Acts 6:13; Heb 10:28). However, the terms in both OT and NT have also religious meanings, since they refer to those who are witnesses for God, setting forth the message they had received from Him.
- In the OT, the people of Israel were the primary witnesses (Isa 43:10 ff.; 44:8), but the prophets in the special sense held that position with a special commission (Isaiah 6:9 ff.; Jeremiah 1:5). In the NT the Church was the witness that was to take the Gospel to the whole world (Luke 24:48; Acts 1:8), but like the prophets, the apostles had a special position, since they witnessed not only to Christ’s teaching and works, but also from personal experience to His Resurrection (Acts 1:1, 21 ff.). They received special authority from Christ, who Himself was the ultimate witness (Rev 1:5; 3:14).
- Persecution, however, is a common feature for both Jew and Gentile. Jesus warned His disciples that as the world hated and persecuted Him, it would also hate and persecute them. The result would be that many of those who bore faithful witness experienced physical attack and even death. Stephen the Deacon (Acts 8:5-8) and James, the brother of John (Acts 12:2) were two of the earliest witnesses who suffered the extreme penalty for witnessing to Christ. Others followed in their train, including the Apostles Peter, Paul and a number of lesser fame (Rev 20:4). Those who so suffered became in a special sense witnesses to Christ (cf. Heb 11), which led the Church to accord them a special place in its tradition, as those who had given the utmost in witness by being faithful unto death.
- In post-NT times the tendency became common to regard those who died for their witness as having a special place in heaven, with special rights of intercession. Under the influence of Neo-Platonism this led to the development of the idea of “saints” who had the privilege of intercession for Christians upon earth. The NT, however, provides no ground for such beliefs, since it gives no place of special privilege even to those who have as “martyrs” died for the faith.
- i. In this context, martyrdom is a potential result of bearing faithful witness to the truth of Christian faith in the face of opposition. The first century of the Christian Church saw great opposition with many facing and enduring death for their refusal to denounce their faith. John’s words were intended to bring consolation and encouragement to those experiencing this test of faith.

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- ii. This same witness of conscience was true of Daniel (Daniel 6:1-38), and also Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego (Daniel 3:1-30).
 - iii. While Christians are not encouraged to look for martyrdom and should never seek it, the Scripture indicates they are none-the-less blessed if it happens to find them.
 - iv. Jesus promised that Christians would always have opposition in the world, with the command to “endure until the end” indicates that perseverance is a necessity even when martyrdom is occasionally an option. [Rev 3:7-13]
 - v. Blood of the saints under the altar in Heaven reflects the OT custom of pouring out blood at the base of the altar as an act of reverence. In Revelation, the OT use of earthly animals at the earthly altar has been supplanted by the blood of the saints at the Heavenly Altar. This is an indication of how precious their witness is to God. The connotation here of the martyrs being comforted, is for the encouragement of the Christians suffering through oppression from worldly opposing powers... here including Rome and the Jews.
- d. God is Sovereign – is another continuing theme in Scripture. God is presented powerfully in Revelation as supreme and as the Master of all circumstance.
- i. Because God is all-powerful, and is in control of the process of redemptive history, our individual ultimate end in eternity is secure.
 - ii. Revelation demonstrates that good triumphs over evil magnificently! Evil may claim its share of victims and carnage along the way, but those so caught up in it are blessed beyond the normative compensation of their sacrifice.
 - iii. The focus for Christian discipleship under a Sovereign God is displayed in Matthew 10:24-28:
“A disciple is not above his teacher, nor a slave above his master. It is enough for the disciple that he becomes like his teacher, and the slave like his master. If they have called the head of the house Beelzebub, how much more *will they malign* the members of his household! Therefore do not fear them, for there is nothing concealed that will not be revealed, or hidden that will not be known. What I tell you in the darkness, speak in the light; and what you hear *whispered* in *your* ear, proclaim upon the housetops. Do not fear those who kill the body but are unable to kill the soul; but rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.”
- e. The Significance of Numbers [numerology] - the number 6 indicates the ‘penultimate’ – it is next to the best possible or ‘ultimate’ in this case 7 is the ultimate.
- i. With regard to the 7s in Revelation, 6 judgments approach the end, but 7 is the end.
 - ii. With regard to numerology, 6 is always imperfect and incomplete, while 7 is perfect and complete. This concept began with creation in the 6 days God called very good, but the 7th day was called Holy... way better than good or very good.
 - iii. C.S. Lewis places this in the context of the “good being the enemy of the best.” In other words, too often we settle for the good we know rather than the great thing we have not yet experienced. This is at the heart of the call for discernment.
 - iv. The interesting thing is that this suggests the antichrist [identified by 666] will not necessarily be an obvious horrible alternative, instead he maybe even a reasonable one thus he will deceive so many – but the wise person will evaluate the goals and objectives of the antichrist with Spiritual discernment to see the matter for what it is.

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- f. **God's Judgment is Coming** – though God has tolerated evil for so many years, there will come a final end to this wicked and Fallen state of existence. God will introduce an ultimate wonder for all His people in the end of redemptive history.
 - i. While God's judgment it is fair and right, but it is also just and brutal.
 - ii. The Gospel is not about justice – but rather about grace. We get what we don't deserve; the otherwise helpless doomed are rescued from destruction by the incredible interception by God, who paid the price Himself.
 - iii. Those who reject God's grace deserve the judgment that they get. The message of Revelation is that the hearts of the worldly sinners are so hardened and their conscience has become so seared that they continue to refuse to respond to the call of grace.
- g. The language invoking natural catastrophes used as aspects of God's judgment – lightning, thunder, earthquake. The inference is that creation is also responsive to the call of God – it is anxiously awaiting renewal just as saints should be.
- h. **Old Testament references surfacing in Revelation:**
 - i. 1 – vision reflects – Dan 10
 - ii. 2-3 – Balaam & Jezebel
 - iii. 4 – Creation – Ez 1
 - iv. 5 – lion & lamb
 - v. 6 – 4 horses – Zec 1:8
 - vi. 8 – Egypt plagues
 - vii. 10 – Eating scroll – Ez 3:1-3
 - viii. 11 – measuring temple – Ez 40-42
 - ix. 11 – the 2 witnesses – Moses & Elijah
 - x. 12 – the birthing mother
 - xi. 13 – Dan 7
 - xii. 14 – harvest – Joel 3
 - xiii. 15-16 – Babylon – Jer 50-51
 - xiv. 21-22 – new heaven & earth – creation/restoration

6. **INTERPRETATION** - the following represents a reasonable approach to the text as provided by evangelical scholars. There is an ongoing problem many Christians struggle with in interpreting Scripture because their approach is either exegesis [drawing out the meaning the author intended] or eisegesis [reading into the text based on a particular theological position]. The Hermeneutical method of evangelical scholarship demands we approach the Word of God as inspired Scripture on its own terms, not on those we would apply to it. Hence, exegesis is the only proper way to interpret Scripture. Please see "Interpreting Scripture - Parts 1-3" under the Biblical Literacy tab for more information on how to interpret Scripture.

One problem people have in interpreting Revelation is that they presume that the text is a lineal conceptual development in real time, because that is how humanity conceptualizes time and history. Humanity lives in a context of past, present, and future. However, we know that God is outside of time where instead of "past/present/future," God is in a present tense "now." To this end, presume that John as a human ambassador is pulled into a concept of eternity that we cannot readily understand, and he is trying to contextualize what he is experiencing in terms others will understand. Instead of a lineal development in time, it may be more useful to think in terms of a spiral, and where past, present and

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future are woven together. Another example of this is Ezekiel's vision of God in Heaven, and his description of God's throne as wheels and eyes and such. We are not exactly sure what Ezekiel actually saw from his description, but we know it was wondrous, awesome, and overwhelming. Such is the limit of human speech, for some things there just aren't sufficient words to properly describe what you are seeing.

A) THE THINGS YOU HAVE SEEN:

- a. Introduction - 1:1-8... the 1st chapter attends to **"The Things you have seen:"** This introduction has a classic Epistolary [letter] approach to this Book with Spiritual ideas being formed that course through the remainder of it.
 - i. John the Apostle has had an intense Spiritual Vision and Encounter with God... where he has been shown the Spiritual Reality outside of the physical reality in which we live. Think of the story of Elisha and Gehazi in 2 Kings 6:8-17 when the Aramean king sets his army out to kill them. Gehazi is terrified and cannot understand why Elisha is not. Elisha prays that Gehazi's "eyes would be opened" so he can see for himself that God is in control. Gehazi then sees the army of God's fiery Angels surrounding the Aramean army... there is absolutely no reason for him to worry. In a similar way, John "seeing" these things reported in Revelation is axiomatic for his experience. He has been ordered by God to commit his experience to writing and pass this along to others – first for encouragement and second for them to take responsibility and being obedient.
 - ii. Spiritual insights often have reflections in the material world, but the main purpose is for humanity to experience a dimension beyond the obvious where God is obviously in control. This is like pulling back the curtain of the natural world and peering into the spiritual world. The result is greater confidence and intimacy with God.
 - iii. It is also important to understand that John had first hand relationships with these 7 churches which were also very close to the Isle of Patmos as the following map indicates. Map of the 7 Churches of Revelation - the Island of Patmos is just off the coast between Ephesus and Rhodes.



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- i. **John concludes this section with a threefold statement on the Deity of Jesus - "I am the Alpha and the Omega,"** says the Lord God, "who is, and who was, and who is to come, the Almighty." **Rev 1:8, which echoes the threefold "who is, who was, who is to come" of 1:4 creating an inclusio, which brackets a critical truth John wants his readers to hear at the outset. John caps this section with his affirmation of Jesus as God... He is the eternal Lord and Savior, and John here reiterates basic Christian theology about Jesus and salvation.**
 - ii. **The "Alpha and the Omega" is used three times in Revelation - 1:8; 21:6; 22:13. Of this title, Zondervan's Encyclopedia of the Bible reports, "God himself speaks and, with his own signature, vouches for the truthfulness of the coming of Christ. Of the many names of God that reveal his character and memorialize his deeds, there are four strong ones in this verse. (1) "Alpha and Omega" are the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet. Their mention here is similar to the "First" and "Last" in v.17 and is further heightened by the "Beginning" and the "End" in 21:6 and 22:13. Only this book refers to Jesus as the eternal "Alpha and the Omega." (2) He is the absolute source of all creation and history, and nothing lies outside him. Thus he is the "Lord God" of all. (3) He is the one 'who is, and who was, and who is to come.' (4) He is continually present to his people as the 'Almighty' (lit., 'the one who has his hand on everything') [cf. 4:8; 11:17; 15:3; 16:7, 14; 19:6, 15; 21:22; 2Co 6:18]."**
- b. Vision 1: Introduction of Jesus & the Church – 1:9-19 is the Heavenly Spiritual grounding of "the Things you have seen" which prepares the reader for the Spiritual view of "the things which are."**
- i. **The vision of the "Son of Man" in Heavenly glory reflects back to the "Mount of Transfiguration" (Matt 17:1-8; Mark 9:2-8; Luke 9:28-26; 2 Peter 1:16-18; John 1:14; 2:11; 17:24) and recalls the vision of Daniel 7:13-14 where the Son of Man is given "Everlasting Dominion over the Kingdom of Heaven." These things are known to John and to Believers, and they form the basis of the introduction.**
 - ii. **Jesus having the "7 Stars" representing the Angels of the churches in His hand speaks to His dominion over the Church.**
 - iii. **The "7 lamps" are the Churches themselves who shed God's eternal light on earth as ambassadors of the Kingdom of God. The 7 churches are both representative and symptomatic of all Christians individually and collectively in their churches throughout time. The "letters to the 7 churches" were most likely intended to be circulated and read by all the churches. The message had application to each specific church, but also to all the churches in general and each individual within the church in particular. In reverently contemplating the strengths and weaknesses admonished in the message, each person would gain insight to what the Spirit was requiring of them and/or convicting them of. The strengths and weaknesses of the 7 churches are common to all and are applicable to all Christians and their Churches.**
 - iv. **Each letter or message is addressed to the "Angel of the Church" and concludes with "He who has an ear let them hear what the Spirit says to the Churches." It is significant that the letters written to the churches are addressed to the "Angel of the Church" - this is in keeping with the Spiritual nature of the Book and its message, and reflecting the "Angelic Being" Jesus has assigned to safeguard the Church. In thinking about this, consider the**

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story recorded in the Book of Daniel... “Do not be afraid, Daniel. Since the first day that you set your mind to gain understanding and to humble yourself before your God, your words were heard, and I have come in response to them. But the prince of the Persian kingdom resisted me (Daniel 10:12a-13a).” The “Prince of the Persian kingdom” is here noted as an adversary of God restraining God’s Angelic messenger. In a similar manner there is Spiritual warfare going on in the background against the people of God. While some theologians translate Angel [literally ‘messenger’] to mean the human pastor of each church, this is inconsistent with the Spiritual nature of this passage and the book as a whole. It is also inconsistent with the genre of apocalyptic literature in general which looks to the Spiritual life behind the obvious worldly life.

- v. The praise and warnings for the Church are also for all believers, not just a particular church at a particular time. The rewards and warnings have more to do with the love of God, their commitment and their dedication to Jesus and the Kingdom of God, which then affects the outcome of individual actions.
- vi. Each letter contains the general exhortation "he who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches" (e.g., 2:7); only its position in the letter tends to be variable. The words of the Spirit are intended to convey the words of Christ (cf. 19:10).
- vii. In speaking to each church there is a literary pattern that runs something like this: (1) destination; (2) identity of sender; (3) primary commendation and/or rebuke; (4) exhortation; secondary commendation and/or rebuke; (5) promise; (6) closing admonition.

B) THE THINGS WHICH ARE: - These are The Messages to the Church - 2:1-3:22. This part of John’s 1st vision is a revelation of the state of the Church... it reveals what Christians are doing well, and where they need to do better. The stern language is sobering... while not ignoring the works performed [deeds]; the revelation focuses on the qualities of the heart and their love and commitment to God. The Gospel message of Jesus flows through the Great Commandment - Loving God and others, and the Great Commission - Go preach [evangelism] and make disciples [discipleship].

Vision 1 continues:

i. Church of Ephesus - 2:1-7:

1. Ephesus was a major metropolitan center and gateway to the Middle East and Asia. It was the capital city where the eastern Governor resided and ruled. It was also home to numerous temples of occult worship including the great temple of Artemis where the city rose in opposition to the Gospel preached by the Apostle Paul (Acts 19:23-41).
2. The message to the church was initially very good... one of working for the Kingdom of God, holding to the truth, and perseverance. Then very bad... you have lost your first love.
3. A dear missionary friend of mine was once counseled by his ministry mentor to “guard your fire.” When we first come to genuine faith and when we receive our calling there is a passion for God that is ignited. It needs to be carefully fed and maintained because the adversary wants to put it out. When we are spiritually on fire for God we are dangerous to the Spirit world in opposition to Christ. All the

other things we do are important, but nothing is as important as keeping that Spiritual flame of love alive.

4. What is going on in the church at Ephesus? Why would they need such a harsh rebuke from the Spirit? John's theology consistently holds that Love is the most important thing of all. God is fundamentally Love... and Jesus is Love Personified. Jesus' questions to His disciples... "do you *know Me*", and "do you *Love Me*?" are not rhetorical... they are meant to probe their hearts and pierce their minds. When people and/or the church forget the primacy of Love... we fall back into legalism and bondage. God is all about relational intimacy... with us as individuals and with His People. It is expressed first between Disciples, and translates outward into the world. Together we are called to His Purpose, and reserved for His use. When people are rightly related to Jesus and the primacy of Love of God is in place... we do naturally the things that please God. When rightly related and spiritually on fire with God, we don't need to "Work at it", because we "Are it".

ii. Church of Smyrna - 2:8-11:

1. Smyrna was a wealthy port city and was closely aligned with Rome. It was known as a "free city" in that all its citizens were Roman citizens and free from taxation. It was the center for Roman emperor worship and every citizen and visitor had to offer a pinch of incense and affirm verbally that "Caesar is Lord," which Christians refused to do because of their unyielding faith that only "Jesus is Lord." There was also a sizable Jewish population who were antagonistic to Christians. The combination of Roman and Jewish persecution made life extremely difficult for Christians in Smyrna.
2. When Christians stand with God for Truth, we often become the focus of the forces of evil. Evil exists in at least 3 forms:
 - a. Physical or natural evil – results from the problems of a fallen world or natural order. Earthquakes, illness, disease, famine, etc., are all considered this part of evil.
 - b. Moral evil – results from human choices... "Wickedness" is an oft used translation. Greed, lust, desire, etc., are examples. Wickedness commonly results when a person sees other people as a means to achieving their own desired ends... whether of pleasure or opportunity.
 - c. Spiritual evil – results from aligning oneself in opposition to God and His purposes. Satan and demonic influences are commonly held as examples of opposition to God's rule and will.
3. The problem of evil in all its forms results in the suffering of humanity. Since God is Sovereign, evil in any of its forms is at least permitted if not tolerated by God. The theological question arises as to "How a Good and Loving God can permit evil to occur?" Job comes to mind, and also Jonah's complaint where God uses the unrighteous Assyrians to punish the more righteous but still spiritually deficient Jews. There is no easy answer... and pat answers or "platitudes" are of little comfort to suffering Christians and make no sense at all to non-believers.
4. Standing on faith in the face of suffering is what the Spirit is encouraging the Christians in Smyrna. We may suffer for a while, but eternity beckons on the other

side of it... we are encouraged to keep our eyes on the prize of eternal life God offers His faithful.

iii. Church of Pergamum - 2:12-17:

1. Pergamum was another great Roman provincial city. It had temples and altars both to the Greek and Roman gods, including emperor worship. It had an enormous library with hundreds of thousands of books making it a regional center for learning and academics. This led to a rather confused identity that was also a problem for Christians in the community.
2. Within this confused identity there is a real problem regarding both "TOLLERANCE" and "COMPROMISE."
 - d. Tolerance = "1. The capacity for or practice of recognizing and respecting the opinions, practices, or behavior of others. 2. Allowable leeway of variation from a standard... the permissible or acceptable deviation from a specified value or calibration. 3. The capacity to endure hardship or pain."
 - e. Compromise = "1. A settlement of differences where each side makes concessions. 2. Something that combines certain qualities of different things. 3. Concessions made in an instance of something detrimental or downgrading [i.e. a compromise of ethics or morality]."
3. Living in a world that does not avow God's Universal and Absolute Truth, that openly practices situational ethics [whatever it takes] and pluralistic values & beliefs [whatever you want] which includes many within the church. In such an environment the result of this confusion is the heresy of SYNCRETISM... or "the attempt or tendency to combine or reconcile differing beliefs where the basic character of the ideas/ideals being joined are lost... they cease being what they were and become something else... of a different nature or quality." Syncretism is the fusion into one of two or more originally different forms [from the Greek term "to unite" or join together]. The resultant belief system functionally retains neither of what was joined... it is now something different containing elements of both. The sin of the Pergamum church was unholy syncretism.
4. There are a number of Biblical examples of syncretism... a few include:
 - f. Attempting to join a Christian 'other-worldly' value system with a pagan 'materialistic' system. Wanting to have the world and Heaven too... we can serve only one. Balaam's compromise was encouraging relations with pagans... which led to sexual sin and idolatry.
 - g. Attempting to join Christian Truth and pagan 'supernaturalism'. Holding to One God and worshipping idols & worldly wisdom. This was the Nicolatian's compromise.
 - h. Holding to the supremacy and sufficiency of Jesus and His atonement, and adding the requirements of the OT Law... we are saved by Grace alone, not by works. This was the Judaiser's compromise condemned by Paul.
5. Satan's goal is to confuse us, make us ineffective for God's work, and to kill our faith and our soul if possible.
 - i. Wisdom is knowing what things to tolerate and what to compromise... not all tolerance or compromise is bad... especially those minor things that

promote the unity of the faith in the non-essential things. Those who avow no tolerance or compromise may argue they are more holy, but this is equally unwise. The Spirit provides the wisdom in balance in walking in the world but not necessarily being dictated by it.

j. Scripture makes it plain that Satan and the forces of evil & wickedness are behind the merging of God's Holy Ideals and the unholy worldly & pagan ideals.

6. In such an environment, there are ways that we can remain steadfast and true to God:

k. We need to be spiritually alive in Jesus, we need to know His Word, we need Spiritual discernment that comes from prayer and dependence of the Spirit.

l. We need a community that encourages and focuses our heart and mind toward God, as well as Godly friends, mentors, and coaches.

m. Avoid worldly passions – animal passion focuses on pleasure and fleshly desires... greed, lust, sexual immorality. Sex and wealth are good things... but they aren't the main things.

n. Focus our Spiritual passion – God is all about reconciling humanity to Himself, and having His people reflect Jesus' nature and character in their lives and in their community... where we demonstrate the spiritual passion of holiness, Godliness, and identify with Him and His purpose.

iv. Church of Thyatira - 2"18-29:

1. Thyatira was not a particularly important city in terms of wealth, prestige or prominence. However it did have a well known manufacturing community of trade guilds. Each guild had its own deity associated with their craft, and worship included sexual revelries. Of particular importance was the weaving and dying of cloth and manufacturing of apparel.
2. The sin of the church in Thyatira had more to do its failure to stand against the barrage of secularism infiltrating their spiritual life.
3. The question raised by this message is how does a person or group resist and influence the more dominant Pagan surrounding culture. Again, the example of Daniel is critical for understanding this dynamic. The Jews of Daniel's era felt secure that God would never permit Jerusalem to be captured because this was where God's Temple was... His "Footstool" on earth. The Jews had compromised their faith and tolerated evil among them including moral and ethical failures of the leadership and the priests... failures both secular and spiritual. When the unthinkable happened and Jerusalem was captured, some of the young men and women were taken to Babylon – the city of evil. Daniel and his 3 companions were part of a "faithful remnant" that God would use to perpetuate His Kingdom Presence on earth through their purity of faith, which was rewarded by God with supernatural wisdom and miracles. The Book of Daniel records three different passive confrontations with the dominant culture where the righteous remnant is saved by God:

- o. Daniel 1:1-17 - shows how Daniel and his friends though now serving in enemy territory refused to allow their Jewish identity to be usurped by the Babylonians. They held to their faith and the Jewish eating restrictions dictated by the Law. However, they wisely did so by cleverly sidestepping direct confrontation with their overlords.
 - p. Daniel 3:8-18 - Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego refused to obey the requirement imposed by Nebuchadnezzar to worship an idol. In this story they demonstrated faith and commitment to God in another form of passive resistance - Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego replied to the king, "O Nebuchadnezzar, we do not need to defend ourselves before you in this matter. If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God we serve is able to save us from it, and he will rescue us from your hand, O king. But even if he does not, we want you to know, O king, that we will not serve your gods or worship the image of gold you have set up" (3:16-18). We know that God intervened and saved them, but their faith preceded God's action and they expressed it in a positive and respectful manner.
 - q. Daniel 6:1-16 - is the story of Daniel's passive resistance in active worship led him into the lion's den. Again, God intervened after Daniel acted in faith. This story is significantly different from the other two in that the attack against the righteous remnant here is insidious. Notice the King's distress when he realizes he has been caught up in the duplicity of Daniel's adversaries realizing these men were not working in the king's interests.
4. These 3 stories show 3 different means the adversary will come against God's faithful. It is a direct and powerful reminder that we are in a spiritual conflict, and that we should expect such confrontation. Of particular importance is how Daniel's spiritual practices helped enable him to stand true in the face of opposition.
- v. Church of Sardis - 3:1-6:
- 1. Sardis had enjoyed prominence as a commercially prosperous and militarily strategic city throughout its history dating back into the Persian Empire. Though Sardis still retained much of its wealth, its influence had waned for its political importance as the capital city of Asia was now long in the past. They were known for their extravagant & luxurious living and their moral decadence... a toxic combination. Sardis' past glory led to their lethargy and dwelling on past dreams and their failure to live and act in the present.
 - 2. The church was initially alive in their faith, but the admonishment against them showed they were actually dying. The church must have had a hard time gaining traction as a small counter-cultural society in a reasonably well functioning dominant society that looked more to the past rather than the future.
 - 3. The message context holds that our redemption through Christ is past, present and future... the past is helpful for forming a foundation, but we all live and act in the present with our hope in the future. Christian counter cultural communities need to live as did the Church after Pentecost where people came to faith in

droves because of the vitality of Spirit life they witnessed in the Christian community.

vi. Church of Philadelphia - 3:7-13:

1. Philadelphia was a fortress city on the inland road between Sardis & Laodicea and West of Antioch. The city drew its prosperity from the rich vineyard lands to the north-east, and to its textile and leather working trades. Philadelphia means “brotherly love” and was named for the love and loyalty between king Attalus II and his brother Eumenes II.
2. The region of Asia Minor and the Middle East were prone to earthquakes, and Philadelphia suffered as a consequence and this caused its people great fear whenever a tremor occurred. This living on the edge helped believers to cling to their faith.
3. The Church at Philadelphia endured and remained steadfast, though the Philadelphians are identified as having “little strength” – they kept their faith and were commended for it. History shows that this was the last city in the region that finally succumbed to Muslim conquest and indoctrination... presumably after all if not most of the Christian population was killed. It maintained a Christian identity until 1392 AD.
4. Encouragement is clearly the major theme of this message, so it may be surmised that the Christian community in this city was big in their faith because it is the only church that is not chastised or condemned. Instead, they are encouraged to hold on to what they have, to keep up their faith and persevere.
5. While the other churches received chastisement, Philadelphia received only praise. It is too bad more is not known about this church, but clearly their faith pleased their Lord.

vii. The Church of Laodicea - 3:14-22:

1. Laodicea along with Colossae and Hierapolis were cities in the fertile Lycus valley along the great Roman road stretching to the inland of Asia from the coast at Ephesus. Due to its strategic travel location, Laodicea was an important center of trade and communication. Its wealth came from the production of a fine quality of glossy black wool they made famous. The city was very wealthy.
2. Laodicea also boasted a famous school of medicine which produced a special eye and ear ointment known as "Phrygian powder." Near the temple of the special god associated with healing (Men Karou) was a market for trading all sorts of goods. Zeus was the supreme god, but was only the 1st among many others also worshiped in the city.
3. Laodicea was a city with a people who had learned to compromise and accommodate themselves to the needs and wishes of others... in other words they did not zealously stand for anything. For all its wealth, the city had poor water. A six-mile-long aqueduct brought Laodicea its supply of water from the south. The water came either from hot springs and was cooled to lukewarm or came from a cooler source and warmed up in the aqueduct on the way.
4. The complaint that their Christian community was lukewarm had a figurative meaning in their values and ethics, but also a literal meaning observed in their

water supply. The two adjectives translated as "neither hot nor cold" should be understood together as equivalent to "lukewarm" (v.16). Meaning they were complacent, self-satisfied, indifferent to the real issues of faith in Jesus and of the demands of discipleship. As a result they were useless.

5. Jesus' rebuke of the Laodiceans being "lukewarm" and that he was about to spew them out of His mouth [literally spit or vomit] was scathing and reminiscent of His rebuke of the leaders of the Jews as blind guides (Matt 15:14; 23:16, 24) and a brood of vipers (Matt 3:7; 12:34; 23:33).
6. This startling warning begs the question of contemplating "what does Jesus expect of His church?" Along the lines taken from Jesus' teaching in the Gospels, I believe we can make a case for three classes of increasing faith and commitment:
 - r. To hear and understand – being a follower of Jesus.
 - s. To understand and believe – being a believer in Jesus.
 - t. To believe and act accordingly – being a disciple of Jesus.
7. The resultant question theologians through the ages have argued about is what constitutes saving faith? While most theologians agree that our theology doesn't need to be perfect, there is a threshold of faith that moves a believer from hearing with our ears to acting upon what we know.
8. Dietrich Bonhoeffer was a Lutheran pastor who died in the Nazi concentration camps near the end of World War 2. He discussed the notion of "Cheap Grace" as dealing with the 'Who' of Jesus as God in the Atonement for Sin, but then ignoring the 'Why' He came in redeeming humanity, and the 'What' He expects where disciples are conscripted to serve Jesus in completing the work of the Gospel in the reclamation of humanity. Many people profess to accept Jesus' provision of salvation in the Atonement, but then they do not feel obligated to live out life as He intended – that is to be a "living sacrifice" in devoted service to Him. Again I think it comes down to the reality of the Great Commandment - to love God and others; and the Great Commission - to go and make disciples.
9. For those who deliberately continue to live a life of sin and compromise, the issues for the lukewarm are very serious (Heb 10:26). God is a God of love, but he is opposed to all that is evil and those who persist in doing wrong will face judgment. This is more than behavior change; it is fundamental change of heart where love of God transforms us from the inside out. This is the goal of Christian discipleship.

C) THE THINGS WHICH SHALL BE:

- c. Vision 2 – Jesus & cosmos – 4:1-16:21... "What must take place after these things" ... 4:1
 - i. Throne room vision – 4:1-11 - There are several throne room scenes described in Scripture (Isaiah 6:1ff; Ezekiel 1:26; Daniel 7:9), with many similarities. The faith and character of these men speaks that they each had a personal encounter with God in a vision. John is describing what he sees as he takes in the scene.
 - ii. The scene focuses on God who is holding a scroll [book] in His right hand – this must be a critically important scroll for it to be the center of attention and focus of the vision – 5:1

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1. No one is worthy to open the 7 seals on the scroll – 5:4 – John is weeping in despair because all is lost if the scroll cannot be opened.
 2. John is comforted and Jesus the Lamb of God takes center stage with all of heaven singing praise “Worthy is the Lamb!” – 5:12
- iii. The Seven Seals & Trumpets – chapters 6-11 is about Jesus reclaiming the land – this section develops His purging the wrongdoers from the land just as Joshua drove out the Canaanites.
1. 1st seal – a white horse... rider with a bow – white indicates He is the Good Guy, bow indicates He is ready for battle and is going out to conquer – 6:1-2.
 2. 2nd seal – a red horse... red horse indicates he is the bad guy, has men fighting and killing one another. The red rider is shown as given right to take peace away from earth – 6:3-4.
 3. 3rd seal – a black horse... famine follows – in OT warfare it was customary to burn the grain crops to starve off the people whose land you were displacing, but you would preserve the vine and trees because you intended to occupy the land [as in Joshua 2:ff]. This is an occupation/displacement description – 6:5-6.
 4. 4th seal – ashen horse... this indicates death & the grave – there is killing by sword, famine, pestilence, & wild beasts [Ez 14:21]. Essentially describes that earth is in chaos – 6:7-8.
 5. 5th seal – dead martyrs at base of heavenly altar – these are the souls of those slain because of the Word of God – these martyrs are precious to God and their position at the base of the Altar recalls the blood sacrifice of the OT covenant poured out at the earthly altar in the Temple in Jerusalem. These martyrs are calling out to God for justice for the Kingdom of God to triumph, and God blesses them with white robes – 6:9-11.
 6. 6th seal – the wrath of God and the Lamb ravages the earth. God’s wrath is not turned upon His saints, but rather faithless Israel and the unrepentant – 6:12-17.
 7. Interlude – this is really interesting... it is as if all of heaven is holding their breath in anticipation as the 4 angels step in to preserve the remnant [144,000] of Israel and the multitude of faithful Gentiles from the tribulation that will now come in earnest. Many theologians believe this to be the mid-point of the tribulation and the promise for comfort in paradise – 7:1-17.
 8. 7th seal – the 7 trumpets are together the 7th seal – 7 angels are turned loose:
 - a. Prayers of the saints [incense] with Holy Fire from the heavenly altar are mixed and thrown to earth to prepare for the 7 angels trumpets – 8:1-6.
 - b. 1st trumpet – hail & fire mixed with blood – trees & grass affected – 8:7.
 - c. 2nd trumpet – mountain of fire – sea became blood – 8:8-9.
 - d. 3rd trumpet – great star – rivers & fresh water made bitter and undrinkable [wormwood] – 8:10-11.
 - e. 4th trumpet – cosmos affected – 8:12.
 - f. Interlude – 4-3 pattern being played out – earth, sea, fresh water, heavenly bodies are affected by the 1st 4 trumpets – but now the woes are about to come, meaning that things are going from bad to worse – 8:13.

- g. 5th trumpet – bottomless pit opened and those not sealed for God are tormented but not killed. God is upping the ante presumably to break and separate the mildly wicked who may yet receive grace from the desperately wicked and evil who are completely lost and beyond hope – 1st woe is passed – 9:1-12.
- h. 6th trumpet – 4 horns of the Great Altar call for the 4 angles to be released to kill 1/3 of mankind – and yet they do not repent of their sin, indicating they were totally evil and unredeemable and deserved to die – 9:13-20.
- i. Interlude – angel & book – John told to eat it has its basis in Ps 119:101-104; the 2 witnesses make a miraculous appeal to humanity and some repent and give glory to God – 2nd woe is passed – 10:1-11:14.
- j. 7th trumpet – Jesus finally reclaims the kingdom of earth amid the vision of praise breaking out in heaven; and with creation responding with lightening, thunder, earthquake, and hailstorm – 11:15-19.
- k. **IMPORTANT NOTE:** The End of Days [eschatology] is not just about judgment and punishment of humanity, but rather it is all about God Himself concluding the saga of redemptive history. This is demonstrated in the prominence of predictive prophecy throughout OT and NT which is essential to the thought of Isaiah chapters 40—48 [see especially 41:22; 44:7; 45:11; 46:10]; and especially about Messiah in both His 1st and 2nd comings and most especially the ultimate conclusion or last things.
- l. Consummation of Creation and History is demonstrated in “Radical dispositions” – there is a growing and exponential polarizing of both good and evil; with dire consequences for evil and amazingly wonderful consequences for the righteous. These prophecies portray:
 - i. The ultimate destruction of wickedness – evil has usurped the kingdom of earth and had held it hostage, this is the message of the Fall played out throughout redemptive history. However, the Kingdom of God remains undaunted... God is not threatened by Satan’s rebellious plans. God’s patience with sinful humanity flows out of His mercy and grace, which balance His justice and the personal accountability of individuals. Satan rebelled first, and made creation the battlefield where humanity is held hostage, but ultimately humanity must chose who they will serve – God, or the power behind the Fallen broken world order... the Spiritual conflict of Satan against God’s sovereignty.
 - ii. Fulness of righteousness – Jesus is the ultimate antidote to evil being God’s Righteousness who entered history to bring redemptive history to its zenith. As the Church age winds down, Jesus remains the focus and locus of God’s redemptive work to rescue humanity and correct the Fallen condition of creation.
 - iii. Triumph of Messiah in the advancement of the Kingdom of God – is totally secure. God is tollerating the imperfect situation, but His Plan is sure and will come to fruition at the fulness of time.

9. **Great sign in heaven – woman & son – 12:1-16:21**
 - a. The woman is symbolic of Israel with the sun and moon under her feet indicating that creation was subservient in God’s created order. The crown of 12 stars is reference to the 12 tribes of Israel. The child being born indicates that the Messiah who will redeem and restore the world order will be Jewish. 12:1-2.
 - b. The opposition to God’s Messianic plan is Satan who attempts to destroy Messiah, but his attempt is frustrated - 12:3-4.
 - c. The Messiah is safely born and His identity clarified - 12:5-6.
 - d. Time moves differently in eternity and this story catches the reader up on what all Jews and Christians would already know from the Fall and OT. Satan’s expulsion from Heaven validates his ultimate defeat, but incites his rage as he knows his time is running short - 12:7-9.
10. **Heaven resounds with the affirmation that God and Messiah will triumph and the Kingdom of God will prevail - 12:10-12.**
 - a. Defeated but still dangerous Satan focuses his wrath on Israel, the Son of Man [Messiah], and the people of God - 12:13-17.
 - b. The beasts are reintroduced from the Book of Daniel - they are human kings who are puppets of Satan and oppress Israel demanding their loyalty - 13:1-10.
 - c. These puppet-kings work through deception and coercion - 13:11-18.
 - d. Their efforts are unable to impede the salvation that is coming to the saints - 14:1-5.
 - e. The puppet-kings continue their deception and war against God’s saints by bringing more and more people into the conflict. God’s wrath against them will surely lead to their destruction as emphasized by the 3 angelic announcements and 2 fold harvest of earth - 14:6-20.
 - f. The bowl judgments are poured out on the kingdom of the beast... while evil groans in anguish, heaven erupts in praise - 15:2-4 as the righteousness and finality of God’s judgments take hold - 15:5-8.
 - g. The 1st 5 bowls bring pain and death to the kingdom of the Beast who refuses to repent - 16:2-11.
 - h. The last 2 bowls depict wholesale destruction and death by war - 16:12-16; and by natural calamities indicating that creation itself has had enough of evil - 16:17-21.
- d. **Vision 3 - Jesus in Conquest - 17:1-20:15:**
 1. The confrontation comes to a head as Babylon [the bride of the Beast] is finally destroyed - 17:1-18:24.
 2. At this climatic point the Messiah returns, Armageddon is launched and God settles the matter personally with Satan and his forces; and then the final judgments commence as the false bride, counterfeit religion, and false kings are destroyed - 19:1-21.
 3. Heaven breaks out with rejoicing - 19:1-5.

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4. The Son of Man and the True bride are gloriously introduced and described - 19:6-16.
5. The conquering Messiah now turns to judgment and rule and dispatches the wicked to the 2nd death - 19:17-20:15. This includes the kings of the earth [Ezekiel's Gog and Magog].
6. Satan is cast into temporary confinement while the 1st resurrection of the saints takes place and Messiah proves His divine worth by making a paradise out of fallen earth with Satan in helpless captivity while the 1,000 years Millennium, while the martyrs reign with Jesus in the millennium. This millennial is an era of great peace and prosperity... but it is still within the context of a sin-cursed earth. It is not until the end of the millennium and that creation is remade incorruptible and eternity begins as God intended - 20:1-6.
7. Final rebellion, judgment: Rev 20:7-15
8. 20:7 – Satan & his army are destroyed by God – they are consumed in fire from heaven. Saints didn't have to fight, they just stood with God, much like what transpired with Joshua & Jericho.
9. Purpose – to prove the point of the Lord's reign over real sin; and to prove the incorrigibility of non-elect... Satan and those who have refused Messiah's rule.
10. Why a final rebellion? – When raptured all saints from all time will join the Lord in the air in their new bodies. The millennium will consist of redeemed souls in resurrected bodies remaining on a sin-cursed world. During the millennium, children will be produced – some of which will refuse Messiah though they have been born and raised under His millennial reign. The final rebellion is to weed out those final individuals who don't belong to the Lord... then the end will come.
11. Background of Rev 19; Ezek 38–39 “Gog and Magog” – see also Gen 10:2. 1 Chron 1:5 indicates that Magog, Tubal, and Meshach were grandsons of Noah and sons of Japheth. Noah's sons are 1)Shem – father of near-east peoples, 2)Ham – father of African peoples, and 3)Japheth – father of the northern lands above Israel. Although the precise meaning has been lost to antiquity, there may be something going on with the theme of selection/rejection and the resultant blessing/cursing that follows from the examples of Isaac and Ishmael, as well as Jacob and Esau. The Semites [Semitic peoples] are the Jews as descendants of Shem, who have inherited the gift of the Abrahamic Covenant.
12. Interesting quote from Charles Krauthammer –“I recently told an assembly at my son's high school,” I wrote in 1997, “That they were living through a time so blessed they would tell their grandchildren about it. They looked at me uncomprehendingly ... because it is hard for anyone to apprehend the sheer felicity of one's own time until it is gone.” ... from RealClearPolitics, Dec 18, 2009 editorial “An Anniversary of Sorts”. The idea is, while it may seem unthinkable that any would harbor open rebellion in that day, some will be unappreciative of the unique bliss of that age, demonstrating the incorrigibility of sin.
13. This passage and its ramifications seem to make the case much more difficult for the positions of the A-millennialists and Post-millennialists who both advocate improvement of the world order preceding Messiah's 2nd coming. Things are not

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improving, instead they are deteriorating and this is what the Pre-millennialists position argues for.

e. **Vision 4 – The New Heaven & New Earth – 21:1-22:5**

- i. With all the conflicts ended, and judgments rendered, and with evil completely destroyed forever, Messiah brings about a New Creation - 21:1-8.
- ii. The capping of the New Creation is the revelation of the Bride - the Church as the New Jerusalem - 21:9- 22:6
- iii. Water of life and tree of life are now completely available to the saints... the prohibition of the Garden has been rescinded. We are now not only able to partake, we are invited and encouraged to partake. This is a quantum leap from the limits placed on humanity in the Garden, and portends to a vastly more wonderful future. The argument can be made that this was always God's idea... just as the Law was a poor custodian for Grace of Jesus, so the Garden was a poor reflection of the wonder of the New Creation.
- iv. Eden was very good. It was the best place on old earth. However, the new creation is far superior, and is incorruptable and impenetrable to sin. In Eden heaven came close to and intersected earth... in Paradise heaven and earth merge.
- v. In the New order, the innerman will survive and the outerman will be remade – 2 Cor 4:16. The new creation cannot sin... saints in heaven cannot fall.
- vi. This is way better than the millenium where the sin-curse yet remained on earth. Though the saints who enter the millennium with Jesus cannot fall, there will be offspring that are raised in this wonderful peaceful Messianic millenium, but they may yet sin. Some will not choose Christ, this is the point of the final battle... these who reject Jesus during the Millennium will fall subject to Satan and both will be cleansed at the end.

f. **Epilogue – 22:6-21** - As the fitting conclusion to an amazing series of visions, John leaves his readers with three final thoughts:

- i. Confirmation of the trustworthiness of the prophecies - 6-7, 16, 18-19.
 1. It is of course understood that John's character reflects Jesus' character. As John trusts Jesus, we may also trust John and Jesus, and the Spirit who revealed these truths to John.
 2. To keep the words of the prophecy is both to believe them and act appropriately upon them.
 3. This confirmation is not a statement any Christian leader would make lightly, especially John. The words recorded in the Synoptics attributed to Jesus resonate - "Whoever causes one of these little ones who believe to stumble, it would be better for him if, with a heavy millstone hung around his neck, he had been cast into the sea." (Mark 9:42; cr. Matt 18:6; Luke 17:2)
- ii. Confirmation of the immanent coming of Jesus - 7, 12, 20.
 1. The church age begun at Pentecost began almost 2,000 years ago, and still Jesus has not yet returned. Many non-believers and even some believers alike may scoff that this is proof that the prophecy is false or questionable.
 2. However, the reality is that all people enter into eternity either at their physical death in the normal course of history, or at the end of the age when the prophecy plays out at the end of redemptive history.
- iii. Warning against idolatry and invitation to enter the City of God - 11-12, 15, 17-19.

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1. **Idolatry is placing anything in the rightful place God should occupy in our life. Even if it is a good thing, God is the best of things and we need to hold on to Him above all else.**
 2. **Additionally, idolatry is holding thoughts about God that are unworthy of Him. Scripture has revealed who God is and what His nature is, we are accountable for holding to ideals that fall short of His glory.**
 3. **Finally, all are invited into the Holy City to reside in eternity with God. It is a free gift, one that we could never buy. But in spite of it being offered free it was heavily invested into by the Trinity... God was fully committed and fully involved in humanities salvation. And although it is offered to us free, it is true that it costs us everything... we become servants of God and willing participants in His plan of redemption.**
- iv. **The text ends with a short prayer of hope sandwiched between the amen inclusio - Amen. Come, Lord Jesus. The grace of the Lord Jesus be with God's people. Amen. (Rev 22:20b-21)**