

NEW CREATION MINISTRIES— T O'BRIEN 2001

REVELATION

Across the generations, humans have used the book of Revelation for many purposes.

Some of these purposes have been an attempt to catalogue and therefore seemingly control the events of history. These quests have had questions about the end of history, the second coming of our Lord, and what the fate of our universe might be. I can remember an author called Hal Lindsay who wrote a book called *Late Great Planet Earth*. Like many so called prophets who imagine that their generation is to be the most significant and important, Lindsay prophesied about tumultuous events involving the cold war opponents at that time, i.e. the Soviet Union and the U.S.

The collapse of the Soviet Union in the early 90s was not part of what was prophesied and much of Lindsay's scenario unravelled.

John Strelan in his commentary on Revelation says "**revelation** involves both an uncovering of some thing which was hidden from human minds and experience, and the actual working out of that which is uncovered." So what is it that is uncovered? Rev 1:1 answers the question..."The revelation of Jesus Christ..." Who He is and what He is doing is the subject of Revelation. This is my guiding reference point in bringing these comments during our weeks together. While Revelation is about people and rulers, history and chaos, they are secondary to the one who is primary, i.e. Jesus Christ our Lord. However, all that Jesus is doing is in connection with the nations of the world, the creation and the future of it all. So we will have much to learn and what we learn will lead us to more and more fervent worship in praise and thanksgiving, much like those who will appear giving praise and thanksgiving in the document we are studying.

Recently a few news commentators and others have drawn attention to what they call the "dumbing down of the people". In other words the truth may be something other than what the "spin doctors" may wish us to understand, because if we truly understood then we may well object. This introduces the issue of "reality". What is reality? Your reality? My reality? The Governor General's reality? The journalist's reality? A lawyer's reality? Korean or Australian or Japanese or American reality? There were lots of views about reality in Asia Minor toward the end of the first century, just like there are today. [quote Strelan p 12-1] But what is God's reality? What is the world as God understands it? Revelation is about "The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave himto show his servants"V1. Revelation is a document that urges us to see "life" through God's eyes, to put on His glasses and see reality from the point of view of His Son being the centre of everything. This Revelation is subsequently made clear in a series of four revelations, received by the prophet John. What a confronting of reality in Asia Minor 2,000 years ago...what a confronting of human reality in the twenty first century if we were to trust the document's urging! II Cor 5:16 had already encouraged the Church to swap its "human point of view" for God's point of view.

Well, what is this reality of Jesus Christ that is so important? The Revelation gives its own answer in Rev 21:5-8. God is working at creating all things new through the ministry of His risen Son Jesus Christ. All that is destructive, unloving, preventing the mutual giving and receiving of all that is essential to the harmony and communion of everything, is being eliminated. Note the words of judgement. Those beings who are “thirsting” for a new world where love, care, support, unity, familyness, peace and celebration reign through Jesus Christ and his sacrificial ministry are being gifted with the newness which this Alpha and Omega is providing i.e being made new being, part of the newness that God is putting in place, in history, in people and cultures right now...no matter what human attempts at control may be trying to ‘bring in’. This is God’s beautiful work going on among us. This is a significant part of His reality...no matter how much other realities may seem to be defying it.

Well may we ask the question in our day as John must have in his day. “Amidst all that is happening in our world and our experience, where is God in all of it?” THIS IS OUR ISSUE FOR WHICH WE WILL NOW STUDY “REVELATION” FOR A RESPONSE. Note that as a student who is also learning about the book of Revelation, I am not into trying to predict future events. I do not personally feel the need as a “member of Christ” to unlock hidden codes in order to have some sense of “control” over my future or the future of the human race and the planet. I am happy to submit to the control of God through Christ. Whatever the book will say about the future and how it will unfold, because it is all in the hands of Christ, we need not fear!

REVELATION— CHAPTER ONE.

V1-3: THE PROLOGUE

V1. the revelation see earlier paragraph 2. This revelation is not something which is simply information. It is performative, operating, in action.
Rom 1:18

Of Jesus Christ eg Mark 2:7. WHO is this? Jesus uses the term Son of Man Risen, Ascended Lord of the Church

Which God gave him God is in it all, God is three persons [see also v4]. Jesus Christ is Son of God. In the communion of the three persons God gave Jesus Christ a Revelation [Jn 14:31,6:38]

To show his servants in a five stage transmission God gave it/to Son/to Angel/to John/ to servants i.e God’s people. See also 19:10; 22:9

What must soon take place means quickly, shortly, immanently at the designated time. It carries a rich sense of actually, already happening [now]. God is making all things new and especially since the death and resurrection of the Lord, we have been living in God’s SOON. But there is also a sense of waiting see 22:7; 6:10 troubled and oppressed, yet also vindication and liberation is also happening as we receive and live in this revelation.

Sending his angel a messenger/ agent speaking and acting on behalf of God and Jesus Christ. We will encounter much to do with angels in Revelation. They are very important. To his servant John mainly see v4 But this man John served this revelation and his Lord

V2 Both John and the Angel serve as agents/messengers to “the testimony” of Jesus Christ. Note this is testimony about the centrality of Jesus Christ in contrast to say the testimony to the Emperor or to Artemis or to any other deity who may be being testified about.

Remember it is not simply information. The Word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ are God and the Lamb in action, saving and judging all things. SO.

V3 This verse is very apt. Listening carefully, hearing and **keeping** brings one to great blessing.

Luke 11:27 Because of the contents of Revelation “beatitudes are not platitudes”. [Strelan]. They are urgent warning calls to “hear” something that is absolutely crucial...God is in action to impart His blessing... are we in it? Heb 3:7-15 See also Rev 14:13 16:15 19:9 20:6 22:7 22:14 It is all about being part of all that God and the Lamb are doing....this is what is being revealed to us in this book.

Mouce p43 says “the vast majority of people could not read and therefore learned aurally.”

Keeping is “take to heart” = moral instruction and not simply prediction.

VERSES 4-8 GREETINGS AND DOXOLOGY:

V4 John is the viewer, the hearer, God's instrument. Strelan stresses how important it is that we understand that John is a prophet of the Lord, not the Lord....a servant like other servants of God. The simple use of the name = a close relationship, an intimate leader. Well known.

The seven churches that are in Asia see map of Asia minor....see chapters 2 & 3. There were at least 10 congregations so seven is meant to symbolise or represent the total Christian community [and by extension include our congregations today?] Mouce wonders if the seven were chosen because of some specific links to Emperor worship.

To you – this is not just a wish but an actual imparting of grace..a benediction.

Grace – the undeserved favour of God in all its enormity and in all its beyond-human understanding because it is not contractual or transactional but sheer gift “in Jesus Christ”..to the human race but particularly to the Church.

Peace – the harmony and wholeness and fulfilment of life in and through being “in Christ”. Spiritual wellbeing, fulfilment, cup running over.

From him who is and who was and who is to come- Knox translates “from him who is, and ever was, and is still to come” Mouce explains “all time is embraced within God's eternal presence”p46. Similar titles were claimed for both Greek and Roman gods..so maybe this is part of a direct challenge to the word “eternal” on the back of Roman coins in regard to the Emperor. If v4,5 are of a Trinitarian formula and I think they are, then these words designate the eternal Father in the Trinity , active, creative, eternal. See also Exodus 3:14 for the being of God.

From the seven spirits etc The Holy Spirit in the fullness and completeness of His power and person. See also Isa 11:2 with the LXX addition of “godliness” to the six. Mouce with thoughtful erudition has an alternative

understanding that it is “best understood as part of a heavenly entourage that has a special ministry in connection with the Lamb”.p48

V5 and from Jesus Christ the faithful witness – to the life of God; to the ways of God in defeating evil i.e. his obedience in his life and his death on the cross. John 18:37. In a time of persecution Jesus is the model [and also our rock/protection]

The firstborn of the dead see Col 1:18 I Cor 15:20 Ps 89:27 the first fruits of resurrection. Therefore during persecution and opposition he gives his people hope and courage as they look to him and see HE IS THE END TO WHICH WE ARE DESTINED. He sends the present from the future and the future into the present with his compliments. I Jn 3:2. Faithful witnessing may bring death but ALSO RESURRECTION.

Ruler of the kings of earth see Ps 2:2. The very authorities who oppose Christ and try to persuade Christians to worship the one whom the kings worship. Rev 16:14 19:19

V5b,6 To whom is this blessing addressed? To Christ who is all the person we have just seen in ruling and judgement AND who fulfilled all the wonderful ministry of changing humans in his death and resurrection. [I John 2:1,2]. He truly deserves the response of worship and celebration for the Trinitarian blessing that flows to us.

Who loves us note the tense having loved us [Rom 8.37 Gal 2.20] he goes on loving us.

And freed us from our sins NRSV Note highlights *washed*. Once for all in the past. The favourite name for Christ in Revelation is “the Lamb who was slain”. He accomplished what the Passover lamb foreshadowed. Remember John the Baptist crying “Behold the lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world”. Matt 26.28. “he has freed us from the penalty, pollution, and power of sin” John 8:31-36; Matt 1:21 Rom 3.24f; 6.12-14; I Cor 6:11; Eph 1:7; Col 1.13.” Bingham page 24. What he has done to believers is stunning, but there’s more.

Made us a kingdom of priests [not slaves to sin or any other enemy of humanity]. Krodel – the church is already now “a priestly community and an alternative to Ceasar’s idolatrous empire.” See Exodus 19.5,6 where God spoke to faithful Israel rescued by “Passover” and the passing through the waters of the Red Sea.

Priests who offer spiritual sacrifices in communion & celebration with the Father And the Son in the Spirit, every moment, in every circumstance, of every day. This is “serving his God and Father”.

To him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen. Reminds us of our Lord’s teaching in what we call the Lord’s Prayer.

V7: ONE LIKE A SON OF MAN

In Matt 26:64 Jesus caps his three years of ministry where he had consistently referred to himself as the Son of Man. The High Priest then exploded and fell out of his tree. We need to understand what is going on about this great term Son of Man.

Look = exclamation to draw significant attention. Used 27 times in Revelation.

He is coming with the clouds Matt 24.30 Dan 7.13 Zech 12:10 Clouds are often associated with divine activity. It symbolised God's power and majesty see Exodus 16.10; Numbers 11.25 and Psalm 104.3. SO HIS COMING IS DIVINE ACTIVITY. It is the triumph of the slain lamb who has achieved the ultimate, as we have already discussed above. Rev 4.11 & 5.9,10.

Every eye shall see him – means all will be open and obvious. I.e. not “hidden”, incognito as of his first coming.

Even those who pierced him - Strelan notes “Those who will see him are defined more closely as those who pierced him. It is noticeable that John does not speak here of Christians. That is because tells of a *resurrection* of Christians and a *judgement* of unbelievers [see the commentary on 20:4-6]. And on his account all the tribes of the earth will wail – because of what he has done FOR THEM and because of what he has made of them, all of which they have rejected. They wail, beat their breasts in sorrow because they have rejected their salvation “in Him”. The mourning is because their rejection is their judgement.

So it is to be. Amen = endorsement of something that has been said. Amen is “may it happen”.

V8

God himself gives a comforting response to the Amen.

He now reveals himself to the worshipping people....and to the persecuted people.

“I am the Alpha and the Omega” says the Lord God etc – at that time magical formulas were used to speak of gods with power to bless or curse. John's God of the Prologue is in v4 [the eternal one] and Exodus 3:15. He is the only one with the power to bless or curse...SUPREMACY. See John 19:10,11. This is the true God we need in a time of crisis.

The Almighty - the Emperors called themselves “Autocrator” [ie ruler with absolute power]. But see Eph 1.3. The God of this prologue is Pantocrator and Autocrator..he controls all things in heaven and on earth....Lord of the universe and the history of life within it. Astrologists ancient and modern are but dust pointing to powers that are not powers. Christians look to a person Jesus Christ their Lord, the eternal one.

VERSE 9 TO CHAPTER 3 V22. THE FIRST REVELATION

Strelan page 13 writes “The *first revelation* was given to John on the island of Patmos.”

Later he writes “The *second revelation* is reported at some length in 4:1 – 16:21. The Spirit took John from Patmos to ‘heaven’, where the prophet was given a view of God in action,”.

Later still he writes “The *thirds revelation* is recorded in 17:1 – 21:8. The Spirit transported John to the desert, a place of safety”.

Finally Strelan writes “The *fourth revelation*, reported in 21:9 – 22:9, is of another city, the new Jerusalem, the city of God and his people. The Spirit takes John to see this city from the top of the very mountain upon which the city descends from heaven.”

John is commissioned to write in a book [v11]. To prepare him for his task he is granted a vision of the Lord and judge of all. [see Peter's titles in Acts 10.36,42]

V9 John – we are not certain who he is, we just know his name. He is certainly a brother, companion and fellow sufferer [16.6 17.7 etc] to those who wrote. He is one of them and he expected them to listen to his recordings.

In Jesus – The Christian life is to share in the life of Jesus. This is one of the most important foundations for our faith and Jesus is the second person in the communion of the Godhead of Father, Son and Holy Spirit which means we share in that communion with them, through Him, in the Spirit.

The persecution and the kingdom - Jesus' life was one of faithful witness to the "communion Kingdom", and he ministered in patient endurance [never panicked or fell out of his tree] when confronted by temptation, rejection and persecution. To be a Christian is to take up our cross to join Him in His ministry to share "the communion kingdom". It is still being contested and brings suffering. This is our lot in Jesus, along with deep worship and celebration and communion. "Those who do not know this suffering through oppression, who do not struggle together with God's people for the sake of the gospel, and who do not feel in their own bodies the meaning of oppression and the freedom and joy of fighting against it, shall have grave difficulty in understanding this letter from Patmos." Allan Boesak in *Comfort and Protest*, page 5.

Patient endurance – the capacity, grace, gift which flows from communion "in Jesus"..it is the living constraint. The unruffled expectancy that God is working out his programme.

Patmos – a place to banish political undesirables. It is not deserted or barren but inhabited. However it was isolating, ie it separated John from the congregations and their people.

Because of the word of God – this could mean two things: [a] imprisoned forcibly because of the political consequences of the gospel or [b] because John had gone there to preach the good news, ie he was there voluntarily as a missionary.

And the testimony of Jesus – see back to verse 2. The testimony of Jesus also means that what Jesus proclaimed as the word and action of God John also proclaimed.

V10 in the spirit – see 4.2 17.3 21.10 Some commentators think it alludes to an out of body experience, an ecstatic one. Whatever, John was in the lieu, sphere, climate, inspiration of the Spirit. He needed to be in order to understand the prophecy. I personally think it part of the state we are all in when we are taking up the "communion fellowship" we have "in Christ" with the Father. See Rom 8:9-11 & I Cor 2:14,15.

On the Lord's day – a significant 'profession of faith' to celebrate the day of our Lord's resurrection triumph, [especially if John had been banished to Patmos].

A loud voice like a trumpet - it could not be ignored. It had penetrating authority. See v12,13.

Behind me- the reality that was the invisible "backdrop" of John's life is now "coming through".

V11 write in a book- John is commissioned. A task given not sought.

Send it to the seven churches – the communion “in Jesus” is lived by real flesh and blood people in real cities with political, social, religious realities and where there is ignorance and suspicion about this “good news” and Jesus the Christ.

V12 John turned and saw: * seven golden lampstands. See v20

V13 I saw one like the Son of Man- see discussion back on v7.

V13 Among the lampstands someone like “**the Son of Man**”. See earlier notes on v7. What a breathless vision of the Lord Jesus and His Church – of the Good News, of the Kingdom of Communion and the communion of the Kingdom. This is the critical element for all that follows. It puts everything into true perspective. Again, this is the true backdrop to John’s life, to the life of the first century churches, in fact for all the ages including ours. **Son of Man.** Refer again to Dan 7.

Like David represented Israel against Goliath.

Like High Priest represented Israel on the day of Atonement...*in solidarity with all people* quote James Torrance p 48 the One for the many...who stands in for us all [vicariously – what happens to him has happened to us]. Here is the Son of God acting on behalf of all humanity and as their representative.

Robe = High Priest Exodus 28:4

Golden sash = suggests kingly function as Judge [what he says goes]

V14 head and hair = like Dan 7:9 translucent, shining white, glowing

Eyes like blazing fire – flashing, energy & power, intense.

V15 “his feet were like burnished bronze – glowing as in a furnace, polished, still burning...vibrant with righteous action, truth and holiness of communion.

His voice – the constant roar of many ocean waves on a beach. Strelan “a Niagra of sound.”

V16 in his right hand – the hand of control, action and power.

Seven stars – see v20. He is the supporter and protector of His Kingdom/communion. He is for his congregations and people. II Pet 3.9.

Out of his mouth came a sharp two edged sword – the instrument of judgement see Heb 4:12 II Thess 2:8. Christ is judge of the Church, spiritual powers, the world. His is the opinion that matters. The instrument of judgement is that by which people live or die, the Word of God. Matt 4.4 [sharp, discerning, penetrating].

His face – the glory of the risen Christ, the Son of Man, outshines the midday sun [remember the Damascus road and Saul of Tarsus].” From this light the lamps and stars which are the Church get their light”. Strelan p43. “It is the creative light which first pierced the primeval gloom and brought life to the world; it is the redemptive light which cleaved the darkness of sin and brought eternal life to the world.” Strelan p43. Matt 5:15,16; Eph 5:8-14.

In his light all other so called great illuminaries pale into insignificance [including the glory of Ceasar].

V17 When I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead etc –John thought he was going to die. See Dan 10:4ff. Exodus 33:20; Isa 6:5; Matt 28:4 guards fell down at his feet. Remember also Peter in Luke 5.1-8. The divine majesty and glory overcomes us – a sense of our unworthiness and awe.

placed right hand - the same hand of power as in v16

do not be afraid - Matt 28:10 Luke 5:10 Acts 27.24 From the mouth with the sword, now comes great reassurance and affirmation to stop being afraid. What a word to us! John belongs to the cluster of stars being protected. So in order to calm John's fears the right hand of protection, who is completing the task to make all things new, reassures John.

I am the first and the last - = self description = sheer good news for his people, so "fear not". See ch 1:8 the divine guarantee. THE ETERNAL WHO IS. [not WHAT] See Isa 41.4 44.6 48.12. See also Col 1:16-18 First =because all things are "from him". Last, =because all things are "to Him".

V18 the living one – see John 11:25 1.14 14.6 This one was a true human being [Son of Man]. **I was dead** - He went through the experience of death like all humans. But he broke the human pattern by coming alive again.

And see, I am alive forever and ever – "death had no dominion over him Rom 6.9.

and I have the keys of Death and of Hades - Christ not only broke out of the prison of death but he took the keys with him. I Cor 15:20-23. This One has the power to unlock the power of death. No wonder Jesus spoke to Pilate the way he did in John 19.10f. See also Rev 20.4 I Cor 15.26, 56,57. Therefore do not be afraid...

v19 Now write – set down in writing, record. [like Mr Stone]

What you have seen – from the point of view of God and of "the One like a Son of Man".

What is now – the focus is on the present... ie the human situation and who the Son of Man is.

And what is to take place after this – the truth not only of the present but also the future, whatever that might be and whatever that future might hold of the action of humanity and the action of the gospel. Strelan p43 "in writing down what you see, you are recording reality; you are reporting what really is and what really will be". "In this way, Christians...will have an alternative view of reality p45. ". This way we have a future determined by this Son of Man. Consider this quote from Woody Allen as a modern person's reality or backdrop to their living and their future. "More than any other time in history, humankind faces a crossroads. One path leads to despair and utter hopelessness. The other to total extinction. Let us pray that we have the wisdom to choose correctly."

V20 the seven stars – the Son of Man interprets two symbols.. Because they are mysteries John needed help to understand the pictures. First the stars; are they heavenly angelic representatives of significant groups of people? This kind of thinking goes back to Jacob's vision in Genesis

28:12. In Revelation the title 'angel' seems always to refer to a heavenly being thus not to human beings.

But another view is that the angels are the human leaders of the congregations about to be personally addressed. It is not easy to define an answer but since in the next two chapters the angels are asked to obey actions that belong to human beings, this could also be a reasonable understanding of the 'mystery'..

The seven lampstands – the text says they are the seven churches and seven churches are about to be addressed. The number seven could be significant though, in that it embraces the perfect number and so the interpretation is that “seven” means the whole of the Church [the complete Church] from Pentecost to Christ's second coming, is implied.

What is important though is that the “him” of v17 is not their enemy but their “saviour, Lord, everything they need him to be ‘in love’ to them.

Well the stage is now dressed with its living backdrop so we can proceed to the events of the next two chapters.

CHAPTER 2

This is still the first Revelation. But the “One like a Son of Man” now addresses the seven Churches individually. What does the personal reality behind all history and life, the Risen Lord of v18, say?

[Remember he is the King of the Kingdom of Communion.]

- a. He urges them through the true perspective he has on everything, to take a long hard look at themselves.
- b. He will draw on the culture, politics, geography and economy in which they live – ie the “this life” context of Asian urban Christianity; Strelan p49 notes “The western part of Asia Minor was one of the most significant in the development of Christianity”. “Asia was one of the more important provinces in the Roman Empire.” “Ambitious Roman civil servants regarded an appointment to the province of Asia as a step up the social and political ladder. The same could not be said for, say, an appointment to the province of Judea.”
- c. “The seven churches are addressed in a way which makes them, collectively, representative of the life and faith of every church in every age. However they are not imaginary churches in invented situations”. Strelan p48.

There is a similar structure in the comments to each of the seven congregations.

- a. There is a command to address the congregation – followed by a connection to the vision of Christ in 1:9-16
- b. The congregation is praised, rebuked or exhorted.
- c. The hearers are summoned to take the Son of Man's words to heart.
- d. Promises are made to ‘those who conquer’ ie those who conform their life to the king of communion and the Lamb.

V1-7 To the angel of the Church at Ephesus –

V1 write: these are the words of him etc – John is to write what he “hears”, the words - to the prophet leader. All members are to take notice, as indeed should all Christians.

Who holds the seven stars – this is the hold of authority.

Who walks among – Christ moves among them – alive, active. He is no North Terrace farmer or disinterested spectator.

Ephesus an important city. Tourist highlights. A significant Mall A Royal Road

Temple of Artemis –

- a. one of the ancient wonders of the world
- b. Unique bond between city and the goddess
- c. She is saviour and helper through life's transitions

* Imperial cult - This cult was very vigorous.

* Strong Jewish presence.

V2 I know your works etc – they live in an hostile environment to the gospel with these other cults and the Jewish occultism so active.

You cannot tolerate evildoers –

You have tested those who claim to be apostles but are not- it has all meant toil and patient endurance. It is very wearing. Were these false ones travelling evangelists, judaizing agents from Jerusalem, disciples of Paul or associates of the Nicolaitans? We can't be sure. As strong troublemakers they had been resisted.

V3 They have stood up for Christ and his work...despite what may have been economic, or religious discrimination. It must have been hard to cop. Did this hardness or maybe "intolerance" yield a wrong sort of fruit that was not consistent with the communion of the Kingdom. We must not only resist our enemies but "love our enemies". Did this lead to the big BUT.

V4 but I have this against you, that you abandoned the love you had at first –

Has the "battle" for orthodoxy been conducted without love or in an unloving way that now "undoes" the work Christ is doing. "Enthusiasm for the truth is nothing if one lacks love". Strelan p57 No matter how hard the battle, the Church is not to become "hard" i.e. unloving; there is no need to if the Son of Man is in charge. See Luke

23.34. II Cor 5:16. Rom 12:19-21. All of their life needs to be consistent with the Kingdom of communion i.e. the kingdom of God.

V5 The Lord's admonition is very direct. **REMEMBER..REPENT..DO.**

Remember how the Lord operated...remember His sacrifice in the H.C...Remember their baptism when the love of Christ washed over them and they were not only at peace with Him and themselves but they could love everybody as they understood themselves to be "in Christ" II cor 5.14. Phil 4.13. But forget this and we again start to sort things "of ourselves", and Satan [with violence, deceit and lies] can sow some good ideas, and we begin to operate in ways that are not loving.

Repent – Do: put Christ first. ie see yourself "in him" and know that everything is going to be o.k. then restart operating like he did, i.e. always in the context of his Father's communing love so that he was loving.

If not,- these must be the most feared words any believer could hear. I will blow out your candle.. the "light" will go out...and it can happen...we can so persist in

unloving, unkingdom operating, that we put ourselves outside of Christ. Rev 20.15

Bingham “No love, no light –no Church.” When we live to share Christ in ministry then to be deprived of ministry is to be deprived of our true life. How agonising.

V6 Some things are clearly false and destructive i.e. evil. They hate **the works of the Nicolaitans** which is **to your credit**. Who the Nicolaitans are is not clear because the hints about them are vague. They are probably some of the evil doers of v2. Ideas about them include “lawlessness” in regard to God’s law, ie shedding responsible loving ways into a kind of free-for-all. They could have encouraged cultural accommodation and compromise in difficult cultural or economic circumstances. It is a bit like the permissive society that compromises so many Christians today. Another possibility is a form of triumphalism that was arrogant, ungracious and judgemental.

V7 **Let anyone who has an ear listen to the Spirit.**- The Spirit of course is the Spirit of Christ, and the Spirit of God, the GO-BETWEEN who lives in the mutual love of the Father and the Son. As such He is ever the Spirit of love. This Spirit is calling them back to their love of Christ and their neighbour in the Kingdom of communion. He is calling them to John 15:9,10,11.

Everyone who conquers – is not that we gird up our loins of ourselves and change ourselves to be more loving, but to awake again to that love which has us “in Christ”, and out of our communion with the Father and the Son in the Spirit, to do what they are doing, with the power that they share to do it, ie, the power to love. This can be very hard to do especially when you fear or suffer injustice by or strongly dislike someone. Out of our strength we want to get them back. To conquer this is a powerful thing to do “in Christ”. We need to remember that God and Christ are working to make all things new, and Ephesus is being called to be part of the restoration programme, as are we all. Not only will this repentance and conquering bring love and celebration into their human relationships, but it will be a flowing from the tree of life. Rev21: 25- 22.5.

In the cult of Artemis the tree was an important symbol. Strelan notes “It was thought to be a place of safety and salvation for the suppliant. This Artemis tree was surrounded by an enclosed garden [Paradise] within which a criminal could find asylum.” P60. But this is a parody of that one true tree that provides asylum, safety and salvation, Christ’s Cross, that remotivates the sinner to go and sin no more/ John 8:11. Those who eat the fruit of Christ’s tree remember and turn to him ceaselessly.

TO SMYRNA

Chapter 2 verse 8. Smyrna had a history like modern day Seoul. About 700 years before John wrote, the city had been devastated, then after a period of about four hundred years it had been rebuilt. By the time “**the first and the last**” wrote to them, its port facilities, the richness of its surrounding territory, its location as a terminal of an ancient trade route all contributed to it being a very prosperous city. It was also called “Glory of Asia” because of the careful planning that was involved in its development. A tourist could go camera happy visiting its magnificent temples.

Apollo, Aesclepius, Cybele, Aphrodite, and Zeus all having a cultic following in the city with their accompanying times of worship and devotion.

Politically, from the time of the early development of the Roman empire Smyrna had been a loyal supporter of Rome. Now that Rome had become the dominating power in that part of the world Smyrna had been rewarded with “free city” status. This also meant though that Smyrna was expected to embrace the “imperial cult”, which therefore flourished, along with the many other cults.

A large Jewish population also shared in the life of Smyrna and it brought intense opposition to bear against the Christians of the city.

Therefore the gospel of Jesus Christ is being contested on many strong opposing fronts, making it very unpopular to be a Christian and to survive socially, practically and religiously. To be a faithful Christian like Polycarp in Smyrna, meant one had to have a strong trust in the one who is the “first and the last”, “**who was dead and came to life:**”

V8 Here is the backdrop of the living Jesus Christ to comfort and assure the Christians of Smyrna [see v10 ‘fear not’].

‘the first and the last’ a title used of god himself..Isa 44:6; 48:12

“who was dead etc’ brings an emphasis upon the resurrection of our Lord. He sprang to life out of death which could not hold him. So put the two titles together to see that he who holds the churches in his right hand, and who moves among them is Lord of every enemy who wants to ‘put down’ God’s children.

V9 affliction; a daily grind in the midst of stress, strain, misrepresentation and deliberate misunderstanding. It is hard not to become paranoid when you are being constantly harassed. People will do and say anything to “get their way” and victims can just feel awful.

Slander; lies, innuendo, put downs...so hard to cop when it is done by those who “**say they are Jews but are not, etc.**” While some of the Jews may have rejected the claims of Messiahship for Jesus Christ, they were not free of the obligation to deal with all people with justice and kindness.

A synagogue of Satan really means they have become a “congregation from hell” who promote a satan style operation meaning they would probably be rivals to the traditional Jews also.

Poverty- probably alludes to Pogrom type effects....property attacked, stolen etc. Or maybe most of the Christians came from the “poor class” in the city, which made them easy targets to victimise and keep economically suppressed. Ie they were on the bottom of the heap in this very affluent city.

V10 Do not fear what you are about to suffer; seems ridiculous until you remember who is saying the words. What else can you do than fear? CELEBRATE. While they may have been poor in one sense, they were rich in faith in Christ. See II Cor 6.10, 8:9, James 2:5.

The devil ; is controlling a state institution or strong community group.

Prison; is the nature of their “suffering” and their “testing”. The imprisonment was probably with a view to get them to “recant” their faith, deny their Lord, or compromise in order to rescue themselves from a terrible situation. **Ten days;** has the sense of a limited period of time but could also mean a complete period of time.

Be faithful unto death; the imprisonment may lead to death, but the precedent is set by Christ Rev 1:5 Rom 6:5,8. For some life will come through death, defeat will lead to victory, power from powerlessness.

It could also mean, no matter what you have to go through until you die, hold on to your trust “in Him”.

Crown of life; “not to the diadem, the kingly crown, but to the victor’s wreath”. Strelan p63 II Tim 4:8 I Pet 5:4 The laurel wreath of the “winner”. The apparent bottom of the heap losers are in God’s reality the winners.

V11 **whoever conquers;** is to remain faithful, not be paranoid, celebrate in the battle against the forces of darkness including spiritual and human institutions.

Not be harmed by the second death; “Jewish teachers used the term ‘second death’ to speak of eternal punishment, exclusion from life in the new creation”. Strelan p63. See also Rev 20:6,14 and 21:8.

TO PERGAMUM

V12 Pergamum is a bit like Canberra. Canberra has tourist attractions like Black Mountain Tower, the old and new Houses of Parliament, The War Memorial Museum, the National Gallery, the Foreign Embassies. The Roman Empire declared the Province of Asia about 133BC, and Pergamum became the capital of the province, The Roman proconsul’s residence was probably situated there.

Like tourists flock to Lourdes, the Temple of Aesclepius whose cult proclaimed him the god of healing, attracted a cult following. To touch a tame snake in the temple of Aesclepius was to obtain an instant healing. The logo was a snake entwined around a tree.

Central high points in a city, like a mountain, are great for gaining attention and the cult of Zeus [a Greek god symbolised by a snake also] built a temple to “Zeus Saviour” on such a site to impose its influence on the population.

The ever present imperial cult was administrated from Pergamum. There was a temple consecrated in 29BC dedicated to the emperor Augustus and was the major power base for the cult in the rest of the provinces. With the emperors so paranoid about their influence and power, there is no doubt that this cult was used to promote political manipulation of the people. In this mixture of state and religion a citizens loyalty and convictions were tested.

The word ‘parchment’ is derived from Pergamum and at the time of John’s vision this new kind of writing paper was replacing papyrus as the new medium to write on. Not surprising really when you realise that Pergamum’s library was second only in size to the one at Alexandria.

Modern day tourists can still see ruins of a huge outdoor theatre, temples for Athena, Dionysius and Trajan, palaces built for priest kings, and the altar of Zeus is on display in the Pergamum Museum in East Berlin.

V12 **who has the sharp two edged sword;** = opposition to the power base of Rome whose reality said they, ie the Roman Proconsul, had the power of life and death contained in the symbol of a two edged sword see Rom 13.4. See Also 1.16

Isa 11.4. Now see further 2.16. His Word, is the decisive Word of judgement and deliverance [ie two edged].Eph 6.17 THIS SWORD IS THE ONE TO RESPECT IN CONTRAST TO ALL OTHER SWORDS.

V13 **Living... where Satan's throne is...;** just what the throne is, is not easy to decide. Remember all the temples! Was the throne like altar of Zeus the focus of the opposition to the exclusive claims of Christ? Maybe it is the whole array of idolatrous cults that are a conglomerate of Satan's deceit. He doesn't care how he deviates humans away from the truth of their real glory. Pergamum is a hotbed of attractive seduction, compromise and persecution for Christians.

You are holding fast...Antipas my faithful one, who was killed; Loyalty to Christ had been "until death" for one and probably more. Faith is not easy when you are surrounded on every side with the forces of compromise. Was Antipas an example made for others to see what happens when you remain steadfast to Christ?

Where Satan lives; to have the same postcode as satan is to guarantee a contesting of faith.

SO V14 gives a few hints

some....hold to the teaching of Balaam; Some in the Church at Pergamum were not being loyal to the "Word of God" alone. Being in the city with all these satanic influences some, [and not an insignificant number] were "dabbling". Probably a bit like our modern Mardis Gras. It was infecting the congregation. The enticement started with the use some women but led on to other things religious. See Numbers 25.1-3 31.16

Fornication; sometimes used as another word for idolatry see Isa 57.3 Jer 7.9. but probably refers to sexual immorality in general.

Food sacrificed to idols.; ie involved in religious sacrifices and later sold from the roadside stalls. This involved a long debate in the early Church.

V15 **Nicolaitans;** As congregations formed in the first century and attracted people from other cultures to join in the worship of Christ, so many issues emerged as to what was permissible or not permissible. The first Council in Acts 15 provided the regulations. Paul had encouraged the Church to assess from their communion in Christ and social responsibility to others, just how to live their lives.

The Nicolaitans are probably a liberal group who advocated that Christians not wear their heart on their sleeve but adopt a low profile in their communities. Cultural accommodation and religious compromise was the way to go. This stance became popular and widespread...**so you also.**

V16 As with all compromise you soon are drawn, enticed further and further away from your original position. Remember the list of cults and possibilities in this city.

Repent then; Abrupt. Blunt. Stop and return or turn, to life through Christ alone.

Soon; He is coming now. He is always moving towards that which is evil to destroy it. Judgement like salvation is occurring now! John 3.36 It is of both the future and the present. Remember Albert Camus.

With the sword of my mouth; Remember that the Word is one of salvation and judgement and being a sword it brings a separation. To persist in flirting with the idolatries may mean you put yourself on the wrong side of the cut ie into judgement.

V17 an ear to listen;

To everyone who conquers...a twofold promise hidden manna & a white stone. The hidden manna is the communion of life in Christ himself. Already faithful Christians who choose not to eat the food of the cultic feasts, or forego a job rather than celebrate with a cultic guild, or who will go hungry rather than risk performing an idolatrous act to obtain a trading site in the market place, are being fed by Christ when they celebrate the Lord's supper.

White stones were used for all kinds of things: Jurors used white or black stones, they were used for admission to banquets, white stones forming a bracelet were used like St Christopher medals. Probably the second use is the most culturally relevant.

Written a new name; known only to us. See I John 3.1ff. So our name is "sons and daughters" of God. Those who have called out in spirit "Father, my Father" know who they truly are. So it all adds up to a personalised entrance to the heavenly banquet.

TO THYATIRA

Due to the intersecting of some major Roman roads, Thyatira was a trade city and also a city of commerce and production. Trade guilds and unions abounded. Since Apollo Tyrimnaeus, son of Zeus was patron of the guilds, their old school tie next work posed problems if you were a Christian trader or manufacturer. You would be treated with suspicion even contempt because you did not belong to the right club who attended the regular religious banquets and ceremonies in the local temple and did not pay your dues to the worship of the emperor. Gross immorality sometimes concluded these 'feasts' and business culture could mean worship of the deities took place at the beginning and the end of business transactions. This often meant Christian people had hard decisions to make.

V18 the words of the Son of God; the only time this title is used in Revelation. This is a direct contesting of that other son of Zeus, Apollo, who was greatly revered in Thyatira.

Eyes..flame of fire; like the flame of a welder's torch that "cuts through" steel. Remember 1.14 and see also Heb4.13. We will see this again in Rev 19.11-16. As a laser beam penetrates the surface reality to expose what is really going on in Thyatira i.e. the deep things of satan [v24].

Feet..burnished bronze; flashing in the eyes of every citizen is the refined metal of the city's furnaces who were dedicated to Apollo. Here is Christ opposing all these religious claims. The citizens would say "what kind of Son of God is this?"

I know; = his piercing, penetrating eyes understand all that is going on in the community including their love etc. They are commended for faith, love, service and patient endurance...sometimes their sheer g. & d.

V20 **But etc;** To tolerate is to refuse to reject a Jezebel..ie one who encourages sorcery, magic and idolatry while posing as a faithful prophet. We have met this behaviour in other cities. To solve the problem of the religious tension of 'Christ versus Culture' this Jezebel was teaching some not to take the idolatry too seriously.

She could **beguile**.

V21 **I gave her time;** amazing grace.

V22 **I am throwing her on a bed;** a bed of plague and those who flirt with her will catch it too.

V23 Those who have committed themselves to her ways are her children. They will not prosper or survive in any way. Remember Annanias & his wife. Remember the penetrating laser vision of v18. Everyone will know that Jesus is not an absent landlord but the One who walks among the candle sticks taking action. Jn 21.17 Acts 1.24.

V24,25 Words of encouragement to the faithful. **Hold fast...;** =cling with a firm grip.

V26 **to everyone who conquers;** = overcomes the temptation to look to other than Christ...this is real power..ie moral power.

I will give authority; = how often must the Christians in these situations have felt so powerless in the ferment of power maintained by the business guilds. Their witness and lifestyle is very powerful "in Christ" who's power backs up their power.

V27 **An iron rod;** = that is how they appear to those who run with Jezebel ie the Chrstians cannot be Broken, it is they who become shattered. John 20.19-23.

V28 **I will give the morning star;** = we need to understand that Roman emperors believed they were descendants of the goddess Venus. Venus was a common symbol for authority and power. But see 22:16 As King of Kings and Lord of all authority, his children are the descendants of the Morning Star. Yet how unspectacular, inglorious and lacking flamboyance Christians appear to the world. What a shock to Jezebel and all who believe in the glitzy & kitsch.

V29. Looking behind all the ordinariness and simplicity will bring great discoveries for those who have an ear for what the Spirit is saying. [let our Churches beware of imitating the world].

TO SARDIS CH3.1-6

King Croesus was an ancient byword for wealth, and Sardis was once the capital that contained his palace. It was built on a hill that was edged with steep cliffs that were thought to make it impregnable to enemy attack because the cliffs were impossible to climb. 'to capture Sardis' was a colloquial way to express doing the impossible. But history records two occasions when the city in its smugness, was suddenly captured. In 546BC the Persians climbed the unclimbable cliffs and routed the city. Three hundred years later the same thing happened when the army of Antiochus the Great repeated the feat of climbing the cliffs, and

the city was caught napping. So much for overconfidence. It can lead to disaster. The Church in Sardis had learned from the city.

On a tour of the city the main attractions would have been a magnificent gymnasium [arena], the town hall and the many shops. The local Jewish synagogue was imposing. There were inspiring temples to Artemis, Zeus and of course to the Roman emperor.

Under Roman control and influence Sardis became the by-word for luxury clothing.

It really was the place to be seen.

V1 the words of him who has the seven spirits of God; = see 1.4,16,20 ie the Spirit of God in all His fullness. He is the Spirit who makes dry bones live. The Lord and giver of life. It is One such who can breath new life into the dead.

And the seven stars; = he controls the fate of the leaders of the seven churches.

I know your works; [very firmly]. While the words may seem harsh, he has not given up on them.

You have a name for being alive;..ie like their home town. Well off, comfortable.

But you are dead; it's the difference between clock watching or really getting on with it. They are missing out on so much while they are not in active faithful participation of Christ's communion and mission. Ie not playing their part. They are dozy like their city had been dozy. They were wrecking their faith by neglect and resting on their laurels.

V2 wake up; = you had better start taking notice and participating ie show yourself watchful. This wakeup call is a sign that all is not lost. You are dead is not the last word.

Strengthen what remains; it sounds a bit like a tree being asked to prune away some diseased parts of itself so it can flourish anew from that which is strong from previous growth. Their lifestyle had so adopted to their community's attitudes about faith and pluralism, that they had become tame spiritually and morally.

I have not found your works perfect; Remember Eph 2.10. God had things for them to do but in their slackness, his report is that the results are deficient, poor and incomplete.

V3 Remember etc; After the review comes the direction from head office to remedy the situation. He is not firing them... yet. Renew your close communion with the Lord, recall all that He is doing for you and what He has made of you, and start living it out even if it means letting go of the comforts of the community.

I will come like a thief; Remember Cyrus. Remember Antiochus the Great. While you may not depend upon a thief turning up [but who hasn't been broken into] you can bank on Christ turning up. "The only question is when." Strelan p79.

V4 yet you still have a few persons etc; the soiling of the clothes brought death to some in the Church and to the life of the Church. But there are some who have retained their freshness and vigor, who I will use to spearhead the wakeup call, the new day, the new liveliness, the new communion and faithfulness to the leading of the Spirit who is the Lord and giver of life.

V5 if you conquer; is to wake up, is to stop being dozy, is to re-enter communion with the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Three promises: **clothed like them in white robes**

Not blot out your name.**I will confess your name before my Father**

1. The soiled garments will be removed for white robes. You will again be receiving the benefits of all that Christ did for you and with you. Cf Rev 7.14.
2. Your name will be preserved. You will be justified in life [worth having as a being]. Your existence will be etched as it were in steel. Korean experience of entry card. They know you are there. So in heaven our existence is marked in indelible ink in the book of life.
3. I will stick up for you. [Remember “I never knew you”] If he sticks up for us then to wake up means we stick up for him. What he is doing for us is marvellous, we own it in celebration, even if the guilds and unions and government say it is not politically correct.

V6 The activity of him who has the seven spirits of God has reported and laid it on the line. Whoever is alert enough to listen, listen.

V7 TO PHILADELPHIA Chapter 3.7-13

Adelaide is sometimes called the Athens of the south. Around 500c.e. Philadelphia was called little Athens. This was because of its many temples and religious festivals. It was also a famous vine growing centre. The soils were rich because of centuries of volcanic activity in the area. The city was flattened in 17ce by a severe earthquake that also flattened 12 other Asian cities.. It devastated this city.

The site of the city was on high ground on the banks of the Cogamis River at the eastern end of a broad valley that led down to the Aegean Sea. It was on the imperial post route from Rome and to all points east that created another title for it, ‘gateway to the east’. So with an economy based upon agriculture, trade and industry, the city enjoyed prosperity.

The name commemorates the loyalty, affection and devotion of two greek rulers Eumenes and Attalus. The Romans tried to conspire with Attalus to betray his brother but were not successful. It became Neo-Ceasarea after the great earthquake as a gesture to acknowledge Rome’s help in rebuilding the city. Obviously the imperial cult was strongly promoted. But the most popular cultus was to Dionysius and his worship was inculcated in an imposing temple. But there were also many other pagan temples as well.

The city also had a strong Jewish population that seems to have earned the title synagogue of Satan from the Risen Christ addressing the Christians. If these Jews had ejected the Christian Jews, then it would contribute significant background to the message to this group of Christians.

V7 to the angel...in Philadelphia; * the prologue does not contribute anything to the description of Christ in the address of this letter. It comes from other sources.

See Isa 5.19 40.25 for “holy One” as a traditional reference reserved for Yahweh.

Rev 6.10 combines holy with true one after a reference to Sovereign Lord. It means real, genuine & trustworthy; a very significant choice of title if the Jews were claiming that Jesus is a false Messiah. If the

emphasis is more on faithful than it could reinforce that he is reliable to see his Messianic programme through to completion.

The key of David; See Isa 22.20-25 esp v22. He is like Eliakim..he decides who is admitted to the "royal house". [and who is to be excluded] Keys are important in Rev and look who holds what Rev 1.18 3.7 20.1 Had the local Jews 'closed the door, banished, excommunicated' Christian Jews?

V8 **I know your works..;** with no social clout, small in number, probably poor, their faith in Christ and his word shines in a hostile environment. They do not deny him.

I have set before you an open door; as 'Gateway to the east" are these words a call to missionary opportunity? The context seems to count against this. More likely the door is that into the eternal kingdom, which Christ himself is for all who believe in Him. Eph 2.18 Acts 4.12 If the door to the synagogue has been closed to them, that really doesn't matter.

You have little power etc; they are a small congregation who have made little impact but with a big faith in a great Saviour.

V9 This is about a huge role reversal see Luke 16:19-31. **Who say they are Jews and are not;** These Jews will one day have to face up to their error of opposing Christ and the Christians. Rom 2.28,29 based on Deut 30.6. Also they will be exposed for their false claims of being God's only people. Slander and persecution are not the actions of true people of God and so their claims are false.

"the grim irony of providence" [Moffatt] reverses the Jewish expectation. They will be forced to play the role of the gentiles. This is not to demand a cringing response from conquered foes, simply the outworking of Phil 2.10.

v10 These Christians have been through much with a consistent faith and without "giving it away" or "giving it up". **Patient endurance;** tenacity. So as the universal testing of all humanity goes on ie **the hour of trial;I will keep you;**

This echoes the sixth petition of the Lord's prayer. This may have been about a 'local' test but not just about that. There is a universal testing to clarify between those who trust "the Lamb" or those who worship the beast. John 17.15 It is preservation "in" trial such as they have already endured. Dan 12.2 Mk 13.19 II Thes 2.1-12. This is spiritual protection guaranteed by Christ.

V11 **I am coming soon;** Remember comments on soon from Rev 1.1. To the Christians at Philadelphia Christ's imminent coming is intended as an encouragement and an affirmation. They just need to hang in there, not worrying what many others may be doing. Remember Rev 1.5 and think about the **crowns**.

V12 Remember the frequent earthquakes of the region. How many times was the city or parts of the city, rebuilt? How often were building materials recycled?

I will make you a pillar; you will be safe, significant, secure in the temple of God because of all that Christ has made of you. **You will never go out of it ;**You will not be discarded, you will be stable and permanent, you will never have to flee again.

There are many ways to establish identity. Tags, special identity badges worn with tags around the neck or on the chest. It says whose you are... and who you are.

- So, I will write on you;**
- a. you belong to God
 - b. you belong to the city whose origin is heaven
 - c. you will be identified as He has remade you.

V13 The message to this Church is a message to all churches especially if they are battling faithfully.

TO LAODICEA - CHAPTER 3:14-22.

Tourists to Denizli today go for the therapeutic hot springs in that region. Adjacent is the ruins of the ancient Laodicea. Medicine played a major role in the life of the city in the times of Christ. There was a medical school with a proud record, a complex pharmacy industry, ophthalmology was a specialty, and the community could afford it all.

It was one of the wealthiest cities in Phrygia, located in the fertile Lycus Valley at the major intersection of two major trade routes running north-south, east-west. It was known as "the gateway to Phrygia". Because these roads determined its location it created a problem with access to water. It had to be piped in. No problem, until the city was attacked and then it became vulnerable. It is thought that this problem caused them to become good negotiators.

Its central business district was alive with trade which helped to create a centre for banking. The agricultural hinterland contributed to its wealth also through black sheep breeding which produced much sought after soft, black, glossy wool to make designer tunics called *trimita*. Another indicator of its wealth is deduced from Tacitus who records that after an earthquake in the region in 60CE a financial offer of help with rebuilding the city from Emperor Nero, was declined, with thanks though because it was an imperial centre.

It should also be noted that the city included a large Jewish population and it was named by a conqueror, Antiochus, after his sister in the third century before Christ.

So this profile meshes interestingly with the criticism of Christ of this city's congregation. Neither hot nor cold [pools], you say I am rich, you are 'naked', buy from me gold, all touch on the life, culture and activity of this city.

This congregation is a ship of faith called 'Titanic' which thought itself the greatest and unsinkable. A foolish leader, a smug clientele, an undue trust in their own brilliance and creativity. The Risen Christ [Rev 1.14b] focuses upon their self confidence & luke-warmness, to call them to his 'true' resources that can bring blessing and joy.

V14 **Angel of the church in Laodicea;** see Col 4.17 Was leadership an ongoing issue?

The words of the Amen; See Isa 65.16,17 II Cor 1.20 God does what He says he will do...he can be relied upon. **The faithful and true witness;** adds to the trustworthiness and dependability of Christ & God.

Origin of God's creation; see Col 1.15ff As the eternal Son he originated everything Jn1.1...ie he is not the first thing created. Being the creator he knows the realities of everything, including life and them.

V15 The local mineral water surfacing in Hierapolis six miles away, became a tepid and unpleasant brew as it cascaded over a broad escarpment near Laodicea Isa 201-**4icea**, a spectacular natural phenomenon. Containing so much calcium carbonate/alum...the unsuspecting drinker only wanted to spit it out.

So I know your works; worship, fruitfulness, had been replaced by trust in the things of this world which made them barren as a congregation.

V16 **Lukewarm; neither cold nor hot; I am about to spit you out;** they were not refreshing for the weary [cold water from Colossae] or healing [hot medicinal water from Hierapolis] to the spiritually sick.

V17 One of the strong emphasise in modern culture is that we have 'outgrown' religion. We do not need God. It is a pretentious claim. **I have prospered, and I need nothing;** not only the culture and business world of Laodicea was smug, but also the Christians. They believed that they had obtained it "all by themselves". Luke 12.19. **Wretched, pitiable, poor, blind and naked;** banks, medical school and textile industry may all bring an influence on their smugness. **You do not realise;**

Remember the frog slowly coming to the boil? See Rom 7.24 I Cor 15.19
Remember Titanic.

V18 **Buy from me;** from me is emphatic..the only true supplier of **Gold;** refined through the **fire** of suffering in Christ that makes us All rich with heavenly wealth of true glory in communion with Trinity ie righteousness [cloth/ark/].

White robes; in contrast to the black tunics so valued, Christ offers the robes of forgiveness.
Rev 1.4 3.4,5 7.9

Spiritually **naked;** In a time when good clothes were a sign of honour [how often we assess by outward appearances] see Isa 20.1-4 Christ exposes that they are "not a pretty sight".

And salve to anoint your eyes; remember the medical school and the eye specialists? Despite all the cleverness the problem is spiritual blindness. How ironic!
Eph 1.17,18 I John 2.10,11 The healing ointment of the Holy Spirit is needed in Laodicea.

V19 **I reprove and discipline..love;** Prov 3.11,12 Heb 12.5,6 God does not tolerate destructiveness at any time in any place. He must move against it to rebuke and pull into line. I Cor 11.20 Heb 12.7,8 "He cares enough to say no".

V20 **Listen, I am standing etc;** these self deluded people in the Laodicean congregation had actually 'excommunicated' Christ. They had put him out.

What unbelievable deity that he would condescend to "come", "ask", and re-enter into deep communion [**eat**] with those who had effectively booted Him out. Will his loyalty be responded to with a new loyalty from the Church. See also Matt 26.29 Rev 19.9

V21 Snooty, smug Laodicea who thought they were something because of all they had, have been exposed as mislead and pitiable in reality. Will they overcome their culture..**conquer**. They actually are intended, in Christ, for a place in the throne of Jesus Christ. How exalted can you get? Christ our Ark of salvation has placed us in the bosom of the Father. II Tim 2.12 Rev 22.1-3.

V22 **Let anyone who has an ear listen to what the spirit is saying to the Churches...**ie to the seven fold Church [complete]. Did Laodicea listen? Do we?

A curious tradition....Strelan p.91.

CHAPTER 4 THE THRONE AND THE ONE ON THE THRONE.

Chapters four and five remind us that amid the details of daily living, the complexity of living in this world, coping with trouble and strife, coping with pain and sorrow, coping with the unexpected, there is an omnipotent and omniscient God in control. Rev 12.12 “Woe to you etc”. Often people ask “What is going to happen to us?”. Mounce says “On the plane of history the Church appears unable to resist the might of hostile worldly powers, but the course of history is not determined by political power but by God **enthroned** and active.” P116.

As we look at the text beginning in verse one, an explanation is made in the words ‘I will show you what must take place after this.’ Strelan thinks these words mean ‘next in John’s experience’. Mounce thinks the words refer to specific events that will bring history to a close. I lean with Strelan.

The description of the throne and the throne room, has a distinct Jewish mode. It has similar precedents in their history and in their temple. So to the throne. WE NEED TO GET THE BIG PICTURE.

V1 in heaven a door stood open; like a veil back/curtain pulled back to reveal what has been covered.

The first voice; see 1.10

After this; after the first vision...next in the story.

V2 there in heaven stood a throne; this is the ultimate mission control centre for the universe...of all history and all affairs... the centre with the complete overview..

God is in full command, ...total sovereignty.

With One seated on the throne; the One on the throne is the focal point..everything else is arranged in relation to this. Isa 6.1 Ps 47.8

V3 and the one seated there looks like; the text does not speak in any way of human likeness but in terms of reflected light. See Ezek 1.4, 27, 28 esp final phrase.

JBP ‘A Halo like an emerald rainbow’. This is the point of the colours reflected through precious stones.

V4 Encircling the throne. The emperors had 12 minders [lectors..bodyguard/press agents] . Domitian doubled it.

24 has several possibilities! 12 tribes and 12 apostles symbolising the whole people of God. Or special class of Angel. Some links with Baylonian astral gods.

White gowns = holiness. Golden crowns = “royalty”.

V5 Tourists making quick visits want to take everything in so they see this, then that, then this. This what is happening to John. Lightning and thunder Ex 19;16-18 20.18-20 reflect the awesome power & presence of God in Nature forms.

Flaming torches; see 1.4 3.1

All these impressions are saying here is the living God who is, worship Him.

V6 **Sea of glass**; like crystal = transparent Ex 24.10 II Chron 4.6

Perhaps a symbol of the distance/gulf between sinful creatures and the holiness of God.

Four living creatures; a group inside the circle. Later we will see they lead the worship. Oriental thrones often had carved animals in the legs, armrests and back.

[I Kings 10,18,19 JB] But these creatures are alive. **Full of Eyes.**

V7 **Lion, ox, human, eagle**; Whereas the 24 elders represent the whole people of God, the four living creatures represent the whole created universe.

V8 **Day & night without ceasing they sing**; see how they lead the worship through v9 & 10!

V11 **You are worthy**; why? **You created all things**; His worth-ship is not in question. They cast their crowns because any power they have is a delegated power. The Roman Emperor cult used words like these [it was called common consent] to enable the worship of the emperor. What John sees in the throne room puts things straight. It is a highly political vision.

CHAPTER 5 THE SCROLL AND THE LAMB

V1 **Then I saw**; This is not chronology. This is simply recording things chronologically. John sees this then notices that, this, and that other.

This chapter will talk reveal three main points. There is the matter of a scroll. There is the matter of who is worthy. There is the matter of the worship of the worthy one. We have much to discover again of the big picture.

The scroll is the scroll of destiny..ie “what God in His sovereign will has determined as the destiny of the world” [Mounce p129] see Psalm 139.16.

The worthy one is called The Lion of The Tribe of Judah, a highly political, cultural and messianic title. “Then I saw” a lamb. It is this lamb that is worthy like God is worthy.

Then John experiences another time of worship, this time to the Lamb because of all that the Lamb has done. And the acclamation is stunning, ringing.

V1 **written all over**; it leaves nothing of history out, it's records are complete.

Seven seals; to seal something is the opposite of revealing something. This makes the sealing very significant. In Revelation when a door or a book is opened something happens. When something is sealed there is no action.

Seven symbolises absolute inviolability.

In the right hand; God holds the destiny of the world in his hand of authority.

V2 It takes a loud voice to fill the universe.

The call is to find among all those previously listed someone who is “worthy”.

V3 Note the universality of the proclamation. [Not an emperor in sight]

V4 Is the promise of God’s capacity in v1 to be thwarted?

Will John not see God’s decisive, completing action .

V5 Both titles contain O.T. messianic expectations. Gen 49.9,10 Isa 11.1

V6 John gets a surprise. Instead of a Lion John sees a lamb that has been sacrificed.

- a. Seven horns = irresistible might. [horns are symbols of power.
- b. Seven eyes = complete vision, perfect knowledge.
- c. Standing = ready to act, obey
- d. wounds

This all adds up to the central vision of the New Testament.

God sent out; ie “on mission”. It is the mission of the Holy Spirit.

V7. These words are like a commentary. And now “He went and took the scroll etc. And now every power in heaven is bowing.”

V8 **Harp;** Traditional instrument to accompany Psalms.

Bowls; Ps 141.2

V9 **worthy;** ie an accolade for action. Psalm 98.1 Every act of making things new requires a new song of praise and gratitude.

Mark 10.45 Son of Man is significant in that it differs from Jewish exclusivism.

V10 **kingdom;** = corporately they reign in some way.

Priest; = individually they serve.

V11 A Mexican wave of verbal adoration.

A countless multitude.

V12 Chanting! Je sus Wor thy.

V13 Is the climax. All begun and conducted by the four living creatures.

V14 The four living creatures complete the worship with Amen.

All of this has been a preparation of John [and of the Church] to share with the Church the solemn judgements about to be revealed.

CHAPTER 6.

Heavenly worship is more than just piety. The foregoing worship has set the scene for a drama of salvation and judgement. One by one seven seals are to be opened,

followed in sequence by seven trumpets and seven bowls. "The dramatic portrayal of God's righteous judgment is now underway." [Mounce p 139] Remember that sovereignty, power and control is in the throne room of heaven. It decides when to unleash terrible things.

V1 We need to note that it is **the Lamb** who opens the seals, the same one who has been sacrificed and is worthy. This "opening" brings action upon the earth. Note also that a command to each horseman **comes** from one of the four living creatures [v1, 3, 5, 7] who are part of the actual throne. Remember that the living creatures are a representation of all God's creation.

V2. Albrecht Durer created a picture called The Four Horseman of the Apocalypse. In it he groups the four horses together. Therefore, this **white horse**; is not the same as the rider and white horse of Rev 19.11. This white horse is a counterfeit sent to confuse people. There is another view that this is Christ and the gospel.

A bow; he makes war to destroy. Apollo, the greek god who inspired false prophecy traditionally linked with devastation of universal proportions, was associated with the bow.

A crown given to him; God crowns human leaders to use them for his purpose.

Remember Pilate. He was an instrument in God's purposes. This rider conquers by misleading people with false prophecy [eg Nostradamus.] Matt 24.4-8. Strelan says:

"it is God who 'gives' even Satan the power and opportunity to do his Satanic work, a work which, in the end, leads to his own destruction".

V3,4 **a bright red horse**; The colour of slaughter and bloodshed. **To take peace from the earth**; Rome was proud of the pax Romana. But it was maintained brutally against internal strife and invasion from without. Hence **a great sword**; a symbol of strife and civil war.

V5 **a black horse**; holding **a pair of scales**; war also means famine. Occupying forces exploited the food supply causing people, especially the poor to have their ability to survive greatly tested. So v6 there is a famine price, **a quart of wheat for a days pay**; would only feed a worker, not his family as well. So they would have to survive on **barley**. **But do not damage**; means there is a containing of the damage by God. In 92CE Domitian ordered half the vineyards in the provinces destroyed. The order was rescinded because it met great opposition.

V7,8 **a pale green horse**; the pallor of a corpse. **It's rider's name was Death, and Hades followed with him**; there is a linking with previous devastations creating an impression that evil is running riot. See Also Ezek 14.21. But there is limitation to "**a fourth of the earth**;"

Many times in its history Israel has experienced the apparently inexplicable absence of God, and cried why and how long? Ps 74.1 How do you hold human suffering and God together? V9 The opening of the fifth seal raises this question. **Under the altar**; is also the place of the running of the blood of atonement.

V10 The martyrs now ask that question on behalf of all God's people. Caird quote. It is an appeal to a higher court.

V11 **they were each given a white robe**; a symbol of purity, but also conquering. As Christ conquered and purified through his death, being in Him they come through in the same way. Therefore they can **rest**; everything will be o.k.

The number would be complete; the history of the Church is a suffering history.

Christians are dying in some parts of the world today. [Indonesia]. Recall also the perilous community position of many in the Churches we have already visited.

V12-17 WHAT WOULD HAPPEN IF THE EARTH SUDDENLY LEFT ITS ORBIT?

The sixth Seal: Ex 19.18 Isa 2.19 Haggai 2.6 COSMIC DISTURBANCES.

V13. No more week by the stars!!!

V14 The dissolution of the universe as we know it.

When these types of things happen people "head for the hills". This is a warning that there will come a day when the sun won't come up and isn't that a scary thought.

V15, It is those who are usually the most secure, who will become undone first. But all stratas of society will be effected. Political status and economic status will not matter. All will become fugitives from the true one see v10.

V16, 17. The enemies of righteousness do have much to fear. But the most scary is to be faced by the "presence" of "**the One seated on the throne etc**". The Trinity is serious about all things belonging to its Communion and it will not brook any other way of life..hence it judges people and angels of all "other ways".

My commentaries all affirm that these words represent the symbolic activities of God at the close of history. We must remember the clock is ticking. Mal 3.2

Chapter 7.

This is a continuation of the action that accompanied the breaking of the sixth seal.

"Who can stand" is echoing! Is anyone safe? Are we safe? What is our community's assessment of what is happening in our world? Is there not a prevailing sense of gloom that things are "going down", including Christians? WHAT IS GOD'S VIEW OF REALITY? The answer is in the narrative of the four wind angels.

This is also an interlude before the climax of opening the seventh seal.

V1-3 **after this**; =next or then. **Four angels etc**; [earth is a square & wind comes from the four corners Jer 49.36 Dan 7.2 ..the geography of the time].

Strelan suggests that these four angels be paired with the angels in 9.14. We will see when we get there. The important point though for Strelan is that John is

reporting the same action under different symbols, ie the seals and the trumpets are about the same divine issues of judgment and saving.

I saw another angel etc; having the seal of the living God; he is not GIVEN the seal he HAS it. See ii Cor 1.22 Eph 1.13 Eph 1.13 II Tim 2.19. The seal is about the 'essence' of the Trinity. So the angel IS THE SEAL. So, it is the Lord going about protecting his children in the time of his judgment.
We have marked the servants of our God.

V4-8 John did not see them but *heard* their number. It is 144,000. It is what the number stands for that matters. These are not *statistics*. It is the name of the servants. The list is not accurate as an entity we could call Israel. It symbolises the total of God's people in this world who are faithful to Christ. The Church. Those who are marked with the "seal" and protected.

V9-12 This is the celebration & praise of the Redeemed. It adds to the scene of the throneroom we saw earlier, of the throne, the four creatures and the twenty fours elders.
 The 144,000 is a much larger group than the Church on earth at any one time. This is the full reality of the people of God as God sees it, and Satan. [C.S. Lewis]. This worship as with all true worship transcends time and space.

V9 **I looked;** now I saw....something else so magnificent.
A great multitude; Multicultural, multilingual,
Standing; not running away...already they love the "Presence" of their God.
Robed in white; placed by Christ
Palm branches; celebrating the Exodus He engineered and manufactured for them.

V10 The **salvation** he provided. Ps 118 .25 It is not only salvation from our enemies but salvation into our communion and eternal life with the Father and the Son.

V11 The powers of heaven join the delight & glory of it all ...again.

V12 The song includes the seven ascriptions of chapters 4 & 5.
 The greek highlights the 'the' before each ascription. Roman Emperors can't deliver salvation nor can any other so called deity.

Amen; we want it to be like this forever... from now on! This vision sustained Desmond Tutu throughout the many years of oppression before the lifting of apartheid.

V13 A rhetorical question from one of the Elders who already knows the answer.

V14 John hits the ball back to the Elder.

Out of the great ordeal; the characters of these people have their formation in the great ordeal, ie they more than passed through it, they faithed their way through it. But also forming them is the washing of them performed in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, the Lamb. In Christ they have been made pure.

V15 Jesus is their temple and they are all in Him. He carries them into the presence of God. In Him their whole life is conducted as worship. He is their ark.

V16 In the shelter of God, in the shared communion of the Trinity, He will be their bread and the water of their life. Isa 49.10 is fulfilled "In Christ".

V17 Christ is both Lamb of sacrifice in the heart of God, and Shepherd of the sheep. As shepherd he is also sheepfold. Jn 10.10. The water is the water of life Rev 22.1. In the midst of this rapturous worship and participation in communion and responding in love, there will be no more pain or grief, sorrow or heartache.

CHAPTER 8.

We need a time of remembering important things from 'before'. This is the second revelation.

Ch 5.5 This verse and its following are among the most important in Revelation for our understanding of what is being related. THIS ONE IS WORTHY TO OPEN THE SEALS. The authority to execute divine judgement and salvation is with Him. THIS IS THE SAME DIVINE ACTIVITY THAT WILL BE PRESENTED TO US IN THE BLOWING OF THE TRUMPETS. Trumpets bring judgement.

"Repetition is the mother of learning". Strelan p144. We need it to grasp the truth, especially if we can't read.

Chapter 8 v 1-5. An interlude of worship preceding further action symbolised by seven trumpets.

It is the opening of the seventh seal.[v1] A COMPLETION with worship...a beginning with worship.

The intercession of the saints are added to the offerings on the golden altar.

The effects are explosive....resulting in the action of the trumpets.

V1 the seventh seal; the last seal

There was silence etc; still the throne room of heaven...the throne, the four living creatures, the twenty four elders, the myriad of angels, and the unnumbered white robed throng, the thunder and lightning...all in silence. Awesome! Pregnant! The liturgical silence is worship. What does it all mean?

a. It completes the seals narrative.

b. "God is listening to us, to our prayers, groans, helpless cries". [Krodel]

c. Luke 1.10 Part of the ritual of the daily worship at the temple in Jerusalem.

Silence speaks when words are beyond us. It is waiting on God to speak and act. Half an hour; ie not an "hour" which is a full time, but a short time but long enough to make a significant impression.

V2 the seven angels; maybe the heavenly counterparts of the worship leaders of the seven congregations. It could be a linking to the prayers of the Church participating in the judging and saving action of God as indicated by the following verses. were given; the terrible things to emerge actually come from the saving/judging action of God.

V3 **another angel**; not one of the seven but leads the worship. [Heb 8.1,2]

The first four trumpets affect the sources of human life. [Like God prepared for the release of His people]

V7 ecological disaster. Chernobyl

V8, 9 environmental plus commercial [ships]

V10,11 Greed poisons the water of the Murray.

V12 A terrible adjustment to the things which seem 'fixed'.

V13 Triple woe. Can things get worse? Yes.

“Even so, we are to remember that this is not literal but symbolic, not physically as it appears, but apocalyptic. The apocalyptic is that action in history which we do not initiate or control, and its visionary elements are not always understood rightly”. [Bingham p 87. The Revelation of St John the Divine].

CHAPTER 9

What we are about to have presented is horrible, fearsome. But like people can ignore the warnings about smoking or speeding because they enjoy them, so they think bad consequences will never catch up with them. This chapter can be summed up in the words of Shakespeare “The gods are just, and our pleasant vices make instruments to plague us”. This chapter is an expose on how terrible and ugly evil is. But God doesn't just want us to react in horror. He wants us to turn away and not be dazzled by evil. But alas, the warnings fall on deaf ears and blinded eyes.

V1a **star**; the angel of the abyss was GIVEN the key to the shaft. See Also Luke 8.31 This spiritual geography helps us understand spiritual realities.

V2 Contrasts with the Shekinah of God's presence. Obscures reality, blinds the mind.

V3 echoes here of the plagues of Egypt.

V4,5 they could torture but not kill. [Matt 10.28]

Five months; = limited time. Also the lifespan of a locust.

Sting; who can compute the pain of child abuse, drug abuse, modern technology and sexual promiscuity?

V6 Scorpion stings defy pain-killers.

V7- 11. ersatz authority. ie they only looked like crowns. They represent evil stripped of the attractive. Grottesque, repulsive, bizarre. Hollywood creations but alas with human faces. The worst wrongdoing is perpetrated by humans.

They have as king over them..Abaddon. Destroyer. Destruction. Deadly.

V12. Self explanatory.

V13 the sixth angel blew his trumpet;

A voice; see 8.3 The sixth trumpet is God's response to the prayers of His people.

V14 The boundary beyond which the feared, bloodthirsty hordes, lurked.

V15, 16, 17, 18, 19. **they inflict harm;** Nothing is random. The dimensions of evil are symbolised. It appearance is horrible.

V20-21 Worship is the issue here. **They did not repent;** is the sad commentary coming out of it all.

WE MUST NOT FALL INTO THE TRAP OF PORTRAYING THESE LITERALLY.

CHAPTER 10.

This is a continuation of what happened at the sounding of the sixth trumpet [9.13]. He had seen terrible things come from the actions of a “fallen star”. That was the first woe. Then with the sounding of the sixth trumpet more terrible things, repetitive of those relating to the sixth seal [6.12ff]

“Then I saw **another mighty angel**” v1. Is it Christ? Some think so. But what is primarily important is what He is about. So v7 is crucial. ***It means God’s plan and purpose IS to be completed with no more delay.***

- Strelan thinks John has placed a ‘precis’ of the whole book at this point.
- Others think 10.1 to 14.20 is an interlude.
- Others again see it as the introduction to the second half of the book.

V1 Compare this with 9.1 But note the differences.

There are lots of links here with the figure in chapter 1 and other parts of Revelation. See 4.3 rainbow and Ex 13.21ff for pillars of fire.

V2 A prophecy for ONE event.

It has to do with the whole world – see where the feet are planted. [see also 13.1 & 13.11 from where the two beasts arise.]

V3 A voice to penetrate the whole creation.

The seven thunders are revelations of God’s power and glory Ps 29.3,4] as they thunder out his intention and actions.

V4 Why? We are not meant to know. They are for John. OR instead of “recording” John is to ENACT [by eating see v9] the contents.

V5 To take an oath

V6 God is creator of all. But he doesn’t just create. He creates with a plan to fulfil and that plan will not be delayed anymore. Remember 6.10. See Rom 8.18-25.

V7 ‘Days’ Isa 46.10 = my counsel shall stand, and I will accomplish all my *purpose*.

The mystery of God is Eph 1.9-11, and Col 1.19-22.

WE ARE LIVING IN THESE DAYS OF THE SEVENTH TRUMPET.

V8 The voice...see v4

V9 Take it and eat it = Own it, make it your own. It will be sweet to digest ie catch the vision. It will be unpalatable to the hearers. II Cor 2.15,16.

V10 Sweet and sour”gospel”.

V11 Despite its bitterness John must continue to proclaim God’s plan for the nations. This is John’s mission given to him to sustain.

How hard it must have been amidst the opposition to the gospel as we saw in chapters two and three, for a leader like John not to become pessimistic, and his congregations also. We see how easy it can be today to be deflected by human pessimism, in the Church. The media frequently infer we are a “finished” entity. Our culture repels the truth of God by removing all reference to Jesus Christ when it can, and finds any mention of God’s plan ‘bitter’ [spits it out...unpalatable].

The believer should take great comfort from this chapter. He who created, did so with a goal [Rom 8.18ff]. He is not making things up as He goes along, they are unfolding to his definite, eternal plan. The eternal goal is unrelentingly being fulfilled no matter how evil, and humans, try to deter it.

CHAPTER 11

“A GOD’S EYE VIEW OF THE STATE OF THE CHURCH.” [Strelan page]

In John’s gospel the writer portrays Jesus as God’s temple for all believers, as we are members “in Him”. This chapter begins talking about God’s temple, and in linking it with Jesus it means this chapter has much for us. How adequate a temple is He?

We also will hear about two significant witnesses, the nature of whose ministry has been revealed as priest and king in the O.T. book of Zechariah. They will be killed then raised by God. At their ascension frightening things happen on the earth, that is called the second woe.

Then **the great “days”** of the seventh trumpet arrive with overflowing worship at the action of God. The chapter is concluded with an expectation of further great action.

V1 Zech 2.1-5 Measuring is a sign of divine gathering together to protect that which is measured. The Church is in safety and untouchable.

The holy place is the intimate place of God’s presence, not the fringe places of the temple court.

V2 The temple is ‘visionary’. ie the old temple in Jerusalem was in ruins. There is to be no thought to re-establish the old.

A trampling is to give it a rough time of brutal persecution.

42 months – all times are limited by the Father; they come to an end.

V3 Two witnesses: there are many ideas about these. Strelan thinks they are symbolic of the Church. See Zech 4.14 They have authority to prophesy.

V4 Lord of the earth = the faithful creator who will complete His plan.

V5 Fire = the Word of God. Jer 5.14 23.29 It can give life, but it can be a lethal word.

V6 Like Elijah [drought] and Moses [water to blood], signs of judgement are brought against a resisting humanity.

V7 There is to be a great clash – war with Satan's "beast". God's two servants will die so we need to take the long view.

The attack can come from any human institution. This is a preview of the work of the Beast. He is the opposite of the Lamb who was slain. The beast kills.

V8 Their laying in the street will be signs of what can happen when evil is contested. It can lead to martyrdom and to shame. They are left to lay as an example.

Sodom and Egypt = both places of idolatry and destructiveness and resistance to God.

V9 See Psalm 2.1f - the nations will take notice because they are involved in the clash. Humiliation is a warning of what faith can expect from the world.

V10 The idolatrous will party because their "irritants" have been fixed.

V11 The One who made everything ex-nihilo [out of nothing], remakes [resurrects] them. This brings a quick end to the world's party. They didn't expect this.

God had vindicated His servants – let all other servants take note.

V12 Their vindication includes being wrapped in the glory cloud.

V13 There is a shaking of 'the city' [Babylon] – and the rest of the people shook in [reluctant!] recognition of God's power.

V14 The second woe is the woe of the two prophetic witnesses.

V15 – There is that worship again to conclude something and to begin something. It is the final climactic launch. Messiah has defeated the nations – "end-time" universal peace is guaranteed.

V17 Not that God has ever not reigned, but now there is finality of reigning – the time of clashing has is over..God has 'come'.

V18 This is Psalm 2 fulfilled.

This is Dan 7 fulfilled. This is Luke 12.32 fulfilled.

V19 From this worship of the moral authority and victory of God we are prepared for a heightened confrontation with evil.

The principles reflected in this chapter should comfort John and the Church because they are continuously at work in history. We have been reassured of the ultimate power of holy love ie God. So history is in good hands. No matter how much destructiveness is publicised, the Lamb's victory is not far from finalisation.

Now in 12.1 to 14.20 the true situation of the Church, her opposition, and the fate of both Church and opposition, are 'unveiled' in another further episode.

CHAPTER 12.

CONFLICT BETWEEN GOD AND SATAN.

V1-9 A narrative about the woman, her child and the dragon. Remember this is apocalyptic language, ie visionary.

V1 “a great portent” = a sign or pointer. Recall how the miracles of Jesus were ‘signs’ about who he was and what he could do.

“a woman” = a beautiful figure of splendid dress, who is to be understood as Israel, since she brought forth Christ.

“

twelve stars” = 12 tribes! Strelan calls her Zion, mother of the faithful Isa 66:6-11. See also Gal 4.26 and 6.16. [Mother of the whole people of God, New Jerusalem].

v2 ‘She was pregnant’ see Jn 4.22. ‘Birthpangs’ = longing for her child [Messiah] to be born.

V3 ‘Portent’ = sign. ‘A great red dragon’ = impressive, huge, a blood-shedder. [v9].
‘ten horns’ = great power, complete strength. ‘Seven heads’ = either great fertility or full intelligence. ‘seven diadems’ = signs of royalty, power. Means the dragon has great resources for persistence and to be pervasive. Like Leviathan..the great white.

V4 Like the tail of a hungry crocodile he scraped a third of the stars from their places. But this is casual action because the real target is the Woman’s child. We must see the Messianic story of Gen 3.15 here. Herod was Satan’s agent see Matt 2.13.

V5 see Gal 4.4 then Psalm 2.6-9. There is Son of Man connections to the nations here. ‘taken to God and his throne’ = in ascension Heb 1.8 & Eph 1.19,20.

V6 ‘wilderness’ = a place of safety and refuge where God will nourish her. The wilderness contrasts with the ‘great city’, where there is much defiance of God.

1260 days: see 11.3 also. = a short time for the Church to both witness and to suffer, all the time being finally kept safe by God.

V7-9 The vision of a war in heaven.[Eph 6.12] Satan has to be confronted, contained and defeated. This fills in the gap between the birth and the enthronement of the Messiah. Strelan helps amplify what is happening here. ‘This war does not involve guns or nuclear weapons or amputations or killings. It is a legal war, fought in the law court of heaven.’ See v10. Satan is the lead prosecutor [Satan means accuser]. Devil means slanderer. In his perversity, he leads people into sin then accuses them of it.

Michael is the leader of the defense and both Strelan and Bingham give an ancient precedent for identifying him with Jesus Christ. See Dan 12.1ff.

'he was thrown down' = defeated in the contest along with his minions. The stronger than the strong man has 'saved the nations'. See Luke 10.18 & Heb 2.14 & Col 2.15, Rom 8.1 & Rev 12.1 & Rom 8.37. Not only is the accuser's case thrown out but he is thrown out in humiliation.

V10-12 A song to celebrate the victory in the court of heaven [the battleground], & to express the release and joy of those who benefit from His grace. Luke 10.18,20. **'a loudvoice'** is not identified.

'but woe to the earth and sea'; So an angry devil comes in great wrath and frustration to lash out and try to do as much damage as he can in the 'short time' left to his activity.

So the people of God alive on earth will witness amidst suffering. Because evil is its own worst enemy, the followers of Satan will also be destroyed by his blind rage.

V13-17 SOME FURTHER DETAILS OF SATAN'S ATTEMPTS TO HARM THE PEOPLE OF GOD.

We need to remember all the "visible forces" challenging the rule of God in the culture of John's day [and ours]. But the truth is in Eph 6.12. The visible is but the

shadow of the real thing. His people need to be aware of the real authority of God and the lamb..remember the throne in the 'control centre' of the universe.

SO, V13 He pursued the Woman. He was filled with rage because he wanted to 'rule' the nations ie control their fate.

BUT, v14 **given two great wings**; Ex 19.4 I Cor 10.3. The wilderness was a place of safety from the devilish Pharaoh. Deut 32.11,12.

V15 **poured water like a river**; a tide of abuse and threat designed to swamp faith in Christ. Ps 144.7 Isa 43.2.

V16 **but the earth came to the help etc**; see Moses song Ex 15.12. The earth is the Lord's and he uses it to protect his people.

V17 **to make war on the rest of her children**; the devil never learns. He makes war on the Woman's seed.

V18 **the dragon took his stand**; he formed a new battle line from which to launch an attack with reinforcements out of the sea.

This chapter is a wonderfully different way to picture what the gospel means, and what it has done for all God's children. It pictures God's wonderful provision and care for his people. It also pictures the slimy opposition and desperation of the devil.

His deception is dreadful if he can overwhelm any of God's children.

Now he is to introduce a clone of himself into the attack against God's children and then try to parody the work of the holy Trinity.

CHAPTER 13.

We must again realise that when we try to decipher things by working from history to vision, we may get it wrong. We must always allow vision to inform history. What is at stake from all that we have said is a battle for the nations. Michael Christ has secured them in all that He has accomplished through his life, death, resurrection and ascension 'in himself as temple etc.'" But maybe the Devil can convince the nations that no such 'salvation' has been obtained and can lure the children of God away from him to find 'life' somewhere else.. Anyway, he has set up his new battle line, called for reinforcements and he is going to give it his best shot. How good are the new reinforcements?

V1 and I saw a beast rising out of the sea; ten diadems = universal sovereignty= power and authority. 'Out of the sea' = chaos and evil. The abyss.

On its heads were blasphemous names; the place where emperors wrote their names.

V2 See Dan 7.1-8. Here we have one beast as a combination of Daniel's 'four'.

Strelan says that most commentators agree that the political and economic order of Rome is the beast John means. "John is saying that this beast epitomises all political power" p 214.

V3 In amazement the whole earth followed the beast; the Beast is setting up a counterfeit kingdom; not that there is any such thing.

V4. Many are sucked in, deluded.

V5-8 See Luke 4.6 In arrogance the beast believed it could deliver the goods. Note four times though that the beast only operates under the divine passive. The ones not fooled are those written in the lamb's book of life. John is reminding his listeners of the divine perspective on the 'battle'.

V9 Peaceful coexistence is not on.

V10a We must bear the stigma of being Christ's. v10b Power\ vengeance is not on. God is looking after everything.

V11 Then I saw another beast; two horns like a lamb and it spoke like a dragon.

Like a lamb means it is very deceptive. It is a wolf in lamb's clothing. Strelan says 'the second beast – represents human ideologies, religious movements [such as new age] evangelists and so-called prophets who prey on people's fears and hopes.' P221. We have already seen how complex was the religious culture of John's world.

V12 It is the mouthpiece of the first beast who is clone of the dragon.

V13,14 Watch out for miracles...they can blind even the elect.

Castaway. Remember the basketball. 'Make no graven image'.

V15 Apes the Holy Spirit and demands worship. The modern godless state enforces order and conformity by killing. Note Burma.

V16 This is a parody of the 'seal' that God puts on His people.[Rev 3.12] This is the totalitarian state at work.

V17 Remember the difficulties of life in the letters to the Churches. No longer can the average person just go to the footy.

V18 The best possibility is Nero in John's time. But the name is really not about a person but about the essential being of something. 666 in contrast to 777 the number for God means the nature of the beast is that which always falls short, never fulfils with completion, is always fraudulent and counterfeit.

This calls for wisdom; Really means don't get sucked in. Through all this deceitful action of the unholy trinity Peter's words are a fitting commentary I Pet 5.8. Wisdom means instead of rebelling against God we worship Him as Father, Son and Holy Spirit in all the work they have done for us and to us.

CHAPTER 14.

In this picture [then I looked v1] there are a number of symbols. The lamb with the 144,000, an angel proclaiming and urging faithfulness to God, a second angel announcing the fall of Babylon, a third angel announcing the torment of those who worship the beast, a call encouraging the saints to remain faithful, the Son of man reaping the earth and finally yet another angel with a sickle commanded by an Angel from the Altar to conduct a bloody vintage. We need to remember this is still the second vision "in heaven". I think Ephesians 6.12 is a helpful indicator in understanding what this vision is trying to say to the Church. This is another variation on a theme as I proposed last week. While highly symbolic it indicates God's view of reality. The pastor in God is comparing the beautiful haven His Lamb is for his people, in contrast to the community under the control of the beast, while He is "making all things new".

THE WORSHIP AND CELEBRATION OF GOD'S COMMUNITY.

V1 the lamb, standing on Mt Zion; this is the one who stands among the lampstands..1.13. 5.6 Mt Zion is in both heaven and earth and is located wherever God's people are in God's presence. See also Ps 2.6. Also Heb 12.22-24.

With him are 144,000 'sealed' on their foreheads ie, belonging to Him.

V2,3 This is a communal voice like "the sound of many waters". It is the song only the redeemed can know, just like the redeemed are the only ones who know their name.

v4,5 have not defiled themselves with women etc; means the fornication of idol worship as set up by the unholy trinity.[remember the guilds and associations that the Christians had to live among]. These are involved in the work of the Lamb and His Father to save the nations, and they are being faithful. They are His firstfruits of a great harvest.

V6,7 another angel – proclaim[ing] – the hour of his judgement has come;

This is the eternal gospel call to all nations to worship God and give Him his rightful glory like the angels of heaven give Him because they know His plan and that He has fulfilled it. What 'gospel' did the prophets and priests of the local and imperial cult have to offer? Only gospels that lead to depression and torment.

The lamb, the temple we call Jesus has been set in place.

V8 Babylon is the 'city' which follows the delusions of the dragon and his clones and they have had extensive influence. Strelan quote p236 on Babylon. Babylon also served as a code name for Rome.

V9-11 An expansion of the details that those who are in Babylon will experience. God's wrath in His holy reaction to evil. The presence of the Lamb is explosive see 6.16. Unmixed is undiluted, with plenty of bite. Mark 9.45-48 and Psalm 32.3,4

amplify the torment pictured as fire and sulphur. Note that unlike Sodom and Gomorrah whose punishment ended, this punishment goes on forever.

V12,13 This is a contrast to the other community of Babylon. Babylon ends in unimaginable disaster. The saints, who hold onto all that Jesus taught and did with us, end in unimaginable blessing. Endurance is staying power despite the provocations of the Dragon.

Could the voice be the Spirit? After all He is the Comforter.

Again the contrast between the two communities is stunning. One has no rest, the other is blessed with rest [in the faith of Jesus of course], bringing with them the “fruit that lasts”. Gal 6.8.

V14-16 THE GRAIN HARVEST. Is this a harvest of the righteous or a harvest of Judgement? G Bingham thinks it is a harvest “of the good”. Matt 9.37,38. Strelan thinks both harvest & vintage are judgement actions. You decide? Dan7.13,14 needs to be noted again because it is the Son of Man who is in action.

V17-20 A HORRIBLE VINTAGE.

Isa 63.1-6 Joel 3.12,13 are solemn portraits of what John is being shown in heaven. To be processed through the great winepress of the wrath of God is an horrific concept. It is one thing to be hurt or abused in one's being by some of our experiences in the world is one thing. We can endure with faith. But to be crushed in 'being' in “the winepress of the wrath of God” must be a “torment that goes up forever and ever”

This chapter is a picture to bring great encouragement to the believers in any age. In the communication of heaven this is the truth pictured in a graphic way. Salvation is wonderful, but judgement is terrible. Who would ever want to be outside “the temple who is the Lamb, the City of God, the New Jerusalem,” who is Christ and the 144,000 who are the Bride of Christ.

CHAPTER 15. THE BOWLS OF WRATH.

As we have been presented with the ‘seal’ septet, then the presentation of the ‘trumpet’ septet, so now this chapter serves as an introduction to a new septet, the ‘bowl’ septet. We need to remember that this is a repeating of the idea of variations on a theme. It is a symphony building towards a wonderful climax which will ultimately catch us up in all that God is doing in the salvation of his children and the judgement upon evil [wrath]. In this introductory chapter note the theme of Exodus coming strongly through. The sea, the song of Moses and then in chapter 16 the contents of the bowls so reminiscent of the ten plagues God unleashed upon Egypt, help us to understand what the ‘portent’ [sign] is saying.

Note also how the song in verses 3 and 4 vindicate God in the matter of His judgements. So now to inspect a few details of this chapter of ‘preparation’ for the bowls septet.

V1 **great and amazing**; a surprise that John used these words when you see what is about to happen. But then John would be one standing beside the sea reflecting upon the awesome rescue by God of His people.

Seven angels; this is the 'last' picture of its kind and it will 'complete' the judgements of God on all who oppose his holiness and live for the fruits of evil. It is not about God somehow running out of wrath. It is about God completing the judgement He must bring to bear upon evil.

V2 a sea of glass; see 4.6 Is the red about judgement or is it about the blood of those who had been butchered in the sea and now cry 'how long O Lord?' But here they are those who have 'conquered'. Remember the call of the Spirit to 'conquer' heralded to each of the seven churches. They now stand beside the sea of glass with harps... ie instruments of worship. Comparing 5.8-14 is interesting when you note the harps, worship, golden bowls and the 'new song'. In 4.6 this crystal like sea was presented as the heavenly counterpart of the Red Sea which contained the powers who are opposed to God and their allies. To cross the sea or 'abyss' is to be victorious, and they are [Psalm 77.16-20, 106.9]. So to be brought successfully by the lamb through the sea is to be brought through a baptism of 'fire'.

The beast and its image etc; it does not matter how you think of the beast, the point is he has been thwarted.

V3 the song of Moses and the lamb; this is a second but greater Moses. Luke 9.30,31. This is a second but greater Exodus in which wicked Pharoah [read dragon, beasts and followers] have been defeated.

Great and amazing; see again in verse 1. Compare 13.3. How much more wonderful are 'the ways of God'.

He is king of both creation... and then of redemption.[always creating with purpose].

This vindication of God is right because evil minds do accuse God of injustice. Psalm 18:25,26 Titus 1.15.

V4 who will not fear and glorify your name etc; Rom 3.18 Jer 10.7 To creatures with evil consciences God's holiness is a mystery. In Christ's death, God's very 'down to earth' holiness has destroyed every refuge of evil and destroyed all impurity [Col 2.13-15]. So "All nations" will come and worship [Phil 2.11, I Cor 15.28] mean God's holiness will have been vindicated.

V5-8 The narrative of the seven angels.

V5 after this I looked; John is again seeing a new element. It has elements he has described before in 5.8 golden bowls full of incense and the prayers of the people;

8.3 prayers of the saints and the altar;

8.5 these prayers calling forth the power of God, to be implemented in the action of the seven trumpets.

The temple of the tent of witness; See 11.1,2 It is the place of the Church worshipping, and all those worshipping around the throne. The tent of witness in the travels after the Exodus was the focus of the presence of God among His people.

Recall the intimate connection of Jesus as our temple and us living "in Him".

V6 **seven plagues**; define the contents of the seven bowls of wrath.

Robed; see Exodus 39.27, Ezek 44.17 Also Exodus 28.4,39 and Rev 1.13.

Strelan is strongly disposed to see the angels as the heavenly counterparts to the leaders of the seven congregations and symbolic of the Church.

V7 **Then one of the four living creatures**; God acts through agents including nature which the four living creatures represent. We are meant to see God at work.

Seven golden bowls; libation bowls ie those connected with sacrifice.

Who lives forever and ever; he is greater than the dragon and the beasts who are limited. So He is Lord of all.

V8 **smoke**; Isa 6.4 I Kings 8.10 II Chron 7.1-3 All symbolic of His glory and power.

No one could enter the temple; until the completion of the action of the bowls ie “the last” of 15.1.

This is all a reminder of of the connection between a holy God, his people and their witness and worship which includes participation in His saving and judging actions.

How helpful it is to use the images of the success of the first Exodus to remind us today that there is no way that the dragon and his clones can triumph. All this stuff is very important for our encouragement amidst the seals, the trumpets and the bowls.

CHAPTER 16. THE BOWLS.

After this worship introduction the action comes. The similarities of the plagues of Egypt give a basis for understanding the action. It illustrates the doom of God's enemies and faithless people. But there are some variations. There is an intensification of the trumpet cycle. Instead of a third of say the earth being destroyed, now destruction is total. In the previous cycles there was an interruption of worship after number 6 in the cycle [providing an opportunity for repentance?] but now there is to be a completion, a closure with all seven bowls being poured out and an announcement of “It is done, Finished”.

V1-4 Abnormal situations and terrible suffering to come upon creation and humankind.

V2 **earth**; Is this the world where people live or is it linked to 13.11?

Painful sore; an abscess, boil.

Came on those who had the mark of the beast; it encouraged God's people [Rev 7.2,4] and warned those giving in to the beast. Strelan suggests it is almost like the mark turned into a beacon that God's wrath targeted.

V3. **into the sea**; again is this the natural sea or the sea from which the beats emerged? Rev 13.1 and 17.15.

Like the blood; see Exodus 7.17-21 putrefaction. Unlike the trumpet cycle **every living thing died**.

V4. **into the rivers and the springs**; all sources of life giving water are contaminated as blood. Ironical for those who are so quick to shed blood. Compare 22.1,2

V5-7 An acclamation of praise at the rightness of God's actions.

V5 **the angel of the waters**; not explained. It was a thought of John's time that angels protested when the area of their responsibility in creation was misused. So it is interesting that far from protesting, this angel affirms the action God has taken.

V6. Blood for blood. Let the punishment fit the crime. They are worthy of death.

V7 **altar**; see 9.13, 14.18 when the "holy ones" are given expression from the altar. See also 8.2 and 11.1 God's people have been accounted foolish by the world as they waited for God, but now in the last moments of the last quarter God is seen to be "in front" ie victorious.

The Narrative of the Last Four Bowls:

v8,9 **the fourth angel poured his bowl on the sun;** Remember this is a looking 'into heaven'. What part does this part of the vision play in the warfare of heaven?

In the old creation the sun as a created body, is unfortunately 'idolised' by many cultures eg Celtic, Egyptian. Note also Rev 21.23; 22.5 where in the new creation the sun is not needed.

It was allowed to scorch them; the people are punished by their 'idol' the sun. When we consider the breakdown in the ozone layer with its amplified heat, what indicators of modern idolatry are in the worship of the internal combustion engine and mass industrial production?

If this heat is not literal but spiritual then it is indeed frightening.

But they curse etc; their true nature and true allegiance is exposed under pressure. Repentance begins and ends by giving God His rightful glory. See 11.13 and Rom 1.18-23. The rebellion of man against the glory of God is bold and crude evil.

V10,11**the fifth angel poured his bowl on the throne of the beast;** this is to take the judgement on evil to the heart of evil's power. Remember earlier we identified the beast as the "political and economic order of Rome" [see notes on 13.2].

Just like Pharaoh's throne at the time of the Exodus represented the headquarters of the deliberate opposition to God, so Rome now fulfils that function. Note 2.13.

Plunged into darkness; the beast's kingdom is dark; refer to Exodus 10.21-23. Darkness becomes even darker. Darkness is not only a state of chaos but also precedes the coming of death. This is not humanity's natural habitat so the anguish and horror are terrible.

And cursed the God of heaven; they curse the Being of God. The multiplication of sores with pain made them chew their tongue to kill the pain they were feeling. There is a finality because of the lack of repentance.

V12 **The sixth angel etc;** Strelan says "Judgement of all enemies and removal of all evil is the negative side of the work of salvation". [p263] See Exodus 14.21 Joshua 3.16 2 Kings 2.8,14. So when God 'dried up' waters it was His way of acting for His people and their salvation.

We do not know who the kings are but probably are linked to those in 16.14 and thus to the nations of Psalm 2. Again we seem to have this idea of evil destroying evil.

V13 **then I saw;** equals another element to the vision in heaven. **Three foul spirits;** From three foul mouths. The spirits looked like frogs. Lev 11.10-12

V14 A flood of evil propaganda from the unholy trinity is devised to unite the nations against God.

V16 There is no such place nor will there be any event [or better, non-event]. Despite all the huffing and puffing, there is no battle because at Calvary the unholy trinity lost. See also 20.7-10. This is again symbolic language about the moral-spiritual battle.

V15. Actually as we have seen before, all these forces are operating now, for the Churches in John's day as for all the churches since. This is a call to us all to examine ourselves 'in Christ' and to stay clothed by faith in Him. Many of our Lord's teachings encourage us in just this eg Luke 12.35-48 Note how the end will be totally unexpected 'like a thief!'.
 V17 **into the air**; thought to be the domain of evil and the demonic. This is therefore a home ground attack.
A loud voice...It is done; John 19.30 God is present as victor in the battle for the throne or control of the nations. This seventh angel signals the completion of the judging and saving action of God.

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V18 **a violent earthquake**; this is the last bowl. The people of the world have lost all control.

V19 **the great city etc**; A composite of all the rebellious cities and their systems who have defied God and worshipped idols and materialism. It is in a state of total disarray, with social, political and economic chaos. Anything can be pictured in these visions of heaven.

As "Babylon" has drunk in the blood of all her destructiveness and butchery now she will drink the full cup of the "fury of His wrath". If she indulged her power say in the Imperial Cult via the intolerance, cruelty and death in her culture, now she will know the retribution of the judgement of God.

V20,21 The symbols of these verses are potent.

As 15.1 alerted us, the wrath of God is 'completed' with the action of the seven bowls. We could not have been presented with so clear a picture. This has all happened 'in heaven' but is presently being worked out among us. The wrath will be 'full wrath'. The message to the faithful is live clear of evil. You have been told what is happening to evil now and in the future, so don't get mixed up with it. Endure patiently with faith in Christ, knowing you are safe through the Lamb who is your temple that cannot be destroyed.

Now, John is called, to see the Judgement of the great whore from another angle; from another perspective. And so he is carried away in the Spirit into a wilderness. Here he will observe the third Revelation. I wonder what he will describe?

CHAPTER 17. THE THIRD REVELATION. [In a wilderness]

V6b has John exclaim “When I saw her, I was greatly amazed”. Is John in danger of being seduced by the woman described in this paragraph? Remember Jason of the Argonauts fame who had himself lashed to the mast so he could hear the sirens but was restrained from jumping ship and swimming on to their island and to his death.

We must remember there is a battle for control of the nations being described. An opponent of he who is King of Kings and Lord of Lords is described in this chapter, as also her relationship with the beast with seven heads and ten horns and the inhabitants of the earth who give themselves to her. She is pictured as the whore of the beast. What a contrast with another woman who is called ‘the Bride of Christ’ see 19.7.

In this third Revelation John will explicitly detail comparisons and parallels between these two ‘women’ who are also called ‘cities’. Remember this is all picture language and symbolic yet having historical reference points.

The term city is an ambiguous term in scripture. Sometimes it symbolises the organised human effort of rebellion against God and to make up a god of their own. It also never achieves the unity and mutuality it desperately espouses. Other N.T. words for the unholy city are ‘the world’ or ‘the flesh’. So let us see what John will ‘paint’ for us to be able to interpret her true nature.

V1-6 The description of the whore Babylon.

V1 **come I will show you etc**; there is continuity of “wrath poured out” here through the link of one of the angels. The great whore is a symbol of great wickedness.

Seated on many waters; see v15. She is in many places where rebellion against God is organised.

V2 God should be their lover, but the kings and nations have willingly caroused in their idolatry.

V3 To get a good look at this whore-city John is transported to a safe place [remember Jason]. Eventually the city will become a wilderness because of God’s judgement, but for John it is a place to see things clearly and report on this mystery of Babylon. What does he see? A woman sitting upon a scarlet beast; see 13.1-5

V4 The clothing implies wealth, affluence and luxury. Isa 47.5 portrays her as the ‘mistress of kingdoms’. The ‘horse and rider’ theme emphasise that they are an operating unity.

Abominations and the impurities of her fornication; symbolise and expose the nature of her character. Her idolatry amounts to the will of human beings being placed above the will of God.

V5 **a name, a mystery etc**; Roman prostitutes did this. We must not limit the mystery of this name by trying to link it with an earthly “Rome” or Brussels or New York.

V6 **drunk etc**; intoxicated by her destructiveness of God's children. She hates them as does the beast and the Dragon. What deadly animosity toward the holy. See 18.4

I was greatly amazed; seeming success and brilliance can even woo the faithful.

V7 **But**; Heralds a warning not to be carried away by appearances. The mystery about her is not pretty. The angel guide is going to put John and us straight.

From the fact of the beast we are going to be carried into the mystery of it and Babylon.

I will tell you etc; means John and his hearers must trust what they hear more than what they see.

V8 This verse needs 1.17,18 as a basis for comparison. The beast is a parody of God, but is always trying to ascend in authority whereas God and the Lamb are on the throne..ie the control of everything. The marvelling is at its seeming great future.

V9 **This calls for a mind that has wisdom**; Rome held an annual festival called the 'Seven Hills Festival'. But it is more than just identifying 'Rome' as Babylon. Babylon, the demonic anti-Christ force, is the primary 'world' power in any age or location. Rome is simply typical of all 'fronts' for the evil one. I Pet 5.13.

V10 This is strange language. Seven kings may hint at 'completeness' of the Roman dynasty. Strelan generalises that "the angel wants John and his hearers to view the emperors corporately [page 279].

V11 "paraphrased, John is saying that the beast belongs to the seven kings, i.e. is of their ethos". Bingham p 160. The reign behind the reign so to speak. Strelan also refers to other schematic representations of what is meant here. It is truly complication to complicated symbols.

V12 **ten horns..ten kings etc**; again symbols representing fullness. Their authority is limited, and they are linked to the beast. He is in it everywhere.

V13. Beastly kings submitted to the beast aim at overtaking the throne of God. But Colossians 2:15 reveals they did not succeed.

V14. See Psalm 2.8 show who the nations belong to. Col 1.15,17 show who created them. Matt 28.19,19 show where the true authority is. The war is over having been won on the Cross of The Lamb where his faithful passion for the family combined with his sacrifice, disarmed the principalities and powers.

Those with him; etc; not frontline troops but 'called' . See also Rom 8.28-30.

V15 Refer to verse 1. The whore is among all the nations. This means Christians are always living in 'Babylon'. But the followers of v14 also come out of the nations, the waters.

V16 Evil is really spiritual cannibalism. In *Screwtape Letters*, C.S. Lewis portrays a senior devil salivating at the thought of devouring a junior devil. When evil is at work you can trust no-one. Nothing is sacred! So the forces of evil will utterly humiliate the whore.

V17. God is the one who dictates to evil. Innate disunity and rivalry will continue until Genesis 3.15 is fulfilled along with all the prophecies of Satan's downfall.

All that is sensually, commercially, materially, cruelly proud and powerful, idolatrous and disdainful of God, has only a limited time to function. This is what this chapter is saying. Evil will prey not just on 'the sealed' but on itself. Doomed is Babylon. And so ends the description of this picture. But wait, there's more.

CHAPTER 18. THE FALL OF BABYLON.

Well might we ask 'have we not been through all of this?' This is another variation on a theme, the theme being 'the fall of Babylon'. We could call it 'fun city' for those who were in a position to exploit people for their own greedy ends. Strelan quite clearly identifies her with Rome in the time of John. But remember that Babylon lives in all the nations in all histories. How many pairs of shoes did Imelda Marcos have? Currently the deposed President of the Philippines is awaiting corruption charges, a former President of Indonesia is also being charged with corruption. What about South Africa? Who really knows what goes on in the halls of power around the world? In Australia the rich are getting richer and the poor poorer. I believe these are apocalyptic visionary descriptions of the war in heaven in which God has already won the battle over Babylon. Look at the past tenses in verse 2. This time there is a call to the faithful not to participate in her sin. There are those who mourn the loss of their 'idol'. This is a spiritually corrupt "multinational" called Babylon, that is to be tormented into destruction. Rome may have been typical of such corrupt systems, but something bigger than the power, wealth, splendour and influence of any individual nation, is being brought down in this portrayal.

V1 Another angel..great authority..bright with his splendour; Ezek 43.2
Does his authority reflect the authority of Christ? See 1.10 for voice.

V2. See Isaiah 21.9 Also Rev 14.8 and 16.19. This was predicted.
Its destruction is total.

V3. The main subject is 'idolatry'. It is in this the nations have indulged. It is both political and spiritual..a refusal to trust God; preferring 'the system'.

V4. **Another voice from heaven;** a call from God himself. There is to be no partnership in sin. It will mean partnership in punishment. II Cor 6.17

V5. The fruit of her sin is obvious. What does God's remembering mean?

V6. Jeremiah 50.14-16. See also 17.16,17 to see what the kings must do.

V7 See Isaiah 47.8,9 Rome believed she would never fall. Hitler believed in the thousand year Reich.

V8 How long did it take for the Soviet union to collapse? Overnight! Note verse 10,17, 19 "in one hour". God is justified in all His judgements.

The Lament of the Ruling classes:

V9. Grief expressed because of a great loss. Their idol who they love to hate has been destroyed. This is the worship of the followers of beast. There is no hope here in the lament of the ruling classes.

V10. The future of Babylon has gone up in smoke. They distance themselves. They have their worries thank you. And it all happened so quickly!

The Lament of the Merchants:

V11. They are really sorry for themselves.

V12-14. A summary in v14 "The fruit for which your soul longed has gone from you". If you can afford to traffic in all these material goods then who needs God?

V15-17a. 'the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life'.

The Lament of the Shipping Industry:

V17b –19. The city is not an actual city. It is the evil multinational built on evil. But how many had grown dependent upon it by investing in it. A bit like investing money in information technology when you don't really know what it is all about. The love of money is the root of all evil.

The Call– Rejoice.

V20. Among the high-flyers, how pathetic the faithful battlers appear. Yet he who laughs last laughs loudest. After seemingly endless tension [how long O Lord] **God has given judgement for you against her.** They rejoice "in heaven" because at last they are seen to be justified. Remember 11.8,10. This court "in God" is the only one that counts.

An Acted Parable: See Jer 51.59-64

V21. Use your imagination to envision this scene. It means violence is the only language this city understands. A taste of their own force.

V22. This is ghost town. There is no place for feelings of nostalgia permitted for the great 'cultures' of godless humanity organised to eliminate God, not even of their workaday world.

V23. If God is the fountain of living waters and 'at whose right hand there are pleasures for evermore' and you have organised to keep Him at bay or denied Him, then whatever else your idolatry has built, is actually empty. You have been deceived because there is nothing to it. Your fruit has not remained. The work of your hands has not been established. Babylon is a hollow kingdom. 'Unless the Lord builds the house the labourers labour in vain.'

V24 This is spiritual genocide of those who 'trusted in The Lord'. Fun City is not fun for everyone. Only those who can work the system of this world seem to get something for a while, no matter who they have to walk over to do it. This is the heavenly war crimes trial scene. How many have paid themselves exorbitant bonuses while their workers paid the cost?

John is shown a horrible picture to translate to us all. While it may be picture language, behind it are terrible realities like evil and its system, and the controlling throne of God and the Lamb who have every answer to bring evil to its end.

CHAPTER 19

Now we enter yet another vision/display/scene with a message. The variation on a theme continues. Its title could be called 'Hallelujah' or praise God. Verses 1 to 8 are a song of praise and celebration to God for what has just been visioned in chapter 18. God's activity in judgement against Babylon motivates the great multitude. They have already been called to do this in 18.20. And as it progresses the song serves to praise God for the saving of the Christ's Bride and the marriage [adoption] of her to the Lamb. This is all great action by God indeed. And indeed, not only the multitude join the chorus, but also those characters around the throne called the Twenty four Elders and the four Living Creatures. We need to note the lamenting song over Babylon in 18.10,17,19.

V1. **Hallelujah;** = praise Yahweh. In Jewish tradition it is a shout of triumph for when God judges the wicked and vindicates the faithful. The Hallel Psalms 113-118 celebrate God's victory over the Egyptian oppression through the liberation of the Hebrews. Now for the first time in the N.T. this word is proclaimed here.

Salvation; Strelan "Salvation means victory; Hallelujah! Is a victory shout. Salvation means healing, wholeness, liberation, room to move, rescue from a narrow place, deliverance from oppression, forgiveness." P.309.
The glory and power of evil seen primarily in human pomp and posturing is seen to be nothing alongside the glory and power of God.

V2. The heavenly War Crimes Tribunal gives true judgements of real justice. The whore gets what she deserves and the servants of God have been

vindicated for all their pain, powerlessness and humiliation. Remember 13.10. Justice is not only done but it is seen to be done.

V3. They can't stop praising! As the eternal spiritual smoke of her goes up forever the message is that her corruption of God's pure creation deserves such torment of endless guilt.

V4 The heavenly representatives of all creation and the whole people of God who worship constantly around the throne agree too. This is their last appearance in a vision of Revelation.

V5 **a voice**; Rev 6.6 maybe? When you read Rom 1.21 then we can understand that continual praise to God from everything is the right order of things and is to be sustained.

V6 This is a declaration that despite other claims both human and spiritual, God is ruler of the universe, always was ruler of the universe and now always will be ruler of the universe.

V7 How glorious a time is being celebrated that the 'most intimate communion' [marriage] between the Lamb and the Bride has come. [Eph 5.25-30]

V8. **bright and pure**; what a gift to us! **It has been granted to her**; The Bride is stunning, by grace! Compare 18.16 but without the purity. The whores works came to nothing. They had no substance. The Brides works are fruit that lasts.

A WEDDING INVITATION 19:9,10

V9. "**Write this**"; a particularly important statement. It is the fourth beatitude in the Revelation. Others are 1.3, 14.13, 16.15, 20.6, 22.7, 22.14. This blessing is actually for those invited to the wedding reception of the Lamb and his Bride. Such are very special participants. It seems most appropriate to highlight this invitation after the worship of v7,8. They unbelievable in wonder. "**True words of God**".

V10. **Then I fell down at his feet**; Caught up in such wonder, glory & presence I would not be too harsh on John.

You must not do that; to worship the angel would not be the highest for John. The highest for us all is to worship God and not any other. The testimony of Jesus in all its aspects had God at its centre. Father, Son and Holy Spirit. There is a Trinitarian dimension to this conclusion of the Praise and Invitation.

THE ANNOINTED OF THE LORD. V11-16.

Psalm 2.2,6,7-9 help us to understand what John 'paints' next. Into the centre of all the scenes he has related from his vision, into the centre of this third Revelation there

is this One who dominates everything. We have seen Him before in 1.12-18. John is to picture Him again for us and surely we can't get enough of Him. Remember this is a heavenly view that is being communicated in earthly ways. But what we are all longing for is not a something but a 'someone' and John is saying "Here He is".

V11. **Heaven opened**; But where is John also? See 17.3. Isn't this Revelation experience he is having wonderful?

Rider is called Faithful & True; note the capitals. O how we need faithful and true in the creation. This is the Judge of the heavenly War Crimes Tribunal.

He judges and makes war; John has related His action many times now in many ways. Now He will emphasise these again. White horse signifies purity.

V12. **eyes**; remember the laser penetration of 1.14 and 2.18.

Many diadems; more than the dragon and the beasts or any ruler. This is total authority, unlimited power.

A name inscribed that no one knows but himself; Only He truly knows the nature of His glorious being in love, grace, truth, mercy, power etc.

V13. Two possibilities need to be noted about blood. His own as in 5.6 [crucifixion].

But also remember the winepress scene from 14.19-20. Also Isa 63.1-3.

His very Being is the Word of God which He is enacting.

V14. See I Cor 15.24-28. The armies of heaven will be both celestial and terrestrial as the conqueror asserts His authority in time. He will clothe them and they will ride on the same purity as His.

V15. Isa 55.10-11 helps us gain insight into this Word of God. It is His utterance which fulfils the counsel, plan and purpose of God and overcomes the betrayers of His creation's glory. The verse shows how dynamic it is.

V16. This verse names Him. See also verses 12 & 13. But these human titles are so inadequate. His name is where all history will end. This is God's anointed pictured symbolically so we can at least begin to understand.

THE HAKA OF EVIL. V17-21

Another detail John needs to picture starts with v17. It is about the death of the two beasts of chapter 13 and the kings of the earth who served their evil kingdom or system.

V17. **an angel standing in the sun**; apocalyptic language for a glorious being.

All the birds that fly in midheaven; An invitation to carrion to a feast filled with punishment.

V18. expresses terms of judgement for all classes.

V19. Much huffing and puffing.

V20. The Word of God strikes!!! Still kicking [alive] they are landed into sheer hell.

V21. The Word of God strikes again!! John 3.36. What an horrific picture of talons and beaks dripping with blood and flesh.

Well another series of scenes stand in front of us. Messages of encouragement abound. Messages of warning abound. Christ is everything. Evil comes to a hideous end. The Word of God is not too be mocked but is exceedingly powerful. When we are confronted by evil we are forearmed to stand with Christ in faith and trust.

CHAPTER 20.

In a previous scene the two beasts of the unholy trinity are dealt with [19.19,20]. But what of the key figure the great Red Dragon? John will understand the dragon's fate in this scene.

Then there is a scene about thrones and a great white throne. It is another picture about 'endings' for the people of God. It is all symbolic and flagrantly symbolic language but depicting realities of heaven in earthly language.

History is filled with schemes of interpretation by literalist approaches to the text. Great debates have occurred about sequences of time and of what happens when. You will have to consult those types of commentaries to engage those explanations. To say "the earth and the heaven fled from his presence and no place was found for them" is to beggar description in my opinion. This is visionary stuff which is still a "variation on a theme" of God being in control and bringing everything to His planned conclusion.

The End of the Leader of Evil; v1-3 and 7-10

V1. Is this an angelic representation of Jesus the Christ? Strelan thinks so.

The key to the bottomless pit; We should go back to the scene in 9.1f and compare it with Rev 1.18 and 3.7. This is symbolic as to WHO holds the ultimate authority.

a great chain; see Jude 6. Strelan thinks a manacle like modern handcuffs! II Peter 2.4.

V2**He seized; and bound him;** See 12.9.

That ancient serpent; the ancient accuser of humankind, deceiver, liar [12.10f & Rom 8:33-39] In the heavenly courtroom all charges against God's elect have been thrown out.

A thousand years; a symbolic term for God's perfect or ideal time. Strelan says "It is truly folly to insist on a literal understanding of this number, when all around are symbols;" p 332. See Also II Peter 3.8-13. God's relationship with time is not like ours. He is not 'bound' within time. It means nothing to God.

Compare 20.4,6 with 22.5. One thousand years means "forever and ever", completeness, just the right period. As part of this vision it is a "concept" linked to heaven not the earth and time.

V3. Satan's influence has been rendered impotent Isa 24.22 [Heb 2.14,15 = not eliminated but rendered ineffective, paralysed, controlled into unimportance] especially in regard to harming the people of God. [Look ahead to the assurances for God's people in verses 4-6]. There will be one last burst at deception see v8 ie to gather the nations for battle. John has a wonderful ability to picture a very active yet at the same time an ultimately ineffectual Satan.

He must be let out; Satan will be let loose in order to finalise him. It is God's way of bringing things to His end, and for the sake of all His people's freedom.

V4-6 THE FIRST RESURRECTION.

Revelation is a warning to people who want to flirt with evil in their culture instead of holding faith in God. Note my words are inclusive of all. This is not just for Christians no matter how much non-Christians may mock it. But it is also meant to be a message of comfort to the faithful and it has been that many times when pictures of judgement are portrayed then interrupted by pictures of the safety of those in Christ. The pattern is repeated here.

V4 We need to be familiar with Dan 7.9-27 as background to the meaning of thrones. See Dan 9.9 and 27.

Authority to judge; beautiful statement when seen in the light of Matt 19.28 Luke 22.30, I Cor 6.2,3. All this is being seen from God's point of view [ie heavenly]. All this is to participate in the reign of Christ. It could also mean that "judgement was given for them" referring then to their vindication in the court of heaven.

Souls; those of the martyrs in a "temporary state" .They were faithful to what Jesus was faithful too.

They came to life; see John 11.25 & 5.24; in other words 'lived on with Christ'. Their apparent loss was actually their gain.

V5. Note, John never speaks of a second resurrection. Often first means "only" see Matt 6.33.

V6 **the second death;** see v14. They will not go into the lake of fire.

What a blessing is outlined here with all the non-time elements we have discussed. A great either/or is portrayed here; the first resurrection or the second death.

BACK TO THE LEADER OF EVIL;

V7 As the people of God ripened for blessing, Satan is ripened in his deception and evil. He is destructive of evil and self destructive.

V8. **Gog and Magog;** Symbols of evil but summed up in Psalm 2.2,3 for the Rabbis. Symbols are the most effective way of portraying evil.

He gathers them for one last attack on the things of God. They share his fate because they are still blind and stupid.

V9. **the camp**; could be a reminder of the desert walk for Israel but could also infer that the faithful are soldiers in a battle even though they are priests see v6.

And fire; see Ezek 38.21-23. The overwhelming power of God is displayed.

V10. The devil has now joined the beats and the false prophet see 19.20. There is no let up to their suffering, no intermission, unrelenting. They are immolated.

THE GREAT WHITE THRONE.

V11 Daniel 7.9-10 applies again. The one who sat on it is all that matters. So nothing else finally matters including heaven and earth. They recede. In the plans of this awesome One the old must be replaced by the new.

THE DEAD STANDING BEFORE THE THRONE. V12-15/

The question is who are they? Recall in v6 we mentioned the great either/or. If one was in the first resurrection one was not in the second death. So by this logic **the dead** are those who have not worshipped the One on the throne but joined with the devil. But others hold the view that the dead are all those who have lived and died.

V12 My view is that this is the second death of v6. There is no resurrection for them just judgement.

Great and small; ie of all classes.

V13. Some say “when your dead, your dead”, meaning that’s all there is; life ends in nothingness. Not according to this picture. Everything ‘gives up’ the dead to judgement.

V14. See I Cor 15.26. All the enemies of man have a common end, the fire of judgement.

V15. Christ is the book of life just as He is the Temple, and believers are written on His hands. See 13.8. Stubborn refusal of the testimony of Jesus and to be adopted “in Him”, is horrendous.

The whole of these visions should sober us, fill us with thanksgiving for the Lamb who is also the book of Life, and make us stable in holy living with perseverance and “conquering” daily.

CHAPTER 21.

We are still looking at visions as part of the third revelation which began in 17.3. So far in these pictures we have had portrayed the removal of all evil. Now John sees the positive side to all this action of God. As we have been shown the fate of evil now we will see the fate of the good. We will see what has been made of the believers in the nations and of the final state of things as God has planned from the beginning.

THE NEW CREATION AND THE NEW JERUSALEM.

V1. **then I saw**; an unveiling. This is a reporting of the new heaven and new earth. This is the last time John will use these words. The earth is affirmed because it will have a place in the new structures. Isa 65.17-25. 66.22-23.

The sea is no more; that which gave rise to the beast and all evil. It symbolises all that is anti-Christ, anti-God. Isa 57.20.

V2 **the holy city;** to be understood in contrast to Babylon, as rebellious humanity tried to construct and activate her.

New Jerusalem; new as in Christ, ie renewed.

Coming down...from God; see Heb 11.10,16; 12.22. Its origin is significant. Eph 5.25-27. Note that the symbolism is the opposite of an expected "rapture".

Prepared as a bride; see 19.6-8.

V3. **a loud voice....SEE;** from the throne and loud both imply significance; take special notice. Lev 26.11,12 Ezek 37.26-28 It was what was planned and expected. This is the promised land, the terminus of Christ's great Exodus for us all, with us all.

V4. A short catalogue of powers whom Christ has defeated and removed in His death and resurrection. This will change suffering for safety and security. This is a reversal of the curse of Genesis 3. This is a great celebration. The things pertaining to the old heaven and earth no longer exist. In Rev 5.4 John had wept "at the thought that there was no one worthy to open the seals. Is there no answer to the problem of earth's evil? His visions have answered that question. The Lamb has conquered. Now he finds that tears, too, have gone forever." Morris/Revelation p245.

V5 **And the one etc;** one of a few occasions when God speaks but not through an agent.

Making all things new; there is an alternative reality to the destructiveness and compromise of Babylon. The copycat nature of all 'worldly' powers and structures are being replaced through God's judging and saving activity with a new heaven and new earth and new people...made new "in Christ". It takes a Revelation by the Spirit for people to discover this reality.

Write this; it really must be recorded because it is crucial, powerful, and genuine for true life.

V6 **It is done;** literally "they have happened" meaning "have been accomplished".

I am; remind us of Exodus & Moses. He works to complete His will and nothing stops Him. Our beginning and our end is not a time or a place but a person.

V7 To drink the water of life is to conquer. They will inherit their true being.

V8. Highlights the seriousness of compromise and idolatry.

THE FOURTH REVELATION.

Title: THE STATE OF THE CHURCH.**Subtitle: THE BRIDE WITH A FUTURE.**

In the previous Revelation John recorded that although the present reality of Babylon is great, the whore is doomed. There is another reality which he only mentions, and it is the direct opposite of Babylon. But now he will record the future of this wife of The Lamb and her glory. The issue that is posed for us is, which city will determine our citizenship? Which will mark will be stamped on our passport?

THE NEW JERUSALEM.

V9 **the wife**; see\ compare Eph 1.5. To become part of His family. Also 19.8.

V10. **in the spirit**; he saw a vision.

Coming down; it could never occur by the construction of humans.

V11 **it has the glory of God**; the glory of God's presence. The glory Cloud.

V12- 14 **The wall**; Ezek 48.30-34 impregnable.

Twelve gates etc; link with the 144,000 the symbol of God's people in history. Remember this is apocalyptic language of a vision. It points to a great reality but it is symbolic.

V15-21 John has recorded here in human terms, things which are in fact really beyond human terms. The central feature is The Wall. It reflects the "perfection" of the City as do a number of the symbols. The symbols also show how it is built with the glory and presence of God within it. It proceeds from God and reveals God. It is magnificent.

V22-27. THE ETERNAL LIGHT. John tours the city to experience it's sights.

No temple etc; See John 2.19-21.

V23. Sun and moon are superfluous in the "direct" light of God.

V24. See Isa. 60.3-5 A procession of worshippers attracted from all cultures.

V27. All that once belonged to the unholy Babylon has no place. Only that which belongs to the Lamb has a place.

This rich sight of "The Bride" has reminded us of all that ministry of Father, Son and Holy Spirit which has been going on in history and is to be brought to this beautiful climax.

And what a sight it is! It is motivation for the believer that in the midst of the struggle when we cry “how long O God”, we hold onto this wonderful vision of the end things “in God”. On that day when we see Him as He is it will be glorious, and so will we.

CHAPTER 22.

This is still the fourth Revelation of the New Jerusalem. John is taken into even more intimate understandings. Central to it all is the Throne of God because the Throne is central to everything in heaven and on earth. John's attention is focussed on it.

V1 See Psalm 46.4 Jer. 2.13. John 7.37-39. God is the source of eternal life and the flow is always at hand.

V2. It is central to the city.

The tree of life; is the cross of Christ.

V3. Because of the Cross [Tree] the curse of guilt which was once upon the nations, has been purged.

See Also Rom 12.1-3; To worship of God is to serve God.

V4 See Matt 5.8. And Exodus 28.36-38

V5. The old has gone. This is the new heaven and new earth.

V6-9. THE CONCLUDING NARRATIVE.

These words highlight the importance of Revelation for the Seven Churches [the whole Church].

V6. Repeat assurance see 19.9 and 21.5 True prophets are ministered to by the Spirit of God and are not autonomous.

V7. **Soon** means always coming, immanently, any moment now.

The blessing is for the one who knows how to conduct themselves in light of this Revelation.

V8,9. John is overwhelmed again and reports that he tried to worship the angel-guide. But the angels and human are fellow servers of God.

Worship God; to worship anyone or anything less is to cheat ourselves of what could be...the best, ie God.

V10-16. THE FINAL CHARGE TO JOHN AND THE CHURCH.

V10 To seal up a book is to close off its contents see 10.4. So John is told not to do this but to disclose the words of the prophecy. This will set God's actions of salvation and judgement in motion.

So **the time is near;** means God's activity in history is already operative. As the words come to people it bears upon them issuing in repentance or rebellion.

So V11. His coming will be so swift that there will be no time to change.

V12. Remember there is fruit that will last and fruit which is futile.

V13. Again the end of everything is not a time or place but a person. And what a person!

V14. The final blessing. The wonderful person in v13 now pronounces salvation. In the present tense it is understood as continuous [ie goes on washing].

V15. He also pronounces judgement. The dogs are the wild mangy creatures who bite and devour one another. They are not in the holy city.

V16. The great one of chapter one who “saves us”, speaks. He now authenticates the testimony of the revelations. Rev 1.1. They are not just for John because the “you” is plural. It means to the sevenfold church i.e the whole church.

See Also Rev 5.5 and 2.28. He is in truth this person in contrast to the claims of others.

V17-21. Concluding sentences.

V17. The Bride is led by the Spirit to plead the fulfilling of Christ’s promise to “come soon”. [v12].

Let everyone who hears; ie he who listens to the reading of Revelation.

See 21.6 and understand the matching invitations.

V18, 19. See Deut 4.2. We do not have the authority to alter the Word of God, nor must we risk distorting it. John has insisted that the words are not his. The warning is solemn. God has the copyright and protects it. And not just this book but the whole canon of scripture. Many readers will read it through the eyes of Babylon and want to change things.

V20. The one called “faithful and true” has born witness to His truth. We are to live anticipating His coming to fulfil it among us now.

Amen; the longings of the faithful fill this shout of hope.

V21. The great grace planned and implemented by God is upon the people of God. This is more than a formal closing. The One on the throne is in charge of everything.

We have been witness to a marvellous display of the love, the holiness and the glory of God.

It is the vision splendid of Him who reigns over all and of His love for all His children. Amen.