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XX. Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, holding in his hand the key of the bottomless pit and a great chain. {2} And he seized the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the Devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years, {3} and threw him into the pit, and shut it and sealed it over him, that he should deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years were ended. After that he must be loosed for a little while. {4} Then I saw thrones, and seated on them were those to whom judgment was committed. Also I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for their testimony to Jesus and for the word of God, and who had not worshiped the beast or its image and had not received its mark on their foreheads or their hands. They came to life, and reigned with Christ a thousand years. {5} The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were ended. This is the first resurrection. {6} Blessed and holy is he who shares in the first resurrection! Over such the second death has no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and they shall reign with him a thousand years. {7} And when the thousand years are ended, Satan will be loosed from his prison {8} and will come out to deceive the nations which are at the four corners of the earth, that is, Gog and Magog, to gather them for battle; their number is like the sand of the sea. {9} And they marched up over the broad earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city; but fire came down from heaven and consumed them, {10} and the devil who had deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and sulphur where the beast and the false prophet were, and they will be tormented day and night for ever and ever. {11} Then I saw a great white throne and him who sat upon it; from his presence earth and sky fled away, and no place was found for them. {12} And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Also another book was opened, which is the book of life. And the dead were judged by what was written in the books, by what they had done. {13} And the sea gave up the dead in it, Death and Hades gave up the dead in them, and all were judged by what they had done. {14} Then Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire; {15} and if any one's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.

- A. Here is an Outline of the Chapter:
1. The Reign of the Righteous - vv. 1-6
 - a. The Restraining of the evil one - vv. 1-3
 - b. The Revelation of the saints - v. 4a
 - c. The Resurrection Described - vv. 4b-6
 2. The Removal of the Restraints - vv. 7-10
 - a. Attempted Destruction - vv. 7-9a
 - b. Amazing Defeat - vv. 9b-10
 3. The Rendering of Retribution - vv. 11-15
 - a. The Setting Described - v. 11
 - b. The Summons Delivered - vv. 12a, 13a
 - c. The Secrets Displayed - v. 12b
 - d. The Sentence Determined - vv. 12c-15

- B. Now that the harlot city is destroyed we shift gears a bit and go up one level to look at things from a more cosmic perspective. As we have said before, although much of the Book of Revelation can be understood in a First Century, destruction of the Temple context, this does not exhaust its meaning. The temple is a symbol for the whole universe. Thus, when the temple and the harlot city (Jerusalem) are destroyed, (actually they are radically purified, not destroyed) they symbolized what must happen to the whole of creation in the end times (the Eschaton). That is what likely happens in this chapter and it is the best way to understand what is described herein. John, after noting what happened to the faithless ones in Jerusalem, now goes up a level and seems to say, as it was for the unfaithful of Jerusalem, so it shall always be for every faithless and godless enemy of God and his Church. There will be no escape, destruction shall befall every one and every age that contends against God and/or persecutes his holy ones.
- C. This chapter is also a very complex one in many ways and admits of many different interpretations and to some of its details. Perhaps the most controversial question that emerges from the chapter is the meaning of the thousand year reign. We will examine various interpretations of it when we look at the specific text. Prior to this however, it is important to get an overview of the chapter and see it in perspective. Thus the following very general summary is proposed
1. Background: The victory of the Lamb has been manifested by the fact that the great harlot, has been destroyed (chap. 18); then the beast and its prophet are overcome (chap. 19). But there still remains the dragon whom we saw in chapter 12 and whose defeat marks the final outcome of the war referred to in that chapter. This final battle is what is described in this chapter.
 2. The scene before us: The battle between Satan and God is described in two scenes; the first tells of how Satan is brought under control and deprived of his power for a time (vv. 1-3); the second describes his last assault on the Church and what happens to him in the end (vv. 7-10). Between these two scenes comes the reign of Christ and his followers for a thousand years (vv. 4-6). At the end of the second scene comes the General Judgment, with the reprobate being damned (vv. 11-18) and a new world coming into being (21:1-8).
- D. ***Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, holding in his hand the key of the bottomless pit and a great chain.*** - The bottomless pit, or abyss, refers to a mysterious place, different from the lake of fire, or hell. The abyss is deeply tied in with Jewish tradition and mythology. We have already seen mention of the abyss before in Revelation. Although it is a concept not entirely separate from the dwelling place of the devil and the damned, it is a wider concept including all those who had died. Sheol was the place of the dead. It was not a pleasant place but it was not hell either. It was a shadowy place where the dead “slept” But here the understanding of the abyss is more negative. It is the place where chaos reigned and where destructive forces emanated. Here it is the place of the devil.
- E. ***bound him for a thousand years*** - as stated there is a great deal of disagreement as to the interpretation of this verse regarding not only the thousand years but also the binding and losing of Satan. It is on the basis of this text alone that a controversy has existed among Christians regarding something called Millenarianism.¹ Today there are three

¹Millennium means *a period of one thousand years*; (another name for this view is chiliasm, derived from the Greek *chilios, a thousand*). To put it briefly, the commonest form of Millenarianism teaches that for a thousand years before the end of the world Christ will reign upon this earth in a kingdom of his saints: and after that will come the final struggle, the general resurrection, the last

essential and very different positions regarding the question of the meaning of the 1000 years in this text. The difficulty in understanding what is meant by the text in Rev. 20 is bound up in the very complex and changing cultural context of First century Judaism; in particular, Jewish Messianic expectations. Likewise, the complex cultural context of the early Church adds complexity. It might be of some value to explore this cultural situation and theological outlook. If nothing else, it will show just how complicated things can get in Biblical exegesis.

- F. **Jewish background** - Since this doctrine of the 1000 year reign does not occur anywhere else in the New Testament we do well to look into Jewish sources for the tradition. This approach is confirmed since Millenarianism was prevalent throughout the early church especially among those who had received their Christianity from Jewish sources. Here then is the purpose of looking into Jewish cultural and theological thinking, especially regarding Jewish beliefs about the Messianic age which were common in the time after 100 B.C. Alas, Jewish Messianic beliefs were never an unvarying system. They varied from time to time and from thinker to thinker. The basis was that the Messiah would come and establish upon earth the new age, in which the Jewish nation would be supreme. In the earlier times the general belief was that the kingdom so established would last for ever. God would set up a kingdom which would never be destroyed; it would break in pieces the other kingdoms, but it would stand for ever (*Daniel* 2: 44). It was to be an everlasting dominion (*Daniel* 7:14,27). From 100 B.C. onwards there came a change. It was felt that this world was so incurably evil that within it the Kingdom of God could never finally come; and so there emerged the conception that the Messiah would have a limited reign and that after his reign the final consummation would come. The *Apocalypse of Baruch* foresees the defeat of the forces of evil; then the kingdom of the Messiah will stand for ever, *until this world of corruption is at an end* (2 *Baruch* 40 3). One section of *Enoch* sees history as a series of weeks. There are seven weeks of past history. The eighth is the week of the righteous, when a sword is given to the righteous and sinners are delivered into their hands, and the house of God is built. In the ninth week the evil is destroyed, and righteousness will flourish. In the tenth week comes judgment; and only then comes the eternal time of goodness and of God (*Enoch* 93:3-10). There was much rabbinic discussion of how long the Messianic age would last before the final consummation arrived. Some said 40, some 100, some 600, some 1,000, some 2,000, some 7,000 years. Some figured based on *Genesis* 15:13 where God tells Abraham that the period of the affliction of Israel will last for four hundred years. In *Psalms* 90:15 the prayer is: "Make us glad as many days as thou hast afflicted us, and as many years as we have seen evil." It was, therefore, held that the period of bliss, like the period of affliction, would last for 400 years. More commonly it was held that the age of the world would correspond to the time taken for its creation and that the time of creation was 6,000 years. "A thousand years in thy sight are but as yesterday" (*Psalms* 90: 4). "One day with the Lord is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day" (2 *Peter* 3: 8). Each day of creation was said to be 1,000 years. It was, therefore, held that the Messiah would come in the sixth thousandth of the years; and the seventh thousand, the equivalent of the Sabbath rest in the creation story, would be the reign of the Messiah. Although the reign of the Messiah was to be the reign of righteousness, it was often conceived of in terms of material blessings. "The earth also shall yield its fruit ten thousandfold, and on each vine there shall be a thousand branches, and each branch shall produce a thousand clusters, and each cluster

shall produce a thousand grapes, and each grape a cor (120 gallons) of wine" (2 *Baruch* 29: 5, 6). There will be no more disease, no more untimely death; the beasts will be friendly with men; and women will have no pain in childbirth (2 *Baruch* 73). Here, then, (though with a bewildering complexity!) we have the background of the idea of the Millennium. Already the Jews had come to think of a limited reign of the Messiah, which would be a time of the triumph of righteousness, and of the greatest spiritual and material blessings.

- G. **Early Christian Thought on the Millennium** - On the basis of this passage of *Revelation* 20 Millenarianism or Chiliasm was very widespread within the early Church, although it was never universal. For Justin Martyr it was an essential part of orthodox belief, although he agreed that there were good Christians who did not accept it. "I and others, who are right-minded Christians at all points, are assured that there will be a resurrection of the dead, and a thousand years in Jerusalem, which will then be built adorned and enlarged as the prophets Ezekiel and Isaiah and others declare" (*Dialogue with Trypho* 80). Irenaeus also (*Against Heresies* 5:32) firmly held to the belief in a Millennium upon earth. One of his reasons was the conviction that, since the saints and the martyrs had suffered upon earth, it was only just that upon earth they should reap the rewards of their fidelity. Tertullian also insisted upon the coming of the Millennium. Papias, the second century collector of so much material upon the Gospels, insisted that Jesus taught the doctrine of the Millennium, and he hands down as the words of Jesus a passage which foretells the wondrous fertility of the earth which is to come. We have already said that, although many in the early Church accepted the belief in the Millennium as a part of orthodoxy, many did not. Eusebius almost contemptuously dismisses Papias's report. "I suppose he got those ideas, through a misunderstanding of the apostolic records, not perceiving that the things said by them were said mystically in figures. For he seems to have been of very limited understanding" (Eusebius: *The Ecclesiastical History* 3:38). One of the things which brought discredit upon Millenarianism was the fact that it undoubtedly lent itself to a materialistic interpretation in which it offered physical as much as spiritual pleasures. Eusebius tells how the great scholar Dionysus had in Egypt to deal with a certain much-respected bishop called Nepos who taught "a millennium of bodily luxury upon this earth" (*The Ecclesiastical History* 7: 24). Cerinthus, a heretic, deliberately taught a millennium of "delights of the belly and sexual passion, eating and drinking and marrying" (Eusebius: *The Ecclesiastical History* 3: 28). Jerome spoke contemptuously of "these half-Jews who look for a Jerusalem of gold and precious stones from heaven, and a future kingdom of a thousand years, in which all nations shall serve Israel" (*Commentary on Isaiah* 60: 1) Origen rebuked those who looked for bodily pleasure in the Millennium. The saints will eat, but it will be the bread of life; they will drink, but it will be the cup of wisdom (*De Principiis* 2.11.2, 3). It was Augustine, however, who, we may almost say, dealt Millenarianism its death blow. At one time he himself had been a Millenarian, although it was always spiritual blessings for which he longed. He had learned to see in the captivity of Satan nothing else than the binding of the strong man by the stronger than he which the Lord had foretold (*Mark* 3: 27; *Luke* 11: 22); in the thousand years, the whole interval between the first Advent and the last conflict; in the reign of the saints, the entire course of the kingdom of heaven; in the judgment given to them, the binding and losing of sinners; in the first resurrection, the spiritual share in the Resurrection of Christ which belongs to the baptized" (Augustine: *The City of God* 20: 7). Augustine spiritualized the whole idea of the Millennium.
- H. Current thought on the meaning of the thousand year reign can be grouped into three

general categories.

1. **The postmillennial view**, In effect this view holds that the millenium has already passed. The 1000 year period was the Old Testament period. More specifically the period involves the time since the establishment of the Davidic kingdom in 1000 BC. Clearly the advantage of this point of view is that it allows a fairly literal reading of the 1000 years. Bt the major problem with this point of view is that it seems to marginalize the victory of Christ. This is because, during the 1000 years of the Davidic Kingdom Satan was restrained. But once Jesus comes and dies, rises and ascends, we then see Satan loosed. This is problematic to say the least. Further there really wasn't a 1000 year period to the Davidic monarchy. There were two invasions (721 & 587 BC). The northern kingdom and te 10 norther tribes were lost forever. The southern kingdom of Judah was destroyed and the survivors exiled for some eighty years. After 587 the Davidic kingdom never really existed on its own. It was always a "client state." This postmillennial position therefore seems difficult to hold.
2. **The amillennial view**, does not really believe in no millennium (which is what "amillennial" should mean etymologically), but in a spiritual millennium. The binding of Satan has been accomplished during the lifetime of Jesus (see Mt 12:29; Lk 10:18; Jn 12:31; Col 2:15). During the age of the church Christ reigns in heaven and the power of Satan is limited in that he cannot stop the spread of the gospel. The first resurrection is the spiritual resurrection of the person's soul coming to life upon conversion. Therefore the millennial period (the thousand years being symbolic of a long time) overlaps the church age, the rebellion in Revelation 20:7-10 being essentially the same as that in Revelation 19:19-21. This view, its supporters argue would fit in well with the twofold advent of Christ: his first coming, in which he demonstrates his power over the devil and inaugurates the Kingdom of God; and his second coming at the end of time, when that kingdom will be established in its full, finished form. St. Augustine was probably the most authoritative Father to hold this amillennial view. According to him, this millenium covers the time between the incarnation of the Son of God and his coming at the end of the world. During this period the activity of the devil is to some degree restricted; he is in some way enchained. Christ reigns fully in the Church triumphant and he reigns in the Church militant in an incomplete way. The power of the devil is no longer sovereign, which means that man is able to elude him. So, although "he desires to do us harm, he cannot do so because his power is subject to another's power He who gives him the ability to tempt, also gives his mercy to the one who is tempted. He has restricted the devil's ability to tempt people" (St Augustine, *Dei Sermones Domini in monte*, II, 9, 34).² God will allow the devil to act very frenetically during the last days. Our Lord also said that they would be marked by great tribulation the like of which had never been seen (cf. Mt 24:21-22). And St Paul refers to "the man of lawlessness" who will take his seat in the temple and proclaim himself to be God (cf. 2 Thess 2:3-8).
3. **The premillennial view**, argues that the text should be taken at face value to indicate an actual period of time, during which Christ reigns and Satan is unable to deceive the nations. This fits with both the New Testament concept that Satan

²The Cure of Ars used to say, "the devil is a big dog on a chain, who threatens and makes a lot of noise but who only bites those who go too near him" (*Selected Sermons*, first Sunday of Lent).

is alive and active on earth during the present age (see Lk 22:3; Acts 5:3; 2 Cor 4:3-4; 11:14; Eph 2:2; 1 Thess 2:18; 2 Tim 2:26; I Peter 5:8) and a common idea found in Jewish apocalyptic as we have seen. Recall that the pseudopigraphical Book 2 *Enoch* mentions the idea that there are several thousand-year periods to world history, the last being a thousand-year Sabbath, when God returns (2 *Enoch* 32:2-33:2). A similar idea is found in a passage in the Talmud (b. *Sanhedrin* 97b) and in the early Christian Epistle of Barnabas (Barnabas 15). Other Jewish works reveal a belief in a shorter millennium (four hundred years or even just forty years) or mention no millennium. In the rest of the New Testament only one other passage (I Cor 15:23-28) may indicate two stages in the overcoming of evil, but Of course the interpretation of this passage is also disputed. At the same time, no New Testament passage excludes this view.

- I. With all this background we now do well to ask which of these viewpoints corresponds best to the scenario and interpretive keys³ we have used in understanding the Book of Revelation. It must be said before answering this question that all three positions have serious flaws. None of them fits perfectly into any interpretation. Thus we shall see that even though we choose one, it will generate questions that cannot be well answered. More work on attempting to understand this Chapter of Revelation is still required. Nevertheless, we return to our question and ask which interpretation seems best. Simply stated the amillennial view would best correspond to the interpretation presented in these notes. This is so for the following reasons.
 1. The Book of Revelation essentially announces the end of one era and the beginning of another. Something new is about to take place. Old Jerusalem with all it represents: Temple sacrifice, the Old Covenant, Old Testament Ritual, and Law as an end in itself, is about to be destroyed. New Jerusalem and all it represents: the New Covenant, Grace, and end to Temple worship and a beginning of worship in spirit and in truth, salvation from sin, and access to the Father through Jesus, is about to be fully inaugurated. Yes, it is true this was already done by Jesus at passion, death resurrection and ascension. But a forty year grace period (recalling the forty year preparation in the desert before the First Covenant was fully realized) has now come to an end and the fully in-breaking of the New Covenant is about to take place. The Amillennial position most clearly underscores this truth by describing the chaining of Satan as already having taken place through the incarnation as well as the passion death and resurrection. Now a new era of grace is inaugurated wherein the full power of Satan is restrained and even destroyed for every Christian who escapes Satan's grasp by the power of the blood of the Lamb.
 2. A similar reason is that the amillennial view corresponds well with the view we have taken that Revelation is essentially about events of the First Century. Hence, there is being described the end of one era and the beginning of another. It should be noted that the post millennial view would also carry this advantage.
 3. The view takes seriously an important truth taught by scripture: that Satan's power is now limited by the effect of grace. For the Christian who perseveres in grace, Satan is somehow chained. However, this text should not be taken in

3i.e. While not excluding application to the end of the world the Book of Revelation is in the prophetic tradition and largely describes events leading up and including the destruction of Jerusalem (the "harlot" city) in 70 AD.

isolation to other scriptural texts that remind us that Satan still does exercise some power in this world (Lk 22:3. Acts 5:3; 2 Cor 4:3-4; 11:14; Eph 2:2; 1 Thess 2:18; 2 Tim 2:26; I Peter 5:8). The emphasis here is that the power is limited and he cannot fundamentally overcome the power of grace in the Christian who remains in God's grace. Once again, we should not make Biblical texts compete with one another. Rather they serve to compliment and clarify each other. Two Biblical passages especially seem to suggest that this is a time of grace wherein the lawless one is somehow restrained but there will be a time when this restraint is to end

- a. (Luke 23:27-31) *And there followed him a great multitude of the people, and of women who bewailed and lamented him. {28} But Jesus turning to them said, "Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me, but weep for yourselves and for your children. {29} For behold, the days are coming when they will say, 'Blessed are the barren, and the wombs that never bore, and the breasts that never gave suck!' {30} Then they will begin to say to the mountains, 'Fall on us'; and to the hills, 'Cover us.' {31} For if they do this when the wood is green, what will happen when it is dry?"*
- b. (2 Th 2:1-8) *Now concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ... that day will not come, unless the rebellion comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed...And you know what is restraining him now so that he may be revealed in his time. {7} For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only he who now restrains it will do so until he is out of the way. {8} And then the lawless one will be revealed, and the Lord Jesus will slay him with the breath of his mouth and destroy him by his appearing and his coming.*

4. This view also provides an understanding for the mention of the fact (in verse 3) that Satan will not be permitted in this 1000 year reign to deceive the nations. As we have seen, the heart of transformation of the early Church was the inclusion of the Gentiles and the realization that true Israel (believers in Christ) would now include Gentiles as well as Jews. In effect the Gospel message, the proclamation of the truth was now to go to the nations so long deceived by idolatry and other false notions about God and the true destiny of man. Hence the fact that the millennium will restrain Satan's power to deceive is another way of saying the nations will hear God's truth and believe
5. And yet it must be said that the weakness of this position is that it doesn't help us to deal with a verse ahead that describes only the martyrs as arising to reign with Christ while the rest of the dead have to wait until the end of the millenium.

- J. ***threw him into the pit***- The Greek word, abysos (here translated as "pit") is more technically understood and translated as the abyss or "the deep." The abyss was a vast subterranean cavern. This was the place where all the dead went (sheol) but the term is also used for the place where special sinners await punishment (more like our present notion of hell). It was reached by a chasm going far into the heart of the earth. There was a tradition among the Jews that in fact the huge stone on which the Temple was built was actually a stone covering this chasm. Underneath the stone lay a vastly deep fissure that led down to the netherworld. Thus the Temple served as a sort of chain or cork keeping the powers of death and hell at bay. Regarding this abyss, demons had a fear. Recall how they begged Jesus not to expel them into the deep when he was casting them out of the Geresene Demoniac (Luke 8:27-33) *And as he stepped out on land,*

there met him a man from the city who had demons; for a long time he had worn no clothes, and he lived not in a house but among the tombs. {28} When he saw Jesus, he cried out and fell down before him, and said with a loud voice, "What have you to do with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I beseech you, do not torment me." {29} For he had commanded the unclean spirit to come out of the man. (For many a time it had seized him; he was kept under guard, and bound with chains and fetters, but he broke the bonds and was driven by the demon into the desert.) {30} Jesus then asked him, "What is your name?" And he said, "Legion"; for many demons had entered him. {31} And they begged him not to command them to depart into the abyss. {32} Now a large herd of swine was feeding there on the hillside; and they begged him to let them enter these. So he gave them leave. {33} Then the demons came out of the man and entered the swine, and the herd rushed down the steep bank into the lake and were drowned.

- K. ***that he should deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years were ended.***- We have already discussed a possible implication of this verse. Satan is bound by Christ through His passion, death and resurrection. Next the Gospel goes forth to the nations. Hence, the period of the New Testament, the period of the Church is a time when Satan is to some extent bound or deprived of the fulness of his power. Meanwhile his deceptions among the nations are shown to be so by the light of the Gospel. The weakness of our theory is also evident however since Satan does seem to still have an awful lot of power and influence.⁴ If the thousand year reign refers to the New Testament period, then we cannot understand this verse in an absolute sense. Satan is not entirely removed from the picture. He still does exercise influence. Yet, his power *is* limited especially for those who take grace seriously. The thousand years must also be taken not as a literal passage but as another way of saying "a long time." In contrast to the "little while" of Satan's full resurgence.
- L. ***After that he must be loosed for a little while*** What is interesting here is that he must be loosed. Evidently it is part of the divine will that this be so. Some commentators, especially those who favor the premillennial view, suggest that after a period of peace wherein the Messiah reigns, being a Christian becomes "easy" and the heroic witness of the saints victorious in trials becomes muted. Thus, the final trial proves the fidelity of those who claim to have faith. For the amillennial view we have here adopted the age of heroic witness hardly seems muted today, even if this is the millenium. Hence there is here more of an emphasis on the necessity being due to the fact merely that God requires it. Letting Satan loose is not unprecedented. In the history of Israel God not infrequently handed Israel over to be punished by wicked and godless nations as a punishment.

⁴Scripture itself attests to this influence. Hence the binding of Satan should not be understood in an absolute sense: (1 Pet 5:8-9) *Be sober, be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking some one to devour. {9} Resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same experience of suffering is required of your brotherhood throughout the world.* And again (Eph 6:11-16) *Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. {12} For we are not contending against flesh and blood, but against the principalities, against the powers, against the world rulers of this present darkness, against the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places. {13} Therefore take the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. {14} Stand therefore, having girded your loins with truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, {15} and having shod your feet with the equipment of the gospel of peace; {16} besides all these, taking the shield of faith, with which you can quench all the flaming darts of the evil one.* Note however that scripture does say we are able to resist. Hence Satan is in some sense bound.

Likewise, in the book of Job a similar scenario is evident were Job is tested to see whether he loves God or merely what God can do for him. : (Job 1:8-12) *And the LORD said to Satan, "Have you considered my servant Job, that there is none like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, who fears God and turns away from evil?" {9} Then Satan answered the LORD, "Does Job fear God for nought? {10} Hast thou not put a hedge about him and his house and all that he has, on every side? Thou hast blessed the work of his hands, and his possessions have increased in the land. {11} But put forth thy hand now, and touch all that he has, and he will curse thee to thy face." {12} And the LORD said to Satan, "Behold, all that he has is in your power; only upon himself do not put forth your hand." So Satan went forth from the presence of the LORD.*

- M. ***They*** [the martyrs] ***came to life, and reigned with Christ a thousand years. The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were ended.*** Now here is a very difficult verse. It seems to suggest that the dead remain dead, or in a state of shadowy sleep. Only the martyrs are raised up. In fact, only the postmillennial position can see this verse as trouble-free. For them it is simply a description of what the afterlife was like before Christ. The dead went to Sheol and “lived” is a shadowy dream-like state. There they stayed until Christ came and awoke them. In terms of dealing with this passage from the amillennial viewpoint the only approach is to say that the passage cannot be taken literally.⁵ Rather, John is using figurative language to describe the reward of Christian faith. Since John has used the image of resurrection to symbolize reward, he is careful to distinguish it from the general resurrection. It is another way of emphasizing the fact that for a Christian, death *is* resurrection. The death of the faithful Christian in fact issues forth in the first resurrection. There is also a tradition of the first resurrection being Baptism for we rise to new life. Recall this passage from St. Paul (Rom 6:3-5) *Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? {4} We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life. {5} For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his.* Hence the only real solution in terms of the amillennial view (and the premillennial view) is to conclude that John is writing figuratively. Hence his point here is that all who have accepted baptism and come to faith will reign with Christ in a resurrection that will also usher in a resurrection for the body in days to come. Those who reject Christ are already dead. In this view, a martyr is understood to be anyone who witnessed to Christ, not just those who shed their blood.
- N. ***the first resurrection*** - as just stated this should probably be understood as the special privilege enjoyed by all Christians during the millennium. In the second resurrection, all the dead, good and evil, believer and unbeliever, will be summoned before the throne for judgement. We shall see this second and general resurrection in a couple of verses. Another way to understand the first resurrection which was common among some of the early Fathers was to understand it as baptism. In baptism we die to our old way of life and are reborn to a new life. The “rest of the dead” are those who did not receive baptism. They too will rise at the Last Judgement and be judged according to their deeds. The second resurrection is the one that will take place at the end of time when the

⁵In fact if you really want to get literal, John does not even say martyrs here. He uses a Greek phrase to describe those who were decapitated. Hence, an absolute literal interpretation would mean only the beheaded would be resurrected!

- body will be raised and the human being, body and soul will enter into everlasting glory.
- O. ***the second death*** - this is understood best in the light of its Old Testament background. For example Jeremiah 51:39 warns the Babylonians that they shall sleep a perpetual sleep and not wake. Other Jewish translations of the text translate it as follows, “They shall die the second death and not live in the world to come.” Hence the second death is exclusion from the blessings of heaven. The second death is also identified with the lake of sulphur and fire. All of us will die the first death, it is the second death (exclusion from the Kingdom) that is most awful. Recall the words of our Lord: (Mat 10:28) *And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul; rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell.* In an extension of this type of thinking, Scripture equates the life of sin with death. For example, (Eph 2:4-6) *But God, who is rich in mercy, out of the great love with which he loved us, {5} even when we were dead through our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), {6} and raised us up with him, and made us sit with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus,* Or again, (1 Tim 5:5-6) *She who is a real widow, and is left all alone, has set her hope on God and continues in supplications and prayers night and day; {6} whereas she who is self-indulgent is dead even while she lives.*
- P. ***priests of God...and they will reign*** - each Christian is baptized priest prophet and king. Two of the “offices” are mentioned here. The third, prophet was mentioned back in Rev 19:10 *Then I fell down at his [the angel’s] feet to worship him, but he said to me, "You must not do that! I am a fellow servant with you and your brethren who hold the testimony of Jesus. Worship God." For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.* In effect what the angel was saying to John that they were now coequals since they shared in the office of prophet.⁶ Thus all who preach the Gospel have a share in the work of prophecy. Now in this Chapter the second two of the three-fold office of the baptized Christian are mentioned: priest and king. Each Christian exercises a priesthood in that we are able to offer sacrifice to the Father through Jesus. Likewise Christ promised his faithful disciples that they would reign with him: Luke 22:28-30 *You are those who have continued with me in my trials; and I assign to you, as my Father assigned to me, a kingdom, that you may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom, and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel.* Although the office of priest prophet and king extends in a pre-eminent sense to the Apostles (and bishops) it also relates to all the baptized. .
- Q. ***And when the thousand years are ended, Satan will be loosed from his prison and will come out to deceive*** Here too we must see the thousand years as a figure for, the “fulness of time” or the appointed time. This is a prelude to his final defeat and to the Last (or General) judgement.
- R. ***the nations which are at the four corners of the earth, that is, Gog and Magog*** The battle of Gog and Magog has direct reference to a passage in Ezekiel 38 and 39.⁷ Gog and Magog are names connected with the nations of the North near the Black Sea, whose invasion of Israel was so devastating that it became the prototype of the worst kind of invasion. Ezekiel (in 38 & 39) described how they advance through the Plain of Esdraelon, scene of many battles, till they reach the mountains of Judea, on whose hills

⁶The Greek word *aggelos* (from which we get the word angel) means “messenger.” This is the same root meaning of the word “prophet” which means “one who proclaims God’s word and/or mediates his presence.

⁷Were there time it would be a fascinating study to see how, in many ways, the Book of Revelation is really of recasting of the same occurrences of Ez 33-43.

Jerusalem sits. Then the destructive force is suddenly brought to ruin by the overwhelming might of God. In This case, John seems to apply the image to the Church, (the New Jerusalem) whose enemy (Satan in conjunction with all the enemies of God and the Church down through the ages) will suddenly be destroyed. Just like with Gog, it is as though God lures them in only for the purpose of a trick and as a prelude to their sudden and ultimate destruction. But who are these nations from the four corners of the earth? Again, here in the 20th chapter we have likely moved beyond a First Century context and are now in an eschatological (end times) scenario. Thus, once the “great city,” (the “harlot” Jerusalem) is destroyed (Back in Rev. 19) The Book of Revelation seems to move from the microscopic level to a more sweeping and cosmic macroscopic view. It amounts essentially to a *Sic semper tyrannis* argument. In other words, Chapter 20 seems to say, as it was for the Harlot city so it shall be for every enemy of God, every persecutor of his people. And in the end all these enemies from down through time (symbolized by the nations from the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog) are lured in for their final destruction. They come to the camp of the saints, the beloved city (New Jerusalem) thinking they have won the day and at once, fire swoops down from heaven and consumes them.

- S. ***gather them for battle; their number is like the sand of the sea. And they marched up over the broad earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city;*** - There are many enemies of God envisioned here. And this recalls some rather sobering words of our Lord which indicated that many would be lost.⁸ Here too there are images given for the Church. It is the camp of the saints. This was the description used for Israel’s wilderness experience after the Exodus from Egypt. Thus, God’s people are seen as a people in pilgrimage still. The Church is also the “beloved city”. and this is the “New Jerusalem” in contrast to “the great city” the harlot Jerusalem. In the next chapter as we behold the New Jerusalem, beautiful as a bride coming down from heaven. The beloved city is called new, not in the sense of an alternative or replacement city. She is the same Jerusalem, but now pruned of her unholiness and infidelity. She also includes the Gentiles now (cf Rom 11).
- T. ***but fire came down from heaven and consumed them, and the devil who had deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and sulphur where the beast and the false prophet were, and they will be tormented day and night for ever and ever.*** - Here is the final lot of the wicked who refuse repentance, and everlasting hell with all the unpleasantness one can imagine: blazing fire and smelly sulphur (like rotten eggs). In

8(Mat 24:4-5) And Jesus answered them, "Take heed that no one leads you astray. {5} For many will come in my name, saying, 'I am the Christ,' and they will lead many astray.

(Mat 24:10-12) And then many will fall away, and betray one another, and hate one another. {11} And many false prophets will arise and lead many astray. {12} And because wickedness is multiplied, most men's love will grow cold.

(Luke 13:23-30) And some one said to him, "Lord, will those who are saved be few?" And he said to them, {24} "Strive to enter by the narrow door; for many, I tell you, will seek to enter and will not be able.

(Mat 7:13-14) "Enter by the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the way is easy, that leads to destruction, and those who enter by it are many. {14} For the gate is narrow and the way is hard, that leads to life, and those who find it are few.

hell there is torment as opposed to the joy and peace of heaven. Further the suffering is day and night without end. Fire coming down from heaven is also a sign of divine judgement. The prophet Elijah could call down fire from heaven.

1. (2 Ki 1:9-18) *Then the king sent to him a captain of fifty men with his fifty. He went up to Elijah, who was sitting on the top of a hill, and said to him, "O man of God, the king says, 'Come down.'" {10} But Elijah answered the captain of fifty, "If I am a man of God, let fire come down from heaven and consume you and your fifty." Then fire came down from heaven, and consumed him and his fifty. {11} Again the king sent to him another captain of fifty men with his fifty. And he went up and said to him, "O man of God, this is the king's order, 'Come down quickly!'" {12} But Elijah answered them, "If I am a man of God, let fire come down from heaven and consume you and your fifty." Then the fire of God came down from heaven and consumed him and his fifty. {13} Again the king sent the captain of a third fifty with his fifty. And the third captain of fifty went up, and came and fell on his knees before Elijah, and entreated him, "O man of God, I pray you, let my life, and the life of these fifty servants of yours, be precious in your sight. {14} Lo, fire came down from heaven, and consumed the two former captains of fifty men with their fifties; but now let my life be precious in your sight." {15} Then the angel of the LORD said to Elijah, "Go down with him; do not be afraid of him." So he arose and went down with him to the king,*
2. Likewise Jeremiah was promised this power though in a more figurative sense: (Jer 5:11-14) *For the house of Israel and the house of Judah have been utterly faithless to me, says the LORD. They have spoken falsely of the LORD, and have said, 'He will do nothing; no evil will come upon us, nor shall we see sword or famine...Therefore thus says the LORD, the God of hosts: "Because they have spoken this word, behold, I am making my words in your mouth a fire, and this people wood, and the fire shall devour them.*

U. ***Then I saw a great white throne and him who sat upon it; from his presence earth and sky fled away, and no place was found for them. And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Also another book was opened, which is the book of life. And the dead were judged by what was written in the books, by what they had done. And the sea gave up the dead in it, Death and Hades gave up the dead in them, and all were judged by what they had done. Then Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire.*** - Here is likely described the Last Judgement (or the "second" resurrection. All the basic elements of the Last Judgement are present: all those who have ever lived are gathered, they are judged impartially by their deeds which are recorded in a book. The just are gathered in and the unjust consigned to woe. The scene is quite similar to other descriptions of the ultimate judgement. Some of these descriptions are reproduced here

1. Daniel 7: 9-14 *As I looked, thrones were placed and one that was ancient of days took his seat; his raiment was white as snow, and the hair of his head like pure wool; his throne was fiery flames, its wheels were burning fire. A stream of fire issued and came forth from before him; a thousand thousands served him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him; the court sat in judgment, and the books were opened. I looked then because of the sound of the great words which the horn was speaking. And as I looked, the beast was slain, and its body destroyed and given over to be burned with fire. As for the rest of the beasts, their dominion was taken away, but their lives were prolonged for a season and a time. I saw in the night visions, and behold, with the clouds of*

heaven there came one like a son of man, and he came to the Ancient of Days and was presented before him.

2. (Mat 13:40-43) *Just as the weeds are gathered and burned with fire, so will it be at the close of the age. The Son of man will send his angels⁹, and they will gather out of his kingdom all causes of sin and all evildoers, and throw them into the furnace of fire; there men will weep and gnash their teeth. Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears, let him hear.*
3. (Mat 19:28) *Jesus said to them, "Truly, I say to you, in the new world, when the Son of man shall sit on his glorious throne, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.*
4. (Mat 24:29-35)¹⁰ *Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken; then will appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory; and he will send out his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.*

V. ***This is the second death, the lake of fire; and if any one's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.*** - Here is defined the "second death" means final condemnation and consignment to the flames of hell. Likewise, passages from the Old Testament serve as the background for the existence of a Book wherein the names of the saved are found written.

1. Dan 12:1-3 *At that time shall arise Michael, the great prince who has charge of your people. And there shall be a time of trouble, such as never has been since there was a nation till that time; but at that time your people shall be delivered, every one whose name shall be found written in the book. And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt. And those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the firmament; and those who turn many to righteousness, like the stars for ever and ever.*
2. Exodus 32:32-33 *And Moses prayed to the Lord, "But now, if thou wilt forgive their sin -- and if not, blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book which thou hast written." But the LORD said to Moses, "Whoever has sinned against me, him will I blot out of my book.*
3. Malachi 3:14-17 *You have said, 'It is vain to serve God. What is the good of our keeping his charge or of walking as in mourning before the LORD of hosts? Henceforth we deem the arrogant blessed; evildoers not only prosper but when they put God to the test they escape.'" Then those who feared the LORD spoke with one another; the LORD heeded and heard them, and a book of remembrance was written before him of those who feared the LORD and thought on his name. "They shall be mine, says the LORD of hosts, my special possession*

⁹Although the angels are not active in these verses from Revelation directly before us, we have seen how instrumental they have been all along.

¹⁰This passage is actually a passage that is in the context of the destruction of the Temple. Jesus quite clearly gives this as the context. However, we can also see how wrapped together both events are. What this again demonstrates is how the destruction of the Temple and the end of the Old Testament age is symbolic of the end of the world and the destruction of the world, at least as we know it.

on the day when I act, and I will spare them as a man spares his son who serves him. Then once more you shall distinguish between the righteous and the wicked, between one who serves God and one who does not serve him.

4. *Luke 10:20 Nevertheless do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you; but rejoice that your names are written in heaven."*
5. *Phil 4:2-3 I entreat Euodia and I entreat Syntyche to agree in the Lord. And I ask you also, true yokefellow, help these women, for they have labored side by side with me in the gospel together with Clement and the rest of my fellow workers, whose names are in the book of life.*
6. *Heb 12:22-23 But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable angels in festal gathering, and to the assembly of the first-born who are enrolled in heaven, and to a judge who is God of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect,*

XXI. Rev 21 The New Heaven and earth, the New Jerusalem - *Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. {2} And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband; {3} and I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Behold, the dwelling of God is with men. He will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself will be with them; {4} he will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning nor crying nor pain any more, for the former things have passed away." {5} And he who sat upon the throne said, "Behold, I make all things new." Also he said, "Write this, for these words are trustworthy and true." {6} And he said to me, "It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. To the thirsty I will give from the fountain of the water of life without payment. {7} He who conquers shall have this heritage, and I will be his God and he shall be my son. {8} But as for the cowardly, the faithless, the polluted, as for murderers, fornicators, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars, their lot shall be in the lake that burns with fire and sulphur, which is the second death." {9} Then came one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues, and spoke to me, saying, "Come, I will show you the Bride, the wife of the Lamb." {10} And in the Spirit he carried me away to a great, high mountain, and showed me the holy city Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God, {11} having the glory of God, its radiance like a most rare jewel, like a jasper, clear as crystal. {12} It had a great, high wall, with twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels, and on the gates the names of the twelve tribes of the sons of Israel were inscribed; {13} on the east three gates, on the north three gates, on the south three gates, and on the west three gates. {14} And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them the twelve names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb. {15} And he who talked to me had a measuring rod of gold to measure the city and its gates and walls. {16} The city lies foursquare, its length the same as its breadth; and he measured the city with his rod, twelve thousand stadia; its length and breadth and height are equal. {17} He also measured its wall, a hundred and forty-four cubits by a man's measure, that is, an angel's. {18} The wall was built of jasper, while the city was pure gold, clear as glass. {19} The foundations of the wall of the city were adorned with every jewel; the first was jasper, the second sapphire, the third agate, the fourth emerald, {20} the fifth onyx, the sixth carnelian, the seventh chrysolite, the eighth beryl, the ninth topaz, the tenth chrysoprase, the eleventh jacinth, the twelfth amethyst. {21} And the twelve gates were twelve pearls, each of the gates made of a single pearl, and the street of the city was pure gold, transparent as glass. {22} And I saw no temple in the city, for its temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb. {23} And the city has no need of sun or moon to shine upon it, for the glory of God is its light, and its lamp is the Lamb. {24} By its light shall the nations walk; and the kings of the earth shall bring their glory into it, {25} and its gates shall never be shut by day -- and there shall be no night there; {26} they shall bring into it the glory and the honor of the nations. {27} But nothing unclean shall enter it, nor any one who practices abomination or falsehood, but only those who are written in the Lamb's book of life.*

A. Here is an outline of the Chapter¹¹

1. Presentation (of the Bride and the New Creation) - vv. 1-2
2. Proclamation (of) vv. 3-8
 - a. Closeness - v. 3
 - b. Consolation - vv. 4-6
 - c. Consummation - v. 6a

¹¹Note, this outline bleeds across the chapter break into verse 4 of Chapter 22.

- d. Conquerors - vv. 6b-7
- e. Condemned - v. 8
- 3. Portrayal (of the Bride) - vv. 10-22
 - a. Designation - v. 10
 - b. Description - vv. 11-14
 - (1) precious - v. 11
 - (2) protected - vv 12-13
 - (3) pedigreed - v. 14
 - c. Dimensions - vv. 15-17
 - d. Design - vv. 18-22
- 4. Presence - vv. 23-26; 22:4
- 5. Purity - v. 27; 22:3a
- 6. Produce - 22:1-2

B. ***a new heaven and a new earth..the first heaven and the first earth had passed away-***
Recall that in Rev 20:11 creation fled away: *Then I saw a great white throne and him who sat upon it; from his presence earth and sky fled away, and no place was found for them.* This happened because creation had been tainted by sin and thus could not endure in the presence of God. Now John sees a new heaven and a new earth. There is an Old Testament background to this text

1. *Isaiah 65:1 I was ready to be sought by those who did not ask for me; I was ready to be found by those who did not seek me. I said, "Here am I, here am I," to a nation that did not call on my name. I spread out my hands all the day to a rebellious people, who walk in a way that is not good, following their own devices; a people who provoke me to my face continually, sacrificing in gardens and burning incense upon bricks...who say, "Keep to yourself, do not come near me, for I am set apart from you." These are a smoke in my nostrils, a fire that burns all the day. Behold, it is written before me: "I will not keep silent, but I will repay, yea, I will repay...[but] for my servants' sake, [I will] not destroy them all. I will bring forth descendants from Jacob, and from Judah inheritors of my mountains; my chosen shall inherit it, and my servants shall dwell there. Sharon shall become a pasture for flocks, and the Valley of Achor a place for herds to lie down, for my people who have sought me. But you who forsake the LORD, who forget my holy mountain...I will destine you to the sword, and all of you shall bow down to the slaughter; because, when I called, you did not answer..."Behold, my servants shall eat, but you shall be hungry; behold, my servants shall drink, but you shall be thirsty; behold, my servants shall rejoice, but you shall be put to shame..."For behold, I create **new heavens and a new earth**; and the former things shall not be remembered or come into mind. But be glad and rejoice for ever in that which I create; for behold, I create **Jerusalem** a rejoicing, and her people a joy. I will rejoice in Jerusalem, and be glad in my people; no more shall be heard in it the sound of weeping and the cry of distress. No more shall there be in it an infant that lives but a few days, or an old man who does not fill out his days, for the child shall die a hundred years old, and the sinner a hundred years old shall be accursed. They shall build houses and inhabit them; they shall plant vineyards and eat their fruit...The wolf and the lamb shall feed together, the lion shall eat straw like the ox; and dust shall be the serpent's food. They shall not hurt or destroy in all my holy mountain, says the LORD."*
2. Another New Testament text also offers some details as to the thinking about this matter in the early Church. 2 Peter 3:9-15 *The Lord is not slow about his promise as some count slowness, but is forbearing toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance. But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a loud noise, and the elements will be dissolved with fire, and the earth and the works that are upon it will be burned up. Since all these things are thus to be dissolved, what sort of persons ought you to be in lives of holiness and godliness, waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be kindled and dissolved, and the elements will melt with fire! But according to his promise we wait for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells. Therefore, beloved, since you wait for these, be zealous to be found by him without spot or blemish, and at peace. And count the forbearance of our Lord as salvation.*

C. And yet all this leads to some questions. What does it mean to have a new heaven and a new earth? Why not simply renew or restore the present one? In this text we are in the period beyond the final judgement. The King of kings has completed his thousand year reign (however this is understood). Each person has received reward or punishment and now we are entering the eternal state beyond the struggles of human history. Within this context there must be a renewal, a new setting for the now purified human race, an earth free from the scars of rebellion that sin caused. There are two positions about the newness that is being described.

1. John is talking about a renewed heaven and earth, not one that is absolutely new. Thus the old creation is purified, not destroyed. This text then represents a return to the way things were in Eden. There are many text in existence outside of the Bible which elaborate the Jewish expectations of the first century to which this view is heir. They tend to favor the understanding of the expectation as renewal, not destruction, recreation.
2. Other scholars argue that the passage must be understood literally and cite the emphasis given in the verse itself, "the first heaven and the first earth had passed away. Thus what we have here is a totally new creation. This also appears to fit the language of the second letter of Peter as we saw above. This view would conclude that the created order is so tainted that only a destruction - recreation (like the Genesis flood) scenario will do. The heavens¹² and earth are thus destroyed
3. It must be said that the case for annihilation/recreation (#2) is quite compelling but it is not convincing. It seems unlikely that God would totally destroy his creation which he saw as fundamentally good. The reference to the Genesis flood is interesting since it is also there that God promises he will not bring such destruction: *And when the LORD smelled the pleasing odor, the LORD said in his heart, "I will never again curse the ground because of man, for the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth; neither will I ever again destroy every living creature as I have done...I establish my covenant with you, that never again shall all flesh be cut off by the waters of a flood, and never again shall there be a flood to destroy the earth.* (Gen 8:21; 9:11) Granted, God says he will not destroy the earth by water, but this seems a bit legalistic in terms of interpretation. The text from 2 Peter seems quite clear, but there is also a way in which scripture addresses this issue which shows how destruction though described literally, is meant figuratively. Consider this text from Hebrews 1:10-11 *And, "Thou, Lord, didst found the earth in the beginning, and the heavens are the work of thy hands; they will perish, but thou remainest; they will all grow old like a garment, like a mantle thou wilt roll them up, and they will be changed. But thou art the same, and thy years will never end.* Notice how a literal perishing and end is later qualified. Now they will not perish but be changed. Likewise consider this passage from St. Paul, *Therefore, if any one is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has passed away, behold, the new has come.*(2 cor 5:17) Thus, although we are new and the old has passed away, this newness is not inconstant with our on-going state of being. We are destroyed in the literal sense by baptism, we are renewed, and made new. Hence, though the biblical language at first glance seems to require a literal, annihilation/recreation

¹²Heavens here does not refer to the abode of God himself but the observable heavens, space, and the stars.

scenario, a second look shows that the biblical texts often transfer between literal and figurative senses. This is understandable since what is being described is beyond the mere power of words. The renewal effected by Christ at the end will result in changes so substantial that the world as we know it will cease to be. The renewed heavens and earth will seem totally new. In addition remember the marriage context of this book. In a moment we will behold a new Jerusalem. But God has not divorced or killed his first wife and is marrying another bride, also called Jerusalem. She is the same bride, but renewed and purified. More on this in a moment. Finally there is the description that Jesus himself offers to John for what He is doing: ***Behold, I make all things new.*** This seems to favor a renewal context more than destruction re-creation.

4.

See also letter "I" below.

- D. ***the sea was no more*** - For the Jewish mind, reflected in scripture there were no romantic notions of the sea. Normally "the sea" was synonymous with chaos. Terrible and unpredictable storms came off the waters to destroy. Consider Psalm 46:1-3 *God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear though the earth should change, though the mountains shake in the heart of the sea; though its waters roar and foam, though the mountains tremble with its tumult.* Or see how Psalm 68:21-22 makes the Sea a synonym for destruction, *But God will shatter the heads of his enemies, the hairy crown of him who walks in his guilty ways. The Lord said, "I will bring them back from Bashan, I will bring them back from the depths of the sea.* Sea monsters also lived in the depths and while God could destroy them, they were fearsome indeed, Yet God my King is from of old, working salvation in the midst of the earth. *Thou didst divide the sea by thy might; thou didst break the heads of the dragons on the waters. Thou didst crush the heads of Leviathan, thou didst give him as food for the creatures of the wilderness.*(Psalm 74:12-14) The sea in its awesome unpredictable power cast fear into the hearts of all and God alone could still its power, *O LORD God of hosts, who is mighty as thou art, O LORD, with thy faithfulness round about thee? Thou dost rule the raging of the sea; when its waves rise, thou stillest them.*(Ps 89:8) Thus when Jesus still the storm, the apostles ask, "Who then is this, that even wind and sea obey him?" (Mark 4:41). Thus when the text before us says that the sea was no more, it is like saying all the chaos and unpredictability, all the fear and sudden sorrow, all the unruly and overwhelming power of nature is done away with. Man is once again at peace and harmony with his surroundings, there is nothing to fear in nature.
- E. ***The holy city, the new Jerusalem*** - here is the ultimate identification of the city that has been in question. The city before has not yet been named, surely it has been hinted at as we have seen. But now, a name is given. The harlot city that was cast down must now reappear, purified and renewed. Who is she, new Rome? Surely not, she is new Jerusalem. Given our preparation, could she be any other city? Those who favor an identification of Rome as the harlot city may have some difficulties with this text. The ultimate question is this, if Rome is the city destroyed why does a new Jerusalem descend from the heavens?
- F. ***Coming down from heaven*** - the point here is that this is a work of God.
- G. ***As a bride adorned for her husband*** - we have already dealt in these notes quite extensively with the biblical background to the image of the bride. Perhaps here it is most important to recall the "bride" passages from Isaiah from which this passage seems to draw most specifically. The allusion here is more than merely that of the bride. It also includes the mention of the jewels and precious stones. These two details make it most certain that there is an intentional reference to at least two passages from Isaiah. That

John alludes to them here is an important clue as to the meaning of the vision before us. The clue comes from the historical context of these Isaiah texts: the return of a purified bride, Israel from exile. Thus we can see a further proof of the point we have been making all along: the harlot city is none other than Jerusalem. Harlot though she has become, she is still God's bride. God must cleanse her from her iniquity but he will not forsake her. God does not obtain a new bride for himself, his Bride is still Israel and she, after having been purified, will not be a barren widow. She, as God's bride will have more children than ever before. Note then these texts from Isaiah:

1. *Isaiah 54 "Fear not, for you will not be ashamed; be not confounded, for you will not be put to shame; for you will forget the shame of your youth, and the reproach of your widowhood you will remember no more...For your Maker is your **husband**, the LORD of hosts is his name; and the Holy One of Israel is your Redeemer, the God of the whole earth he is called. For the LORD has called you like a **wife** forsaken and grieved in spirit, like a **wife** of youth when she is cast off, says your God. For a brief moment I forsook you, but with great compassion I will gather you. In overflowing wrath for a moment I hid my face from you, but with everlasting love I will have compassion on you, says the LORD, your Redeemer. "For this is like the days of Noah to me: as I swore that the waters of Noah should no more go over the earth, so I have sworn that I will not be angry with you and will not rebuke you. For the mountains may depart and the hills be removed, but my steadfast love shall not depart from you, and my covenant of peace shall not be removed, says the LORD, who has compassion on you." O afflicted one, storm-tossed, and not comforted, behold, I will set your stones in **antimony**, and lay your foundations with **sapphires**. I will make your pinnacles of **agate**, your gates of carbuncles, and all your wall of **precious stones**...Isa. 55:1 "Ho, every one who thirsts, come to the **waters**; and he who has no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and **without price**. Here then are three significant clues that the background for our Revelation text is Isaiah 54-55: The bride, precious stones, and water without price. Therefore it seems clear, this "New Jerusalem" is in fact the same Bride, the renewed Jerusalem.*
 2. *Isaiah 61:10-62:5 I will greatly rejoice in the LORD, my soul shall exult in my God; for he has clothed me with the garments of salvation, he has covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decks himself with a garland, and as a **bride** adorns herself with her **jewels**..The nations shall see your vindication, and all the kings your glory; and you shall be called by a new name which the mouth of the LORD will give. You shall be a crown of beauty in the hand of the LORD, and a royal diadem in the hand of your God. You shall no more be termed Forsaken, and your land shall no more be termed Desolate; but you shall be called My delight is in her, and your land Married; for the LORD delights in you, and your land shall be married. For as a young man marries a virgin, so shall your builder marry you, and as the bridegroom rejoices over the bride, so shall your God rejoice over you.*
- H. **Behold, the dwelling of God is with men...God himself will be with them** - Surely there is an echo here of Ezekiel 37:27-28 *My dwelling place shall be with them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Then the nations will know that I the LORD sanctify Israel, when my sanctuary is in the midst of them for evermore.* Although Ezekiel proclaimed this of a restored Israel after the Babylonian captivity, it was not fully realized at that time. This was because the Ark of the Covenant was never found

again after the exile. It was within the ark that God dwelt and made his presence with Israel manifest. But after the return from exile the ark was not to be found. Legend had it that Jeremiah hid it in the hills, but no one knew where. Thus the temple's inner sanctum was really an empty room and the glory of God's presence through the ark was lost. Hence these lines show a fulfillment of the expectations of Israel. Now God would once again dwell with his people and live in the midst of them. But this presence is not limited to the temple. Now God dwells among his people. This fact is underscored in the vision of the Holy City, New Jerusalem which follows in the next chapter. We are told that there is no temple in the New City for God himself is the temple (verse 22). Thus the text is fulfilled today in a way in which Ezekiel could not experience. God is present to his people through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit and through the Eucharist. In all Catholic parishes, there is a tabernacle wherein Jesus is present through the Holy Spirit. Though we often take the presence of God for granted we should strive to see the glory of it due to the longings of Israel who looked for the return of the glorious presence of the ark. *O LORD, why dost thou make us err from thy ways and harden our heart, so that we fear thee not? Return for the sake of thy servants, the tribes of thy heritage. Thy holy people possessed thy sanctuary a little while; our adversaries have trodden it down. We have become like those over whom thou hast never ruled, like those who are not called by thy name. O that thou wouldst rend the heavens and come down, that the mountains might quake at thy presence-- as when fire kindles brushwood and the fire causes water to boil -- to make thy name known to thy adversaries, and that the nations might tremble at thy presence!*

- I. ***He will wipe every tear from their eyes*** - a direct reference to Isaiah 25:8. The 25th chapter of Isaiah deals also with the restoration of Israel but also advances the truth that all the nations will come to glorify God. Thus the text is particularly fitting as a background for the text before us: Isaiah 25:1-9 *O LORD, thou art my God; I will exalt thee, I will praise thy name; for thou hast done wonderful things, plans formed of old, faithful and sure. For thou hast made the city a heap, the fortified city a ruin; the palace of aliens is a city no more, it will never be rebuilt. Therefore strong peoples will glorify thee; cities of ruthless nations will fear thee. For thou hast been a stronghold to the poor, a stronghold to the needy in his distress, a shelter from the storm and a shade from the heat; for the blast of the ruthless is like a storm against a wall, like heat in a dry place. Thou dost subdue the noise of the aliens; as heat by the shade of a cloud, so the song of the ruthless is stilled. On this mountain the LORD of hosts will make for all peoples a feast of fat things, a feast of wine on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wine on the lees well refined. And he will destroy on this mountain the covering that is cast over all peoples, the veil that is spread over all nations. He will swallow up death for ever, and **the Lord GOD will wipe away tears from all faces**, and the reproach of his people he will take away from all the earth; for the LORD has spoken. It will be said on that day, "Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him, that he might save us. This is the LORD; we have waited for him; let us be glad and rejoice in his salvation.*
- J. ***And death shall be no more. Neither shall there be mourning nor crying nor pain any more*** - all the sorrows that have come due to sin shall cease in the New and Eternal Jerusalem. In this case we can see that a total fulfillment of this passage must wait for heaven and will not be completely realized for this world until after the renewal effect after the Last Judgement. Here again we return to the question of the New Heaven and Earth: are annihilated or renewed? As we have said, it seems that the weight of the Biblical evidence leans toward renewal, not annihilation. Consider this text from the Letter to the Romans which has some similar reflections to the verse now before us.

Romans 8:19-25 *For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God; for the creation was subjected to futility, not of its own will but by the will of him who subjected it in hope; because the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and obtain the glorious liberty of the children of God. We know that the whole creation has been groaning in travail together until now; and not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. For in this hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what he sees? But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience.* Hence these promises of God are “already but not yet.” We do in fact share in them to some extent, but not fully. That shall wait for heaven, and by extension, to the Last Day when our bodies shall be resurrected to share in the fruits of the redemption we now possess already in terms of our spirit.

- K. ***Former things have passed away...*** Yet another reference to Isaiah this time 43:19-21 *Behold, I am doing a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it? I will make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert. The wild beasts will honor me, the jackals and the ostriches; for I give water in the wilderness, rivers in the desert, to give drink to my chosen people, the people whom I formed for myself that they might declare my praise .*
- L. ***He who sat upon the throne*** - Most commentators avoid asking who this is by stating rather generically, the one who is seated upon the throne is God. This is true enough but perhaps we can ask more specifically, is this the Father or the Son? Back in Revelation 5 it was quite clear that the Father was the one seated on the throne. However in the present context we see that the one who seated on the throne is judge of all the nations (20:11). Scripture elsewhere states clearly that this task is given over to the Son¹³ Later he also calls himself the alpha and the omega (vs 6) and this too was applied the the Son of Man, Jesus back in Chapter 1. Finally, as the vision concludes in Chapter 22 he says “I am coming soon” (22:7) to which John replies, “Amen, Come Lord Jesus.” (22:20).
- M. ***Behold, I make all things new.*** As we have already noted, the Lord does not say he is making new things, but that he is making all things new.
- N. ***It is done!*** - This phrase recalls of of the seven Last words of our Lord from the Cross: “It is finished” Given the allusion to the text from Isaiah 55 (which speaks of the new and everlasting covenant) in the very next phrase, the tie here to the word from the cross is probably not coincidental.
- O. ***To the thirsty I will give from the fountain of the water of life without payment*** - We have already seen above how this whole chapter of Revelation is based heavily on Isaiah 54-55 which describes Jerusalem like a bride punished but now welcomed back. This invitation of our Lord is a direct allusion to Isaiah 55:1-3 *Come, all you who are thirsty, come to the waters¹⁴; and you who have no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without cost. Why spend money on what is not bread, and your labor on what does not satisfy? Listen, listen to me, and eat what is good, and your soul will delight in the richest of fare. Give ear and come to me; hear me, that your soul may live. I will make an everlasting covenant¹⁵ with you, my faithful love promised to*

¹³John 5:22 *The Father judges no one, but has given all judgment to the Son.*

¹⁴It does not take much imagination for us to understand that for a people who lived in a very arid climate, water was a precious gift.

¹⁵Recall the language of Jesus at the last supper, “This is the cup of my blood of the new and everlasting covenant.”

David. And what is this life-giving water? In the Johanne tradition it is the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, the life of grace, the very life of God within us. To see this, consider this text from (John 7:37-39) *On the last day of the feast, the great day, Jesus stood up and proclaimed, "If any one thirst, let him come to me and drink. He who believes in me, as the scripture has said, 'Out of his heart shall flow rivers of living water.'" Now this he said about the Spirit, which those who believed in him were to receive; for as yet the Spirit had not been given, because Jesus was not yet glorified.*

P. ***I will be his God and he shall be my son*** - This is a clear echo of a promise made to King David and his heirs back in 2 Samuel 7:1 *When your (David's) days are fulfilled and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring after you, who shall come forth from your body, and I will establish his kingdom...He shall build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom for ever. I will be his father, and he shall be my son. When he commits iniquity, I will chasten him with the rod of men, with the stripes of the sons of men; but I will not take my steadfast love from him, as I took it from Saul, whom I put away from before you. And your house and your kingdom shall be made sure for ever before me; your throne shall be established for ever."* In echoing this quote, the text is once again calling to our attention that the Old Covenant is not rejected but fulfilled and renewed. It is another way of saying that there is not a new Bride here but a renewed one. Here it is put in terms of David, his throne is established forever and the love of God is steadfast. If this is Jesus who is speaking in this part of Revelation does it not seem odd that he speaks of his relation to each faithful follower as a father/son relationship? Granted this type of image is more rare but it is not unheard of. For example recall this well known prophecy about the Messiah from Isaiah 9:6 *For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government will be upon his shoulder, and his name will be called "Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace."* In the context of the marital imagery here there is also a fittingness to this image. The Church is Christ's bride and he himself is the Groom. From the chaste union of Christ and his Church we are born to eternal life. In this sense Christ is as a Father to us.

Q. ***But as for the cowardly, the faithless, the polluted, as for murderers, fornicators, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars, their lot shall be in the lake that burns with fire and sulphur, which is the second death.*** - The central point of this verse is that there is no room in heaven for sin. The list of sins here should not be considered an exhaustive one. Rather these sins should be allowed to stand as good examples of all sin. Yet each of them can be rather broad in its scope:

1. Cowardly (**deilos**) - since this sin is seen in contrast to martyrdom we can define it as those who love the world and its comforts more than Christ and his kingdom. Hence on the day of trial they failed to give witness and were ashamed of the gospel.
2. Faithless - **apistoj** - those who refused to accept the Gospel as well as those who accepted it with their lips but denied it by their life. By extension, a faithless person is also untrustworthy
3. Polluted (**bdelusso**) - those who allowed themselves to be saturated with the vile abominations of the world.
4. Murderers (**foneuj**) - most specifically those who slaughtered the Christians in persecutions. By extension all who unjustly take life and refuse to repent of it.
5. Sorcerers - (**farmakeuj**) from pharmakon (a drug, i.e. spell-giving potion); (by extens.) a magician:--sorcerer. In other words those who relied on superstition, or magic to attain to their ends, rather than to rely on and trust God.

6. Fornicators (**pornoj**) - the sexually impure
7. Idolaters (**eidololatrej**) - those who worship false gods of the world.
8. Liars (**pseudej**) Those who are guilty of untruth and of the silence which is also a lie.

R. ***Come I will show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb....and [the angel] showed me the holy city Jerusalem*** - In these verses John sets forth a description the holy city Jerusalem in a way that shows a remarkable mastery of language and an exquisite use of three different literary devices. The description is like the impressions a traveller has as he approaches a city from a distance. From afar he sees its radiance. And thus John describes the city as a whole and the glory of God: ***the holy city Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God, having the glory of God, its radiance like a most rare jewel, like a jasper, clear as crystal.*** As he comes closer he can distinguish its walls and its gates: ***It had a great, high wall, with twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels, and on the gates the names of the twelve tribes of the sons of Israel were inscribed; on the east three gates, on the north three gates, on the south three gates, and on the west three gates.*** Closer still, he can now see its foundation stones: ***And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them the twelve names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.*** Once inside, he realizes its sheer scale: ***And he who talked to me had a measuring rod of gold to measure the city and its gates and walls. The city lies foursquare, its length the same as its breadth; and he measured the city with his rod, twelve thousand stadia; its length and breadth and height are equal.*** And he is able to assess the size and richness of its walls: ***He also measured its wall, a hundred and forty-four cubits by a man's measure, that is, an angel's. The wall was built of jasper, while the city was pure gold, clear as glass.***

S. A word of explanation is due for the size of the city:

1. Foursquare - in other words, the city is a perfect cube. Why a cube? The temple in Jerusalem had a holy of holies which was also a perfect cube. John in effect that now the holy city is the holy of Holies.
2. 12,000 stadia - about 1500 miles!¹⁶
3. 144 cubits - about 216 feet¹⁷. Pretty short walls for so tall and huge a city. But note there are no enemies to keep at bay. All the enemies of God have been defeated. Then why does the description include any walls. Probably this is a cultural inclusion. All ancient cities included walls.

T. The overall impact of the description is to describe a city of immense size (1500 miles X 1500 miles), incomparable beauty, a city which has no enemies outside, and no dissension within; a city whose light is the very glory and presence of God. An interesting omission is that there is little description of the people within. However we must remember that this has already been given in earlier descriptions of the heavenly liturgy. We also hear in this chapter that death, suffering and mourning are no more and that every tear is wiped from their eyes. In the next chapter we shall also see some mention of their bliss. And yet it is still a rather truncated description especially in the context of the elaborate descriptions of the physical attributes of the city. Likewise there is a somewhat vivid description of those outside the city ("dogs" etc...) Perhaps we are left to conclude that the glory and joy of the saints within cannot be reduced to words:

161500 miles is the distance between Washington DC and Denver Colorado. It might take us more than a few days to "walk all over God's heaven!"

17A cubit is the length from the elbow to the tips of the fingers of an average human person. But note here, the one doing the measuring is an angel. How long is an angel's arm?

Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him.(1 Cor 2:9).

XXII. (Revelation 22) *Then he showed me the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb {2} through the middle of the street of the city; also, on either side of the river, the tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit each month; and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. {3} There shall no more be anything accursed, but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it, and his servants shall worship him; {4} they shall see his face, and his name shall be on their foreheads. {5} And night shall be no more; they need no light of lamp or sun, for the Lord God will be their light, and they shall reign for ever and ever. {6} And he said to me, "These words are trustworthy and true. And the Lord, the God of the spirits of the prophets, has sent his angel to show his servants what must soon take place. {7} And behold, I am coming soon." Blessed is he who keeps the words of the prophecy of this book. {8} I John am he who heard and saw these things. And when I heard and saw them, I fell down to worship at the feet of the angel who showed them to me; {9} but he said to me, "You must not do that! I am a fellow servant with you and your brethren the prophets, and with those who keep the words of this book. Worship God." {10} And he said to me, "Do not seal up the words of the prophecy of this book, for the time is near. {11} Let the evildoer still do evil, and the filthy still be filthy, and the righteous still do right, and the holy still be holy." {12} "Behold, I am coming soon, bringing my recompense, to repay every one for what he has done. {13} I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end." {14} Blessed are those who wash their robes, that they may have the right to the tree of life and that they may enter the city by the gates. {15} Outside are the dogs and sorcerers and fornicators and murderers and idolaters, and every one who loves and practices falsehood. {16} "I Jesus have sent my angel to you with this testimony for the churches. I am the root and the offspring of David, the bright morning star." {17} The Spirit and the Bride say, "Come." And let him who hears say, "Come." And let him who is thirsty come, let him who desires take the water of life without price. {18} I warn every one who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: if any one adds to them, God will add to him the plagues described in this book, {19} and if any one takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God will take away his share in the tree of life and in the holy city, which are described in this book. {20} He who testifies to these things says, "Surely I am coming soon." Amen. Come, Lord Jesus! {21} The grace of the Lord Jesus be with all the saints. Amen.*

A. In a way there is an unusual chapter break between 21 & 22. The first five verses of this chapter seem to go more fittingly with chapter 21. Verse six and following then serve as a kind of an epilogue to this work. We must remember that the original Chapter and verse distinctions that we find very helpful today were not part of the original manuscripts. It was not until the Middle Ages that monks added the Chapter verse system. Usually the Chapter breaks were quite natural but occasionally they seem a bit clumsy such as here. Hence our outline of this chapter begins with verse 6.

B. Outline

1. The Imprimatur - vv. 6-8a; 16
2. The Inappropriate response - vv. 8b-9
3. The Immediacy - vv. 10-13
4. The Included - v. 14
5. The Insolent - v. 15
6. The Invitation - vv. 17-21
 - a. Warning - vv. 18-19
 - b. Welcome - vv. 17, 20-21

- C. ***the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb*** - If the life giving water is a symbol of the Holy Spirit¹⁸ (see also commentary on 21:6 above) then we have a Trinitarian meaning to this verse. The Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son.
- D. ***The river...flowing...through the middle of the street of the city; also, on either side of the river, the tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit each month; and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.*** - This is based heavenly on the vision of Ezekiel 47:12¹⁹ *And on the banks, on both sides of the river, there will grow all kinds of trees for food. Their leaves will not wither nor their fruit fail, but they will bear fresh fruit every month, because the water for them flows from the sanctuary. Their fruit will be for food, and their leaves for healing.*" Ezekiel was describing the qualities of a restored Jerusalem based on a vision he had. There is also an echo of Psalm 46:4-5 *There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God, the holy habitation of the Most High. God is in the midst of her, she shall not be moved; God will help her right early.* The overall image for us here is that everything and everyone finds life and joy through the Holy Spirit. In the glory of heaven the joy and the very life of everyone and everything is that the very life and love of God infuses them.
- E. ***There shall no more be anything accursed*** - All wickedness and sin have been sealed away in hell and there is simply no room for them in the new and heavenly Jerusalem. Perhaps it is well to recall an image we have used before: fire and water do not mix; they cannot co-exist in the same place at the same time. And thus here when the holiness of God is fully manifest, there is no room for anything unholy or accursed.
- F. ***they shall see his face*** - The vision of the face of God is another way of describing the blessing of being in God's presence at peace and without fear. There are many passages that describe the wonder of this blessing. Some of them express fear due to sin, others express this look as a deep longing that symbolizes all our longings. Still others speak of the transformative power of this look. Here are a number of them.
1. Ex. 3:6 *And he said, "I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." And Moses hid his **face**, for he was afraid to look at God.*
 2. Ex 33:20 *But," God said, "you cannot see my **face**; for man shall not see me and live."*
 3. Num 6:24-26 *The LORD bless you and keep you: The LORD make his **face** to shine upon you, and be gracious to you: The LORD lift up his countenance upon you, and give you peace.*
 4. Deut 31:17-19 *And the LORD said to Moses, "Behold, you are about to sleep with your fathers; then this people will rise and play the harlot after the strange gods of the land, where they go to be among them, and they will forsake me and*

¹⁸John 7:37 *On the last day of the feast, the great day, Jesus stood up and proclaimed, "If any one thirst, let him come to me and drink. He who believes in me, as the scripture has said, 'Out of his heart shall flow rivers of living water.'" Now this he said about the Spirit, which those who believed in him were to receive; for as yet the Spirit had not been given, because Jesus was not yet glorified.*

¹⁹Remember that an important interpretive key for Revelation is to see it as a recasting of the Book of the Prophet Ezekiel which describes the first destruction of Jerusalem in 587 BC and of its ultimate restoration. Revelation not only quotes extensively from Ezekiel but it also follows an almost identical order.

*break my covenant which I have made with them. Then my anger will be kindled against them in that day, and I will forsake them and hide my **face** from them, and they will be devoured; and many evils and troubles will come upon them, so that they will say in that day, 'Have not these evils come upon us because our God is not among us?' And I will surely hide my **face** in that day on account of all the evil which they have done, because they have turned to other gods.*

5. Deut 34:10 *And there has not arisen a prophet since in Israel like Moses, whom the LORD knew **face to face**.*
6. 2 Sam 21:1 *Now there was a famine in the days of David for three years, year after year; and David sought the **face** of the LORD.*
7. 2 Chr 30:9 *For if you return to the LORD, your brethren and your children will find compassion with their captors, and return to this land. For the LORD your God is gracious and merciful, and will not turn away his **face** from you, if you return to him."*
8. Psalm 11:7 *For the LORD is righteous, he loves righteous deeds; the upright shall behold his **face**.*
9. Psalm 27:8 *Thou hast said, "Seek ye my **face**." My heart says to thee, "Thy **face**, LORD, do I seek."*
10. Psalm 42:2 *My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When shall I come and behold the **face** of God?*
11. Ps 67:1 *May God be gracious to us and bless us and make his **face** to shine upon us,*
12. Ps 80:9 *Restore us, O LORD God of hosts! let thy **face** shine, that we may be saved!*
13. Matt 5:8 *Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.*
14. 1 Cor 13:12 *For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall understand fully, even as I have been fully understood.*
15. 2 Cor 3:12-18 *Since we have such a hope, we are very bold, not like Moses, who put a veil over his **face** so that the Israelites might not see the end of the fading splendor. But their minds were hardened; for to this day, when they read the old covenant, that same veil remains unlifted, because only through Christ is it taken away. Yes, to this day whenever Moses is read a veil lies over their minds; but when a man turns to the Lord the veil is removed. Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. And we all, with unveiled **face**, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being changed into his likeness from one degree of glory to another; for this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.*
16. 1 John 3:2 *Beloved, we are God's children now; it does not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.*

G. ***his name shall be on their foreheads*** - The imagery of marks on the forehead is used in the New Testament only in Revelation. It is a manifestation of the essential character of the person and indicates his/her essential choice with regard to eternal destiny. Thus there are three different marks shown forth:

1. The mark on the forehead of those who are sealed for God (7:3; 9:4; 14:1; 22:4)
2. The mark on the forehead of those who are marked for the beast (13:16; 14:9; 20:4)
3. The mysterious mark (or name) on the forehead of the harlot (17:5)

H. ***And night shall be no more; they need no light of lamp or sun, for the Lord God will be their light and they shall reign for ever and ever.*** - The theme of light and darkness

is a very important one in Johannean writings. The Gospel sets forth a struggle between light and darkness. There is also an Old Testament background to this text. The following quotes are selections from the Old Testament and Johannean literature to illustrate this verse.

1. Isaiah 60:19-21 *The sun shall be no more your light by day, nor for brightness shall the moon give light to you by night; but the LORD will be your everlasting light, and your God will be your glory. Your sun shall no more go down, nor your moon withdraw itself; for the LORD will be your everlasting light, and your days of mourning shall be ended. Your people shall all be righteous; they shall possess the land for ever*
 2. Isaiah 60:1-5 *Arise, shine; [Jerusalem] for your light has come, and the glory of the LORD has risen upon you. For behold, darkness shall cover the earth, and thick darkness the peoples; but the LORD will arise upon you, and his glory will be seen upon you. And nations shall come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your rising. Lift up your eyes round about, and see; they all gather together, they come to you; your sons shall come from far, and your daughters shall be carried in the arms. Then you shall see and be radiant, your heart shall thrill and rejoice; because the abundance of the sea shall be turned to you, the wealth of the nations shall come to you.*
 3. John 1:4-5 *In him was life, and the life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.*
 4. John 3:19-21 *And this is the judgment, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For every one who does evil hates the light, and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed. But he who does what is true comes to the light, that it may be clearly seen that his deeds have been wrought in God.*
 5. John 8:12 *Again Jesus spoke to them, saying, "I am the light of the world; he who follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life."*
 6. 1 John 1:5 *This is the message we have heard from him and proclaim to you, that God is light and in him is no darkness at all.*
- I. The remaining verses serve as an epilogue to the vision. Now that the vision is concluding, Jesus himself addresses John and us.
- J. ***These words are trustworthy and true.*** The reason for this fact is given in the very first line of this book: Rev 1:1 *The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show to his servants what must soon take place; and he made it known by sending his angel to his servant John* These words are from God who can neither deceive nor be deceived.
- K. ***I am coming soon..Do not seal up the words of the prophecy of this book, for the time is near.*** We have commented before on the First Century Fulfillment of the prophecies of this book. This does not exclude and in times fulfillment of the Book but sees the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD as the first and essential meaning this text. Jesus elsewhere spoke of the imminence of his prophecies about the destruction Jerusalem Mark 13:30 *Truly, I say to you, this generation will not pass away before all these things take place*
- L. ***I fell down to worship at the feet of the angel who showed them to me; {9} but he said to me, "You must not do that! I am a fellow servant with you and your brethren the prophets,*** - In the Old Testament it was deemed appropriate to fall down before an angel. But now each Christian also has the office of prophet and thus stands on par with the angels, the messengers of God.
- M. ***Let the evildoer still do evil, and the filthy still be filthy, and the righteous still do***

right, and the holy still be holy. - These words essentially offer peace for the here and now. We might expect different words, something more like: "Let the evil doer hear these words that he might repent." But the message is not unlike something said in Daniel: 12:10 *Many shall purify themselves, and make themselves white, and be refined; but the wicked shall do wickedly; and none of the wicked shall understand; but those who are wise shall understand.* In other words, the wicked are always going to be around, in this age. Don't fret, stay with Jesus and with the winning team. The wicked are losers. Likewise, this text echoes what has already been shown in revelation. Namely that the wicked who are headed for destruction will ultimately head there. Recall two texts from Revelation and consult the commentaries in these notes for further commentary

1. Rev 9:20 *The rest of mankind, who were not killed by these plagues, did not repent of the works of their hands nor give up worshiping demons and idols of gold and silver and bronze and stone and wood, which cannot either see or hear or walk; nor did they repent of their murders or their sorceries or their immorality or their thefts.*
2. Rev 13:10 *If any one is to be taken captive, to captivity he goes; if any one slays with the sword, with the sword must he be slain. Here is a call for the endurance and faith of the saints.*

N. ***I am coming soon, bringing my recompense, to repay every one for what he has done.***
- There is nothing that will not be rewarded or punished. Thus everyone will have his day in court.

1. Mark 4:22 *For there is nothing hid, that will not be made manifest; nor is anything secret, that will not come to light.*
2. Matt 12:36-37 *I tell you, on the day of judgment men will render account for every careless word they utter; for by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned.*
3. John 5:22-34 *The Father judges no one, but has given all judgment to the Son, that all may honor the Son, even as they honor the Father. He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent him. Truly, truly, I say to you, he who hears my word and believes him who sent me, has eternal life; he does not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life. "Truly, truly, I say to you, the hour is coming, and now is, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live. For as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son also to have life in himself, and has given him authority to execute judgment, because he is the Son of man. Do not marvel at this; for the hour is coming when all who are in the tombs will hear his voice and come forth, those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of judgment." "I can do nothing on my own authority; as I hear, I judge; and my judgment is just, because I seek not my own will but the will of him who sent me. If I bear witness to myself, my testimony is not true; there is another who bears witness to me, and I know that the testimony which he bears to me is true. You sent to John, and he has borne witness to the truth. Not that the testimony which I receive is from man; but I say this that you may be saved.*
4. Romans 2:5-11 *But by your hard and impenitent heart you are storing up wrath for yourself on the day of wrath when God's righteous judgment will be revealed. For he will render to every man according to his works: to those who by patience in well-doing seek for glory and honor and immortality, he will give*

eternal life; but for those who are factious and do not obey the truth, but obey wickedness, there will be wrath and fury. There will be tribulation and distress for every human being who does evil, the Jew first and also the Greek, but glory and honor and peace for every one who does good, the Jew first and also the Greek. For God shows no partiality.

5. Rom 14:10-14 *For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of God; for it is written, "As I live, says the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall give praise to God." So each of us shall give account of himself to God. Then let us no more pass judgment on one another; but rather decide never to put a stumbling block or hindrance in the way of a brother.*
 6. 2 Cor 5:10 *For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive good or evil, according to what he has done in the body.*
 7. 1 Tim 5:24 *The sins of some men are conspicuous, pointing to judgment, but the sins of others appear later.*
 8. Hebrews 9:27-28 *And just as it is appointed for men to die once, and after that comes judgment, so Christ, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time, not to deal with sin but to save those who are eagerly waiting for him.*
 9. 2 Peter 2:9-22 *The Lord knows how to rescue the godly from trial, and to keep the unrighteous under punishment until the day of judgment, and especially those who indulge in the lust of defiling passion and despise authority. Bold and wilful, they are not afraid to revile the glorious ones, ...But these, like irrational animals, creatures of instinct, born to be caught and killed, reviling in matters of which they are ignorant, will be destroyed in the same destruction with them, suffering wrong for their wrongdoing. They count it pleasure to revel in the daytime. They are blots and blemishes, reveling in their dissipation, carousing with you. They have eyes full of adultery, insatiable for sin. They entice unsteady souls. They have hearts trained in greed. Accursed children! Forsaking the right way they have gone astray...For, uttering loud boasts of folly, they entice with licentious passions of the flesh men who have barely escaped from those who live in error. They promise them freedom, but they themselves are slaves of corruption; for whatever overcomes a man, to that he is enslaved. For if, after they have escaped the defilements of the world through the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and overpowered, the last state has become worse for them than the first. For it would have been better for them never to have known the way of righteousness than after knowing it to turn back from the holy commandment delivered to them. It has happened to them according to the true proverb, The dog turns back to his own vomit, and the sow is washed only to wallow in the mire.*
- O. ***I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end.*** - Here is said of Jesus that which belongs only to God. Hence we have a clear indication of the divinity of Jesus
- P. ***Outside are the dogs*** - "Dogs," is a traditional Jewish designation for heathen Gentiles. St. Paul however used it once of his Jewish opponents and in so doing used a very provocative word: Phil 2:2-3 *Look out for the dogs, look out for the evil-workers, look out for those who mutilate the flesh. For we are the true circumcision, who worship God in spirit, and glory in Christ Jesus, and put no confidence in the flesh.*
- Q. ***The Spirit and the Bride*** - The Spirit is the Spirit of Jesus who inspires the prophets (2:7; 14:13) and the bride is the Church (21:2, 9)

R. **Come!** - Some commentators have suggested that there is a liturgical refrain of sorts going on these final verses. A possible call and response scenario might go like this, the first phrase is sung by a cantor or member of the clergy and the response is made by the choir and/or congregation:

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| 1. | The Spirit and the Bride say: | Come! |
| 2. | And let him who hears say: | Come! |
| 3. | And let him who is thirsty: | Come! |
| 4. | Surely, I am coming soon
Jesus! | Amen, Come, Lord |
| 5. | The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen. | |

S. ***I warn every one who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: if any one adds to them, God will add to him the plagues described in this book, and if any one takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God will take away his share in the tree of life and in the holy city, which are described in this book.*** - There have been some interpretations of this text which would apply it to the whole Bible. Thus “Book” = “Bible” But the context seems to be more the Book of Revelation itself. The warning seems to convey a sense that this prophecy is critical to the salvation of souls. Hence it is wrong to add to the prophecy since extra burdens and/or falsehoods can cause bitterness which would lead one to reject the whole prophecy and not just the falsehood. Subtracting from it can also endanger souls by giving an incomplete message which lacks the full impact of the vision. It can also lead to a false sense of security or an exaggerated sense of alarm. Such warnings were not uncommon in ancient texts. There are two examples of similar threats in the Old Testament

1. Deut 4:2-4 *You shall not add to the word which I command you, nor take from it; that you may keep the commandments of the LORD your God which I command you. Your eyes have seen what the LORD did at Baalpeor; for the LORD your God destroyed from among you all the men who followed the Baal of Peor; but you who held fast to the LORD your God are all alive this day.*
2. Deut 12:32-13:3 *"Everything that I command you you shall be careful to do; you shall not add to it or take from it."If a prophet arises among you, or a dreamer of dreams, and gives you a sign or a wonder, and the sign or wonder which he tells you comes to pass, and if he says, 'Let us go after other gods,' which you have not known, 'and let us serve them,' you shall not listen to the words of that prophet..."*

T. **xarij tou kuriu Ihsou meta pavtwn, amen.** - *The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.* We have here a liturgical greeting which reminds us of the many liturgical overtones of the book. It is also a common epistolary greeting in the other New Testament letters. This also recalls a theme we examined at the beginning of these notes: is Revelation a letter? We concluded that it largely is, although its subject is an elaborate description of a vision and a prophecy.

XXIII. Concluding remarks

- A. We have examined many themes in this extraordinary book. A significant thesis which was examined was that the harlot city was not Rome as is commonly attested but was Jerusalem. This was adopted not to be argumentative or contrary but because it seems to correspond best to the imagery invoked by John and the Holy Spirit. Likewise, it places Revelation squarely in the prophetic tradition which takes seriously the self-identification of the text, “this prophecy” (1:3; 22:10,18,19). Most modern scholars emphasize the apocalyptic genre. But this seems misplaced. There is apocalyptic imagery used but this is largely present *because of the prophetic tradition* from which Revelation draws. The most unusual images used are drawn almost entirely from the prophets.
- B. The historical context of the book was also discerned in these notes from an alternative theory base. Instead of the Persecution of Christians by Roman emperors, the context was the persecution of Christians by fellow Jews. This is the consistent context of all the other books of the new Testament. Likewise, it respects more fully the clearest clue as to the persecutors: “those who say they are Jews, but are not,”(2:9 & 3:9) and “the synagogue of Satan.”(2:9 & 3:9) The destruction described was of the City of Jerusalem in 70 AD. This theory was adopted because it seems to correspond well to details in the book and the way in which John draws heavily from the prophetic literature relating to the first destruction of Jerusalem in 587 BC. Likewise it takes most seriously the clearest clue given as to the identity of the city: the city where their Lord was crucified (11:8).
- C. Yet another theme was that “Jerusalem” was renewed not utterly forsaken. New Jerusalem was inclusive of the Gentiles (in fulfillment of what the prophets had taught) and now identified with the Church. God did not reject his bride. Jerusalem had become like a harlot and was even persecuting and killing her own children. Thus the Lord pruned and purified her so that John could see a new Jerusalem, which was based on faith in Christ Jesus and the Justice he gave. There is no divorce and remarriage here: there is a purification just as in the days of old and a clear identification of true Israel, a theme already developed by Paul.
- D. Finally, the Book of Revelation is essentially a book of glory. Jesus has conquered through the cross and resurrection. Christians must follow in his footsteps but they must always know the glory that awaits for all who are faithful. Jesus is coming soon and he brings reward with him. All will be avenged, vindicated and the truth will out. The Book of Revelation is not therefore a book merely for yesterday. It is about every Christian’s struggle, yesterday, today and tomorrow. There will come a final struggle and some of the elements of that are surely dealt with here but the essential theme is the daily struggle which must take place in the light of the glory reflected on the face of Christ. Come Lord Jesus.