

# THE BOOK OF REVELATION

## Prologue

**1** This is the revelation given by God to Jesus Christ<sup>a</sup> so that he could tell his 1  
servants<sup>b</sup> about the *things which are now to take place* very soon; he sent his 2  
angel to make it known<sup>c</sup> to his servant John, •and John has written down 3  
everything he saw and swears it is the word of God guaranteed by Jesus Christ.<sup>d</sup>  
Happy<sup>e</sup> the man who reads this prophecy, and happy those who listen to him, if 3  
they treasure all that it says, because the Time<sup>f</sup> is close.

## I. THE LETTERS TO THE CHURCHES OF ASIA

### Address and greeting<sup>g</sup>

From John, to the seven churches of Asia: grace and peace to you from him 4  
who is, who was, and who is to come,<sup>h</sup> from the seven spirits in his presence before  
his throne, •and from Jesus Christ, *the faithful witness, the First-born* from the 5  
dead, *the Ruler of the kings of the earth.*<sup>i</sup> He loves us and has washed away<sup>j</sup> our  
sins with his blood, •and made us a *line of kings, priests to serve<sup>k</sup>* his God and 6  
Father; to him, then, be glory and power for ever and ever. Amen. •It is he who 7  
*is coming on the clouds*; everyone will see him, even *those who pierced*  
*him, and all the races of the earth will mourn over him.* This is the truth. Amen.  
•I am the Alpha and the Omega<sup>l</sup> says the Lord God, who is, who was, and who 8  
is to come, the Almighty.

### The beginning of the vision

My name is John, and through our union in Jesus I am your brother and share 9  
your sufferings, your kingdom, and all you endure. I was on the island of Patmos<sup>m</sup>  
for having preached God's word and witnessed for Jesus; •it was the Lord's day 10  
and the Spirit possessed me, and I heard a voice behind me, shouting like  
a trumpet, •Write down all that you see in a book, and send it to the seven 11  
churches of Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia and  
Laodicea<sup>n</sup>. •I turned round to see who had spoken to me, and when I turned 12  
I saw seven golden lamp-stands •and, surrounded by them, a figure *like a Son* 13  
*of man,*<sup>o</sup> dressed in a long robe tied at the waist with a *golden girdle.* •His head 14  
and his hair were *white as white wool* or as snow, his eyes like a *burning flame,*  
his feet like *burnished bronze* when it has been refined in a furnace, and his voice 15  
*like the sound of the ocean.* •In his right hand he was holding seven stars, out of 16  
his mouth came a sharp sword, double-edged, and his face was like the sun  
shining with all its force.

When I saw him, I fell in a dead faint at his feet, but he touched me with his 17  
right hand and said, 'Do not be afraid; it is I, *the First and the Last*; I am the

18 Living One,<sup>a</sup> • I was dead and now I am to live for ever and ever, and I hold the  
 19 keys of death and of the underworld.<sup>b</sup> • Now write down all that you see of present  
 20 happenings<sup>c</sup> and *things that are still to come*. • The secret of the seven stars you  
 have seen in my right hand, and of the seven golden lamp-stands is this: the seven  
 stars are the angels<sup>d</sup> of the seven churches, and the seven lamp-stands are the  
 seven churches themselves.

1:8+  
 Is 44:6;  
 48:12  
 Heb 7:25  
 Dn 2:28  
 Hab 2:2  
 1:12; 16:5

### 1. Ephesus

1 **2** 'Write to the angel of the church in Ephesus<sup>a</sup> and say, "Here is the message  
 2 of the one who holds the seven stars in his right hand and who lives  
 3 surrounded by the seven golden lamp-stands: • I know all about you: how hard  
 4 you work and how much you put up with. I know you cannot stand wicked men,  
 5 and how you tested the impostors who called themselves apostles<sup>b</sup> and proved  
 6 they were liars. • I know, too, that you have patience, and have suffered for my  
 7 name<sup>c</sup> without growing tired. • Nevertheless, I have this complaint to make;  
 8 you have less love now than you used to. • Think where you were before you fell;  
 9 repent, and do as you used to at first, or else, if you will not repent, I shall come  
 10 to you and take your lamp-stand from its place.<sup>d</sup> • It is in your favour, nevertheless,  
 11 that you loathe as I do what the Nicolaitans are doing. • If anyone has ears  
 12 to hear, let him listen to what the Spirit is saying to the churches: those who  
 13 prove victorious I will feed *from the tree of life set in God's paradise*."<sup>e</sup>

1:16  
 1:12  
 1 Th 1:3  
 2 Co 11:13,  
 15  
 2:15+  
 13:9  
 Mt 13:9  
 22:2  
 Gn 2:9  
 Pr 3:18

### 2. Smyrna

8 'Write to the angel of the church in Smyrna and say, "Here is the message of

1 a. Lit. 'A revelation of Jesus Christ which God gave to him'.

b. 'His servants' may possibly be the prophets in the early Church, cf. 10:7; 11:18; 22:6; Ac 11:27+; and Am 3:7, among whom John includes himself, cf. 19:10 and 22:9; but the same word is regularly used for all followers and disciples of Christ and 19:10 suggests that no firm distinction is made between 'prophets' and other 'witnesses to Jesus' such as evangelists and martyrs.

c. Lit. 'He conveyed through signs sent by his messenger': ambiguous, the angel could be sent by Jesus, cf. 19:10; 22:6-20, or by God, in which case the angel would be the Messiah himself, cf. 14:14,15 and 1:13.

d. Lit. 'the Word of God and the witness of Jesus Christ'.

e. First of the seven beatitudes in the Apocalypse, cf. 14:13; 16:15; 19:9; 20:6; 22:7,14.

f. When Jesus returns; cf. 3:11; 22:10,12,20 and 1:7.

g. This section makes use of many O.T. allusions to suggest the King-Messiah's glorious return, solemn enthronement and future reign over God's people in fulfilment of the promise made to David. This is basically what the whole book is about.

h. Common title in Jewish literature, developed from the name revealed to Moses: 'I am who am', Ex 3:14+.

i. The Messiah is the 'witness' to the promise that was made to David, 2 S 7:1+; Ps 89; Is 55:3-4; Zc 12:8, both in his person and in his work; as he fulfils this promise he is the efficacious Word, God's 'Yes', Rv 3:14; 19:11,13; 2 Co 1:20. Not only is he heir to David, Rv 5:5; 22:16, but by his resurrection he is the 'First-born', Col 1:18, who will reign over the universe when his enemies have been destroyed, Dn 7:14; Rv 19:16.

j. Var. 'released us from'.

k. Lit. 'He made us a kingdom and priests for': those who turn to the Messiah and whose sins he forgives, vv. 5 and 7, will be a family of king-priests, Ex 19:6+; kings because they will rule over all the nations, Dn 7:22,27; Is 54:11-17; Zc 12:1-3; cf. Rv 2:26; 5:10; 20:6; 22:5; priests because in union with Jesus the messianic Priest they will consecrate the universe to God in a sacrifice of praise.

l. The beginning and end, originator and goal,

of all things: Is 41:4; 44:6; Rv 21:6; 22:13. 'the Almighty': 'pantokrator' lit. 'the All-Ruler', a stock rendering of 'Lord of Hosts' ('Yahweh Sabaoth').

m. Deported there for being a Christian proselytiser. Patmos (10 miles x 5 miles) was used by Romans as a penal colony.

n. The Messiah as eschatological Judge (cf. Dn 7:13, also 10:6). The long robe symbolises his priesthood (cf. Ex 28:4; 29:5; Zc 3:4), the golden girdle his royalty, cf. 1 M 10:89, the white hair his eternity (cf. Dn 7:9), the burning eyes (to probe minds and 'hearts', cf. Rv 2:23) his divine knowledge, the feet of bronze (cf. Dn 2:31-45) his permanence; the brightness of his legs and face, and the strength of his voice symbolise the fear inspired by his majesty. In his power (his 'right hand') he holds the seven churches (the 'stars', cf. v. 20); he is prepared to sentence faithless Christians to death (the 'double-edged sword'), cf. 19:15+; 2:16; and Is 49:2; Ep 6:17; Heb 4:12. One or other of his attributes as Judge is used, at the beginning of each of the seven letters, to suggest the situation of the particular church addressed.

o. The one who has life 'in himself', cf. Jn 5:21,26; 1:4.

p. Lit. 'death and Hades'. Hades was the place of the dead, the Gk word corresponding to the *sheol* of the O.T., cf. Nb 16:33+. Christ has the power to release souls from Hades, Jn 5:26-28.

q. 'present happenings' refers to the letters of ch. 2 and 3; 'things that are still to come': the revelations of ch. 4-22.

r. Jews held that not only the physical universe was controlled by angels, cf. Rv 7:1; 14:18; 16:5, but also human beings (both individuals and communities), cf. Ex 23:20+. Each church here is thought of as under the control of an angel appointed to be responsible for it.

2 a. Metropolis of the province of Asia; the other six churches of the letters that follow were located in the same province.

b. Probably the Nicolaitans of v. 6, see 2:15+.

c. Cf. 2 Co 11:5,13.

c. Allusion to some previous persecution.

d. Ephesus will cease to be the religious capital.

e. Var. (Vulg.) 'the paradise of my God'.

1:17-18+  
Is 44:6;  
48:12  
Jm 2:5  
Jn 8:37-44  
SI 2:1  
Dn 1:12,14  
Lk 22:31-33  
I Co 9:25+  
20:6,14; 21:8  
the *First* and the *Last*, who was dead and has come to life again: •I know the trials 9  
you have had, and how poor you are—though you are rich<sup>f</sup>—and the slanderous 10  
accusations that have been made by the people who profess to be Jews<sup>g</sup> but are 11  
really members of the synagogue of Satan. •Do not be afraid of the sufferings 12  
that are coming to you: I tell you, the devil is going to send some of you to prison 13  
to test you, and you must face an ordeal for *ten days*.<sup>h</sup> Even if you have to die, 14  
keep faithful, and I will give you the crown of life for your prize. •If anyone has 15  
ears to hear, let him listen to what the Spirit is saying to the churches: for those 16  
who prove victorious there is nothing to be afraid of in the second death.” 17

### 3. Pergamum

1:16; 19:15  
“Write to the angel of the church in Pergamum and say, “Here is the message 12  
of the one who has the sharp sword, double-edged: •I know where you live, 13  
in the place where Satan is enthroned, and that you still hold firmly to my name, 14  
and did not disown your faith in me even when my faithful witness, Antipas, was 15  
killed in your own town, where Satan lives.<sup>i</sup> 16  
Nevertheless, I have one or two complaints to make: some of you are 17  
followers of Balaam, who taught Balak to set a trap for the Israelites<sup>j</sup> so that 18  
they committed adultery<sup>k</sup> by eating food that had been sacrificed to idols; •and 19  
among you, too, there are some as bad who accept what the Nicolaitans teach.<sup>l</sup> 20  
You must repent, or I shall soon come to you and attack these people with the 21  
sword out of my mouth. •If anyone has ears to hear, let him listen to what the 22  
Spirit is saying to the churches: to those who prove victorious I will give the 23  
hidden manna and a white stone<sup>m</sup>—a stone with a *new name* written on it, 24  
known only to the man who receives it.” 25

### 4. Thyatira

1:14-15  
“Write to the angel of the church in Thyatira and say, “Here is the message 18  
of the Son of God who has eyes like a burning flame and feet like burnished 19  
bronze: •I know all about you and how charitable you are; I know your faith and 20  
devotion and how much you put up with, and I know how you are still making 21  
progress. •Nevertheless, I have a complaint to make: you are encouraging the 22  
woman Jezebel<sup>n</sup> who claims to be a prophetess, and by her teaching she is luring 23  
my servants away to commit the adultery of eating food which has been sacrificed 24  
to idols. •I have given her time to reform but she is not willing to change her 25  
adulterous life. •Now I am consigning her to bed, and all her partners in adultery 26  
to troubles that will test them severely, unless they repent of their practices;<sup>o</sup> 27  
and I will see that her children<sup>p</sup> die, so that all the churches realise that it is I who 28  
search heart and loins and give each one of you what your behaviour deserves. 29  
But on the rest of you in Thyatira, all of you who have not accepted this teaching 30  
or learnt the secrets of Satan,<sup>q</sup> as they are called, I am not laying any special 31  
duty; •but hold firmly on to what you already have<sup>r</sup> until I come. •To those who 32  
prove victorious, and keep working for me until the end, I will give the 33  
authority over the pagans •which I myself have been given by my Father, to rule 34  
them with an iron sceptre and shatter them like earthenware. And I will give him 35  
the Morning Star.<sup>s</sup> •If anyone has ears to hear, let him listen to what the Spirit 36  
is saying to the churches.” 37

### 5. Sardis

1:16  
3 “Write to the angel of the church in Sardis and say, “Here is the message 1  
of the one who holds the seven spirits<sup>a</sup> of God and the seven stars: I know all 2  
about you: how you are reputed to be alive and yet are dead. •Wake up; revive 3  
what little you have left: it is dying fast. So far I have failed to notice anything in 4  
the way you live that my God could possibly call perfect, •and yet do you 5  
remember how eager you were when you first heard the message? Hold on to that. 6  
Repent. If you do not wake up, I shall come to you like a thief, without telling 7

4 you at what hour to expect me. •There are a few in Sardis, it is true, who have kept their robes from being dirtied, and they are fit to come with me, dressed in white. •Those who prove victorious will be dressed, like these, in white robes;<sup>b</sup> I shall not blot their names out of the book of life, but acknowledge their names in the presence of my Father and his angels. •If anyone has ears to hear, let him listen to what the Spirit is saying to the churches.”

Mk 13:33▲  
1 Th 5:2▲  
7:14

20:12+  
1 S 25:29+  
Ps 69:28  
Mt 10:32  
Lk 9:26

## 6. Philadelphia

7 ‘Write to the angel of the church in Philadelphia and say, “Here is the message of the holy and faithful one who *has the key of David*, so that *when he opens*, nobody can close, and when he closes, nobody can open: •I know all about you; and now I have opened in front of you a door that nobody will be able to close— and I know that though you are not very strong, you have kept my commandments and not disowned my name. •Now I am going to make the synagogue of Satan—those who profess to be Jews, but are liars, because they are no such thing—I will make them come and *fall at your feet* and admit that *you are the people that I love*. •Because you have kept my commandment to endure trials, I will keep you safe in the time of trial which is going to come for the whole world, to test the people of the world.” •Soon I shall be with you: hold firmly to what you already have, and let nobody take your prize away from you. •Those who prove victorious I will make into pillars in the sanctuary of my God, and they will stay there for ever; I will inscribe on them the name of my God<sup>c</sup> and the name of the city of my God, the new Jerusalem which comes down from my God in heaven, and my own new name as well.” •If anyone has ears to hear, let him listen to what the Spirit is saying to the churches.”

Lv 17:1+  
Is 6:3+  
1:18  
Is 22:22  
Mt 16:19

2:9+

Is 45:14;  
60:14  
Is 43:4

2 P 2:9

2:25+  
1 Co 9:24-27  
2 Co 6:2+

2:17  
Ga 2:9  
1 Tm 3:15  
7:4  
Ezk 48:35  
21:2f

2:17+

## 7. Laodicea

14 ‘Write to the angel of the church in Laodicea and say, “Here is the message of the Amen,<sup>a</sup> the faithful, the true witness, the ultimate source of God’s creation: I know all about you: how you are neither cold nor hot. I wish you were one or the other, •but since you are neither, but only lukewarm, I will spit you out of my mouth. •You say to yourself, ‘I am rich, I have made a fortune, and have everything I want’, never realising that you are wretchedly and pitifully poor, and

1:5+; 19:11  
2 Co 1:20  
Jn 1:3

Pr 13:7  
Ho 7:9; 12:9  
Lk 12:21

f. Smyrna’s spiritual wealth contrasts with her poverty.

g. Henceforth the Church of Christ is the true Israel, cf. Ga 6:16; Rm 9:8.

h. I.e. of short duration.

i. Emperor-worship, as well as other forms of paganism, flourished in Pergamum, and is always represented in Rv as the worship of Satan, ‘the prince of this world’.

j. According to one Jewish tradition, cf. Nb 31:16, Balaam suggested to Balak that he should persuade Israel to idolatry with the help of the women of Moab, Nb 25:1-3.

k. The prophets used this as a common figure of speech for idolatry, religious infidelity, cf. Ho 1:2+.

l. This doctrine had some affinity with the errors already attacked by Paul in the Captivity Letters (notably in Col); it heralded the gnostic speculations of the 2nd cent., but also tolerated a measure of compromise with pagan cults, e.g. participation in sacred banquets, cf. v. 14.

m. The perspective, as in the other six letters, is eschatological. The manna (hidden, together with the ark, by Jeremiah, 2 M 2:4-8) will be brought out as the food of those who are saved in the heavenly kingdom, cf. 15:8+. The white stone (white is the colour of triumph and joy) alludes to various ancient usages (badges of honour, tablets of discharge or admission) and symbolises entry into the kingdom. The ‘new name’ signifies the Christian’s spiritual rebirth. n. ‘Jezebel’; var. ‘your wife Jezebel’. A self-styled prophetess of the Nicolaitan sect; her name is symbolic, cf. 2 K 9:22.

o. Var. ‘her practices’.

p. Those who follow her teaching.

q. The doctrine of the Nicolaitans, so called either by the heretics themselves, or, sarcastically, by their opponents, cf. 1 Co 2:10.

r. The true faith in Christ.

s. In Eastern literature the Morning Star is both the symbol of dominion and power and also, as apparently here, of resurrection and triumphant glory. Christ reigns because he rose from the dead, cf. Ac 2:36+; Rm 1:4+; Rv 1:5+, and his faithful will share his reign as they share the glory of his resurrection, on which his worldwide empire is based. In the Roman liturgy, this theme is introduced into the *Exultet* of the Easter Vigil.

3 a. These seven spirits of God are seven angels.

b. A symbol of purity but also of victory and joy.

c. Perhaps the opportunity of spreading the Good News in fresh areas, for which this is a common metaphor, cf. Ac 14:27+, and Paul’s letters.

d. Lit. ‘all living on the earth’, i.e. the pagan world, as always in Rv. This ‘testing’ is therefore the plagues of 8-9 and 16, from which God’s servants will be preserved, cf. 7:1f.

e. The return of Christ in glory.

f. Cf. 2:17; 14:1; 19:12,13; and Is 56:5; 62:2; 65:15. Cf. Is 1:26+.

g. Either a name that will not be known until the *parousia*, or the name ‘Word’, cf. 19:13.

h. Reference to Is 65:16 where ‘God of truth’ is literally ‘God of Amen’. Cf. Rv 1:5+.

i. Cf. Pr 8:22; Ws 9:1f; Jn 1:3; Col 1:16f; Heb 1:2.

Is 55:1 blind and naked too.<sup>f</sup> •I warn you, buy from me the gold that has been tested in 18  
the fire<sup>g</sup> to make you really rich, and white robes to clothe you and cover your  
shameful nakedness, and eye ointment to put on your eyes so that you are able  
Pr 3:12 to see.<sup>i</sup> •I am the one who *reproves and disciplines all those he loves*: so repent 19  
1 Co 11:32 in real earnest. •Look, I am standing at the door, knocking. If one of you hears 20  
Heb 12:4-11 in real earnest, •Look, I am standing at the door, knocking. If one of you hears 20  
Jn 14:23 me calling and opens the door, I will come in to share his meal, side by side with  
Lk 22:29-30 him. •Those who prove victorious I will allow to share my throne, just as I was 21  
1:6+; 20:4 Si 2:3 victorious myself and took my place with my Father on his throne. •If anyone has 22  
Mt 19:28 ears to hear, let him listen to what the Spirit is saying to the churches.”<sup>j</sup>

## II. THE PROPHETIC VISIONS

### A. THE PRELUDE TO THE GREAT DAY

God entrusts the future of the world to the Lamb<sup>k</sup>

1:10 **4** Then, in my vision, I saw a door open in heaven and heard the same voice 1  
speaking to me, the voice like a trumpet, saying, ‘Come up here: I will show  
Dn 2:28 you *what is to come* in the future’. •With that, the Spirit possessed me and I saw 2  
Is 6:1 a throne standing in heaven, and the *One* who was *sitting on the throne*, •and 3  
Ezk 1:26-28 the Person sitting there looked like a diamond and a ruby. There was a rainbow  
Ex 24:10 encircling the throne, and this looked like an emerald.<sup>b</sup> •Round the throne in a 4  
Is 24:23 circle were twenty-four thrones, and on them I saw twenty-four elders<sup>c</sup> sitting,  
8:2,5; 11:19; dressed in white robes with golden crowns on their heads. •Flashes of lightning 5  
16:18 were coming from the throne, and the sound of peals of thunder,<sup>d</sup> and in front  
of the throne there were seven flaming lamps burning, the seven Spirits<sup>e</sup> of  
Ex 24:10 God. •Between the throne and myself was a sea<sup>f</sup> that seemed to be made of glass, 6  
Ezk 1:5-21 like crystal. *In the centre*, grouped round the throne itself,<sup>g</sup> were *four animals*<sup>h</sup>  
Ezk 10:14 with many eyes, in front and behind. •The first animal was like a lion, the second 7  
like a bull, the third animal had a human face, and the fourth animal was like  
Is 6:2 a flying eagle. •Each of the four animals had six wings and had eyes all the way 8  
Ezk 1:19; round as well as inside; and day and night they never stopped singing:  
10:12

Is 6:3 ‘Holy, Holy, Holy  
is the Lord God, the Almighty;  
1:4+ he was, he is and he is to come’.<sup>i</sup>

Every time the animals glorified and honoured and gave thanks to the One sitting 9  
Dn 4:31 on the throne, *who lives for ever and ever*, •the twenty-four elders prostrated 10  
themselves before him to worship the One *who lives for ever and ever*, and threw  
down their crowns in front of the throne,<sup>j</sup> saying, •‘You are our Lord and our 11  
God, you are worthy of glory and honour and power, because you made all the  
universe and it was only by your will that everything was made and exists’.<sup>k</sup>  
14:7  
Ps 115:3  
Rm 4:17  
Ep 4:11  
**5** I saw that in the right hand of the One sitting on the throne there was a scroll 1  
that had writing on back and front and was sealed with seven seals.<sup>a</sup> •Then 2  
Is 29:11 I saw a powerful angel who called with a loud voice, ‘Is there anyone worthy 3  
Ezk 2:9 to open the scroll and break the seals of it?’ •But there was no one, in heaven 3  
Dn 12:4,9 5:13 or on the earth or under the earth,<sup>b</sup> who was able to open the scroll and read it.  
I wept bitterly because there was nobody fit to open the scroll and read it, •but 4  
Lk 7:13-15 one of the elders said to me, ‘There is no need to cry: the Lion of the tribe of 5  
Gn 49:9 Judah, the Root of David, has triumphed,<sup>c</sup> and he will open the scroll and the  
Is 11:1,10 seven seals of it’.  
Rm 15:12  
1 Co 5:8  
Heb 7:14

Then I saw, standing between the throne with its four animals and the circle 6  
Jn 1:29+ of the elders, a Lamb that seemed to have been sacrificed;<sup>d</sup> it had seven horns,  
4:5+ and it had seven eyes,<sup>e</sup> which are the seven Spirits God has sent out all over the  
Zc 4:10 world. •The Lamb came forward to take the scroll from the right hand of the 7  
One sitting on the throne, •and when he took it, the four animals prostrated 8



themselves before him and with them the twenty-four elders; each one of them was holding a harp and had a golden bowl full of incense made of the prayers of the saints. •They sang a new hymn:

‘You are worthy to take the scroll  
and break the seals of it,  
because you were sacrificed, and with your blood  
you bought<sup>7</sup> men for God  
of every race, language, people and nation<sup>8</sup>  
and made them *a line of kings and priests*,  
to serve our God and to rule the world’.<sup>9</sup>

11 In my vision, I heard the sound of an immense number of angels gathered round the throne and the animals and the elders; there were *ten thousand times*  
12 *ten thousand of them and thousands upon thousands*, •shouting, ‘The Lamb that was sacrificed is worthy to be given power, riches,<sup>1</sup> wisdom, strength, honour,  
13 glory and blessing’. •Then I heard all the living things in creation—everything that lives in the air, and on the ground, and under the ground, and in the sea, crying, ‘To the One who is sitting on the throne and to the Lamb, be all praise,  
14 honour, glory and power, for ever and ever’. •And the four animals said, ‘Amen’; and the elders prostrated themselves to worship.

### The Lamb breaks the seven seals<sup>a</sup>

1 6 Then I saw the Lamb break one of the seven seals, and I heard one of the  
2 6 four animals shout in a voice like thunder, ‘Come’. •Immediately a white

j. Unlike Smyrna 2:9, Laodicea was rich in worldly goods, but spiritually poor.

k. The true riches that are of the spirit.

l. The clothing and the eye ointment are, of course, needed to repair the ‘blindness and nakedness’ of v.17; but there may be a special point in this as an allusion to the local products for which Laodicea was known.

4 a. God delegates to the Lamb the power of carrying out his decrees against persecuting pagans. The ‘Great Day’ of God’s anger is about to dawn. The vision begins with a view of God’s throne and widens to a view of the whole universe.

b. Lit. ‘the Enthroned One looked like a jasper stone (diamond) and a *sardion* (ruby) and a rainbow round the throne looked like a *smaragdus* (emerald)’. John is careful not to describe God anthropomorphically; he prefers to give an impression of light. The whole scene draws heavily on Ezk 1 and 10; cf. also Is 6.

c. The elders have a priestly function: they praise and worship God, 4:10; 5:9; 11: 16, 17; 19:4, and offer him the prayers of the faithful, 5:8. The number twenty-four suggests the twenty-four priestly classes of 1 Ch 24:1-9; the thrones indicate that the elders are ‘judges’ in the New Israel which is the redeemed world; the crowns are the sign that they share God’s royal power. It is to be noted that the thrones of the elders make the outer ring of the heavenly court, and in the New Jerusalem which comes down from heaven, ch. 21, the outer walls are composed of twelve foundation stones of apostles and twelve gates which are the twelve tribes of Israel.

d. Thunder is frequently associated with theophanies, cf. Ex 19:16+; Ezk 1:4,13.

e. Not the sevenfold Spirit of mediaeval tradition but the seven ‘angels of the presence’, cf. 3:1+; 8:2; Tb 12:15. God’s messengers, cf. Zc 4:10; Tb 12:14; Lk 1:26; Rv 5:6 and *passim*.

f. Either the ‘upper waters’ of Gn 1:7; Ps 104:3, or the ‘Sea’ of 1 K 7:23-26.

g. Lit. ‘In the centre of the throne and round the throne’: the text is obscure. ‘In the centre of the throne and’ is possibly a gloss from Ezk 1:5.

h. The symbolism derives from Ezk 1:5-21. The ‘animals’ are the four angels responsible for directing the physical world. ‘Four’ symbolises the universe; their many eyes symbolise God’s omniscience and

providence. They give unceasing glory to God for his creation. The figures of lion, bull, man, eagle suggest all that is noblest, strongest, wisest, most swift, in the created world. Since Irenaeus, these four creatures have been used as symbols of the four evangelists.

i. The liturgical *Trisagion* or *Sanctus* echoes this doxology. It is said that the Church thus shares in the worship of the heavenly court, but it is also possible that John’s vision of heaven reproduces the worship of the Church on earth.

j. The crowns symbolise the government of the world, entrusted to the ‘elders’ by God. This power comes from God and must go back to him.

k. Lit. ‘Through your will they were (var. ‘they were not’) and they were created’: text uncertain.

5 a. A roll of papyrus in which God’s hitherto secret decrees are written. The contents are made known in ch. 6-9.

b. In Hades, 1:18+.

c. Over Satan and the world, cf. Jn 3:35+; 1 Jn 2:14+.

d. The Messiah, the Passover lamb sacrificed for the salvation of the Chosen People, cf. Jn 1:29+. The wounds that caused the death of the Lamb are visible, but the Lamb has risen from death, and therefore stands upright. The Messiah, who became a lamb in order to submit as sacrifice, to suffer and to die, is a lion because he conquered death.

e. Symbolising the fulness (number seven) of the Messiah’s power (horns) and knowledge (eyes).

f. Var. ‘you bought us’, ‘you bought us for God’. The reading ‘us’ supposes that the elders are human beings, possibly the O.T. patriarchs. Lit. ‘you were killed and you bought for God by your blood’.

g. Cliché for ‘the whole world’. Cf. Dn 3:4,7,96.

h. Lit. ‘you made them into a kingdom and priests for our God and they will reign on earth’ (or ‘over pagans’); Vulg. ‘you have made us... we shall reign...’

i. Vulg. ‘divinity’.

6 a. Ch. 6-9 plus 11:14-18 make one homogeneous whole—a series of symbolic visions heralding and prelude the destruction of the Roman empire. The four horsemen of this first vision are modelled on Zc 1:8-10 and 6:1-3; but they further symbolise the four scourges with which God, through the prophets,

horse appeared, and the rider on it was holding a bow; he was given the victor's crown and he went away, to go from victory to victory.<sup>b</sup>

When he broke the second seal, I heard the second animal shout, 'Come'.<sup>3</sup> And out came another horse, bright red, and its rider was given this duty: to take away peace from the earth and set people killing each other. He was given a huge sword.<sup>c</sup>

When he broke the third seal, I heard the third animal shout, 'Come'.<sup>5</sup> Immediately a black horse appeared, and its rider was holding a pair of scales;<sup>d</sup> and I seemed to hear a voice shout from among the four animals and say, 'A ration of corn for a day's wages, and three rations of barley for a day's wages, but do not tamper with the oil or the wine'.

When he broke the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth animal shout, 'Come'.<sup>7</sup> Immediately another horse appeared, deathly pale, and its rider was called Plague,<sup>e</sup> and Hades followed at his heels.<sup>f</sup>

They were given authority over a quarter of the earth, *to kill by the sword, by famine, by plague and wild beasts.*

When he broke the fifth seal, I saw underneath the altar<sup>g</sup> the souls of all the people who had been killed on account of the word of God,<sup>h</sup> for witnessing to it. They shouted aloud, 'Holy, faithful Master, how much longer will you wait before you pass sentence and take vengeance for our death on the inhabitants of the earth?'<sup>i</sup> Each of them was given a white robe,<sup>j</sup> and they were told to be patient a little longer, until the roll was complete and their fellow servants and brothers had been killed just as they had been.

In my vision, when he broke the sixth seal, there was a violent earthquake and the sun went as black as coarse sackcloth; the moon turned red as blood all over, and the stars of the sky fell on to the earth like figs dropping from a fig tree when a high wind shakes it; the sky disappeared like a scroll rolling up and all the mountains and islands were shaken from their places.<sup>k</sup> Then all the earthly rulers, the governors and the commanders, the rich people and the men of influence, the whole population, slaves and citizens, took to the mountains to hide in caves and among the rocks. They said to the mountains and the rocks, 'Fall on us and hide us away from the One who sits on the throne and from the anger of the Lamb. For the Great Day of his anger<sup>l</sup> has come, and who can survive it?'<sup>m</sup>

God's servants will be preserved

Next I saw four angels, standing at the four corners of the earth, holding the four winds of the world back to keep them from blowing over the land or the sea or in the trees. Then I saw another angel rising where the sun rises, carrying the seal of the living God; he called in a powerful voice to the four angels whose duty was to devastate land and sea, 'Wait before you do any damage on land or at sea or to the trees, until we have put the seal on the foreheads of the servants of our God'. Then I heard how many were sealed: a hundred and forty-four thousand,<sup>n</sup> out of all the tribes of Israel.

From the tribe of Judah, twelve thousand had been sealed; from the tribe of Reuben, twelve thousand; from the tribe of Gad, twelve thousand; from the tribe of Asher, twelve thousand; from the tribe of Naphtali, twelve thousand; from the tribe of Manasseh, twelve thousand; from the tribe of Simeon, twelve thousand; from the tribe of Levi, twelve thousand; from the tribe of Issachar, twelve thousand; from the tribe of Zebulun, twelve thousand; from the tribe of Joseph, twelve thousand; and from the tribe of Benjamin, twelve thousand were sealed.

#### The rewarding of the saints

After that I saw a huge number, impossible to count, of people from every nation, race, tribe and language;<sup>o</sup> they were standing in front of the throne and in front of the Lamb, dressed in white robes and holding palms in their hands.<sup>p</sup>

- 10 They shouted aloud, •'Victory to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the  
 11 Lamb!' •And all the angels who were standing in a circle round the throne,  
 surrounding the elders and the four animals, prostrated themselves before  
 the throne, and touched the ground with their foreheads, worshipping God  
 12 with these words, 'Amen. Praise and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and  
 honour and power and strength to our God for ever and ever. Amen.'  
 13 One of the elders then spoke, and asked me, 'Do you know who these people  
 14 are, dressed in white robes, and where they have come from?' •I answered him,  
 'You can tell me, my lord'. Then he said, •'These are the people who have been  
 through the great persecution,<sup>f</sup> and because they have washed their robes white  
 15 again in the blood of the Lamb, •they now stand in front of God's throne and  
 serve him day and night in his sanctuary; and the One who sits on the throne will  
 16 spread his tent over them. •*They will never hunger or thirst again; neither the*  
 17 *sun nor scorching wind will ever plague them, •because the Lamb who is at the*  
*throne will be their shepherd and will lead them to springs of living water; and God*  
*will wipe away all tears from their eyes.'*<sup>g</sup>

=15:2  
 Mt 24:21  
 1:5; 3:4; 22:  
 14  
 Is 4:5-6; 25:  
 4-5  
 Is 49-10  
 Is 49:10  
 =21:3-4; 22:  
 3-5  
 Is 25:8

### The seventh seal

- 1 **8** The Lamb then broke the seventh seal, and there was silence in heaven for  
 about half an hour.<sup>a</sup>

Hab 2:20  
 Zp 1:7  
 Zc 2:17

### The prayers of the saints bring the coming of the Great Day nearer

- 2 Next I saw seven trumpets being given to the seven angels who stand in the  
 3 presence of God. •Another angel, who had a golden censer,<sup>b</sup> came and stood  
 at the altar.<sup>c</sup> A large quantity of incense was given to him to offer with the prayers  
 4 of all the saints on the golden altar that stood in front of the throne; •and so  
 from the angel's hand the smoke of the incense went up in the presence of God  
 5 and with it the prayers of the saints. •Then the angel took the censer and *filled*  
*it with the fire* from the altar, which he then threw down on to the earth;  
 immediately there came peals of thunder and flashes of lightning, and the earth  
 shook.

4:5+  
 Tb 12:15  
 16:7  
 5:8; 6:9  
 Tb 12:12  
 Ps 141:2  
 Lv 16:12  
 Ps 11:6  
 Ezk 10:2  
 4:5; 11:19

### The first four trumpets

=16:1-9

- 6 The seven angels that had the seven trumpets now made ready to sound them.  
 7 The first blew his trumpet and, with that, hail and fire, mixed with blood, were  
 dropped on the earth; a third of the earth was burnt up, and a third of all trees,  
 8 and every blade of grass was burnt.<sup>d</sup> •The second angel blew his trumpet, and it  
 was as though a great mountain, all on fire, had been dropped into the sea: a third  
 9 of the sea turned into blood, •a third of all the living things in the sea were

Jl 2:1+  
 Ex 9:24  
 Jl 3:3  
 Jr 51:25  
 Ex 7:20

threatened a faithless Israel: wild animals, war, famine, plague, cf. Lv 26:21-26; Dt 32:24; Ezk 5:17; 14:13-21; and also Ezk 6:11-12; 7:14-15; 12:16; 33:27.

b. The rider on the white horse (symbol of victory) represents the Parthians, identified by the bow, their favourite weapon. They were the terror of the Roman world in the 1st cent. These are the 'wild beasts' of v. 8 (i.e. victorious pagan nations, cf. Dt 7:22; Ezk 34:28; Jr 15:2-4; 50:17). The Parthian invasion is described in the vision of 9:13f. One tradition identified the rider with the Messiah, as in 19:11-16.

c. Symbol of war.

d. Symbol of famine: food is rationed and sold at a prohibitive price.

e. Lit. 'death', but this word (as in 'the black death') signifies an endemic plague.

f. To swallow up the victims.

g. The altar of holocaust, 1 K 8:64+.

h. The martyrs.

i. The pagan nations.

j. Symbolising triumphant joy.

k. In prophetic writings, these cosmic phenomena are the concomitants of the Day of Yahweh, cf. Am 8:9+. They are to be interpreted therefore

not as physical realities but as symbols of God's anger, cf. Mt 24:1+.

l. Var. 'their angel'.

7 a. The angels of v. 1.

b. Twelve (the sacred number) squared and multiplied by one thousand represents the totality of all who have been faithful to Christ (the new Israel, cf. Ga 6:16).

c. All the Christian martyrs now in heaven, v. 14.

d. Palms symbolise victory.

e. For this form of dialogue cf. Zc 6:4-5 and also 4:4-13.

f. Nero's persecution.

g. Common metaphors in the prophetic tradition, used to symbolise eschatological bliss, cf. Ho 2:20+; Is 11:6+; they recur in 21:4.

8 a. The 'coming of Yahweh' is often preceded and heralded by silence, in prophetic literature.

b. This was in the shape of a scoop or shovel, and was also used for carrying the live coals from the altar of holocaust to the altar of incense.

c. The altar of incense, cf. Ex 30:1; 1 K 6:20-21.

d. For the symbolism of these disasters see 6:14+.



killed, and a third of all ships were destroyed. •The third angel blew his trumpet, 10  
 Is 14:12 and a huge star fell from the sky, burning like a ball of fire, and it fell on a third  
 Jr 9:14 of all rivers and springs; •this was the star called Wormwood, and a third of all 11  
 water turned to bitter wormwood, so that many people died from drinking it.  
 The fourth angel blew his trumpet, and a third of the sun and a third of the moon 12  
 Ex 10:21-23 and a third of the stars were blasted, so that the light went out of a third of them  
 and for a third of the day there was no illumination, and the same with the night.  
 Ezk 7:5,26 In my vision, I heard an eagle, calling aloud as it flew high overhead, 'Trouble, 13  
 Hab 2:6 trouble, trouble, for all the people on earth at the sound of the other three  
 trumpets which the three angels are going to blow'.

### The fifth trumpet

20:1  
 Is 14:12 **9** Then the fifth angel blew his trumpet, and I saw a star<sup>a</sup> that had fallen from 1  
 heaven on to the earth, and he was given the key to the shaft leading down 2  
 Gn 19:28 to the Abyss.<sup>b</sup> •When he unlocked the shaft of the Abyss, *smoke poured up* out of 2  
 Ex 19:18 the Abyss *like the smoke from a huge furnace* so that the sun and the sky were  
 Ex 10:12,15 darkened by it, •and out of the smoke dropped locusts which were given the 3  
 Wg 16:9 powers that scorpions have on the earth:<sup>c</sup> •they were forbidden to harm any 4  
 J1 1-2 fields or crops or trees<sup>d</sup> and told only to attack any men who were without God's  
 Ezk 9:6 seal on their foreheads. •They were not to kill them, but to give them pain for 5  
 five months, and the pain was to be the pain of a scorpion's sting. •When this 6  
 Jb 3:21 happens, *men will long for death and not find it anywhere*; they will want to die  
 and death will evade them.  
 J1 2:4 To look at, these locusts were *like horses armoured for battle*; they had things 7  
 that looked like gold crowns on their heads, and faces that seemed human, •and 8  
 J1 1:6 hair like women's hair, and *teeth like lions' teeth*. •They had body-armour like 9  
 J1 2:5 iron breastplates, and the noise of their wings sounded like a great charge of  
 horses and chariots into battle. •Their tails were like scorpions', with stings, 10  
 and it was with them that they were able to injure people for five months.<sup>e</sup> •As 11  
 their leader they had their emperor, the angel of the Abyss, whose name in  
 Hebrew is Abaddon, or Apollyon<sup>f</sup> in Greek.  
 8:13; 11:14 That was the first of the troubles; there are still two more to come. 12  
 Ezk 7:5

### The sixth trumpet

The sixth angel blew his trumpet, and I heard a voice come out of the four 13  
 Ex 30:1-3 horns of the golden altar<sup>g</sup> in front of God. •It spoke to the sixth angel with the 14  
 =16:12 trumpet, and said, 'Release the four angels that are chained up at the great river  
 1 Co 1:8 Euphrates'.<sup>h</sup> •These four angels had been put there ready for this hour of this 15  
 day of this month of this year,<sup>i</sup> and now they were released to destroy a third of 16  
 the human race. •I learnt how many there were in their army: twice ten thousand 17  
 times ten thousand mounted men. •In my vision I saw the horses, and the riders 18  
 Jb 41:10-13 with their breastplates of flame colour, hyacinth-blue and sulphur-yellow; the  
 horses had lions' heads, and fire, smoke and sulphur were coming out of their 19  
 mouths. •It was by these three plagues, the fire, the smoke and the sulphur coming 20  
 out of their mouths, that the one third of the human race was killed. •All the  
 horses' power was in their mouths and their tails; their tails were like snakes, 21  
 Am 4:6+ and had heads that were able to wound. •But the rest of the human race, who  
 16:9 escaped these plagues, refused either to abandon *the things they had made with*  
 Is 17:8 *their own hands*—the idols made of gold, silver, bronze, stone and wood that can  
 Dn 3:4 neither see nor hear nor move—or to stop worshipping devils. •Nor did they give  
 Ps 135:15-17 up their murdering, or witchcraft, or fornication or stealing.

### The imminence of the last punishment

**10** Then I saw another powerful angel coming down from heaven, wrapped in 1  
 a cloud, with a rainbow over his head; his face was like the sun, and his legs 2  
 Ezk 2:10 were pillars of fire. •In his hand he had a small scroll, unrolled; he put his right foot 2

3 in the sea and his left foot on the land •and he shouted so loud, it was *like a lion* Am 3:8  
 4 *roaring*. At this, seven claps of thunder made themselves heard<sup>a</sup> •and when the Ps 29:3-9  
 the seven thunderclaps had spoken, I was preparing to write, when I heard a voice Jr 25:30  
 5 from heaven say to me, 'Keep the words of the seven thunderclaps secret and do 22:10  
 not write them down'.<sup>b</sup> •Then the angel that I had seen, standing on the sea Dn 8:26;  
 6 and the land, *raised his right hand to heaven*,<sup>c</sup> •and *swore by the One who lives 12:4,9*  
*for ever and ever, and made heaven and all that is in it, and earth and all it bears,* Dn 12:7  
 7 *and the sea and all it holds*, 'The time of waiting is over; •at the time when the Dt 32:40  
 the seventh angel is heard sounding his trumpet, God's secret intention<sup>d</sup> will be Ne 9:6  
 fulfilled, just as he announced in the Good News told to *his servants the prophets*'. Ezk 12:28  
 Ex 20:11  
 Rm 16:25+  
 Am 3:7

### The seer eats the small scroll

8 Then I heard the voice I had heard from heaven speaking to me again. 'Go,'  
 it said 'and take that open scroll out of the hand of the angel standing on sea Zc 5:2  
 9 and land.' •I went to the angel and asked him to give me the small scroll, and he said, 'Take it and eat it; it will turn your stomach sour, but in your mouth it  
 10 will taste as sweet as honey'. •So I took it out of the angel's hand, and swallowed it; it was as sweet as honey in my mouth, but when I had eaten it my stomach  
 11 turned sour.<sup>e</sup> •Then I was told, 'You are to prophesy again, this time about many different nations and countries and languages and emperors'. Ezk 3:1-3

### The two witnesses

1 **11** Then I was given a long cane as a measuring rod, and I was told,<sup>a</sup> 'Go and Ezk 40:1-5  
 measure God's sanctuary, and the altar, and the people who worship there;<sup>b</sup> Zc 2:5-9  
 2 but leave out the outer court and do not measure it, because it has been handed  
 3 over to pagans—they will trample on the holy city for forty-two months.<sup>c</sup> •But Lk 21:24  
 I shall send my two witnesses to prophesy for those twelve hundred and sixty days, 12:6,14; 13:5  
 4 wearing sackcloth. •These are the *two olive trees* and the two lamps that stand Dn 7:25+  
 5 *before the Lord of the world*.<sup>d</sup> •Fire can come from their mouths and consume Zc 4:3,14  
 their enemies if anyone tries to harm them; and if anybody does try to harm 2 K 1:10  
 6 them he will certainly be killed in this way. •They are able to lock up the sky so Jr 5:14  
 that it does not rain as long as they are prophesying; they are able to turn water 1 K 17:1  
 into blood and strike the whole world with any plague as often as they like. Jm 5:17  
 Ex 7:17;  
 11:10

9 a. One of the fallen angels, possibly Satan himself, cf. v. 11 and Lk 10:18.

b. Where the fallen angels are imprisoned pending their ultimate punishment.

c. The vision of locusts is suggested by Jl 1-2 which, according to Jerome, the Jews interpreted historically: the four armies of locusts being successive invaders, Assyrian, Persian, Greek, Roman; cf. Jr 51:27. Here the locusts probably indicate the Parthians. Another suggestion is that the locusts symbolise spiritual torments inflicted by demons.

d. Possibly symbols of upright, faithful Christians, cf. 7:1f.

e. Lit. 'They have scorpion-like tails and stings and their authority (power) is to harm people for five months with their tails'; Var. 'they have tails like scorpions, and stings, and in their tails (lies) their power...'

f. Destruction, or ruin.

g. This shows that the pagans are punished in answer to the martyrs' prayer of 6:9,10 (cf. 8:2f).

h. The Parthians lived east of the Euphrates; the sixth plague represents Parthian cavalry. Cf. 6:2+.

i. Lit. 'for the hour and day and month and year'. For the 'Great Day' of wrath, cf. 6:17.

10 a. The voice of God.

b. Because the time of their fulfilment has not yet come. Cf. 22:10.

c. The angel, in contact with air, sea and land, the three regions of the universe, is about to swear by him who made them. Cf. Gn 14:22; Ezk 20:6,15,28;

Dt 32:40.

d. The definitive establishment of the kingdom; the sign of this is the destruction of the enemies of God's people, i.e. Babylon, ch. 17, Satan, and the pagan nations, 20:7-10. On the 'mystery' or 'secret' of God in the eschatological sense, cf. Rm 11:25; 2 Th 2:6f and Rm 16:25+. Cf. 2:24, the 'secrets of Satan'.

e. The news is sweet because it announces the Church's victory, bitter because it foretells her suffering.

11 a. Lit. 'A reed like a rod was given to me saying'; var. 'and the angel stood (there) saying'.

b. The Holy City, Jerusalem, symbolises the Church, cf. 20:9, which is about to be persecuted by the Beast (the Roman empire, cf. ch. 13). The Temple of God, which is measured as a sign that it will be spared, symbolises those who will remain faithful to Christ (cf. 14:1-5), the new 'remnant' of Israel, cf. Is 4:3+.

c. This period (three-and-a-half years) taken from Dn, had become the symbol for any persecution, cf. Lk 4:25; Jm 5:17. Here it is the Roman persecution.

d. In Zc the two olive trees symbolise Joshua and Zerubbabel, the religious and the civil leaders of the repatriated community who restored Temple and city after the Exile. Here they probably symbolise the two leaders appointed to build the new Temple, the Church of Christ, namely Peter and Paul, probably martyred in Rome under Nero, v. 8. They are described in terms of Moses and Elijah, the two witnesses of the transfiguration.

When they have completed their witnessing, the beast that comes out of the 7  
 Dn 7:21 Abyss<sup>e</sup> is going to make war on them and overcome them and kill them. •Their 8  
 corpses will lie in the main street of the Great City<sup>f</sup> known by the symbolic  
 names Sodom and Egypt, in which their Lord was crucified. •Men out of every 9  
 people, race, language and nation will stare at their corpses, for three-and-a-half  
 Jn 16:20 days, not letting them be buried, •and the people of the world will be glad about 10  
 Est 9:19 it and celebrate the event by giving presents to each other, because these two  
 prophets have been a plague to the people of the world.<sup>g</sup>  
 Ezk 37:5,10 After the three-and-a-half days, *God breathed life into them and they stood up*, 11  
 and everybody who saw it happen was terrified; •then they heard<sup>o</sup> a loud voice 12  
 from heaven say to them, 'Come up here', and while their enemies were watching,  
 2 K 2:11 they went up to heaven in a cloud. •Immediately, there was a violent earthquake, 13  
 and a tenth of the city collapsed; seven thousand persons<sup>h</sup> were killed in the  
 earthquake, and the survivors, overcome with fear, could only praise the God  
 of heaven.

### The seventh trumpet

8:13; 9:12; Ezk 7:5 That was the second of the troubles; the third is to come quickly after it.<sup>i</sup> 14  
 Then the seventh angel blew his trumpet, and voices could be heard shouting 15  
 1:5+; 12:10 in heaven, calling, 'The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our 16  
 Ps 2: 22:28 Lord and his Christ, and he will reign for ever and ever'. •The twenty-four elders, 16  
 Dn 7:14,27 enthroned in the presence of God, prostrated themselves and touched the ground  
 Zc 14:9 with their foreheads worshipping God •with these words, 'We give thanks to 17  
 1:4+; 16:5; 19:6 you, Almighty Lord God, He-Is-and-He-Was,<sup>j</sup> for using your great power and 18  
 Ps 2:1,5 beginning your reign. •*The nations were seething with rage* and now the time has 19  
 19:2 come for your own anger, and for the dead to be judged, and for your servants  
 Am 3:7 the prophets, for the saints and for all who worship you, small or great, to be  
 19:3 rewarded. The time has come to destroy those who are destroying the earth.'  
 Ps 115:13 Then the sanctuary of God in heaven<sup>k</sup> opened, and the ark of the covenant 19  
 Ex 25:8-10+ 2 M 2:5-8 could be seen inside it. Then came flashes of lightning, peals of thunder and an  
 Heb 8:5 earthquake, and violent hail.  
 4:5; 8:5

### The vision of the woman and the dragon<sup>l</sup>

22:14 12 Now a great sign appeared in heaven: a woman,<sup>b</sup> adorned with the sun, 1  
 Gn 37:9 standing on the moon, and with the twelve stars on her head for a crown.  
 Sg 6:10 She was pregnant, and in labour, crying aloud in the pangs of childbirth. •Then 2  
 Gn 3:16 a second sign appeared in the sky, a huge red dragon which had seven heads 3  
 Mi 4:9-10 and ten horns, and each of the seven heads crowned with a coronet.<sup>c</sup> •Its tail 4  
 Dn 7:7 dragged a third of *the stars from the sky and dropped them to the earth*,<sup>d</sup> and the 4  
 Dn 8:10 dragon stopped in front of the woman as she was having the child, so that he could  
 Is 66:7 eat it as soon as it was born from its mother. •The woman brought a male child 5  
 2:27 into the world,<sup>e</sup> the son who was to rule all the nations with an iron sceptre, and the  
 Ps 2:9 child was taken straight up to God and to his throne,<sup>f</sup> •while the woman escaped 6  
 1:6+ into the desert,<sup>g</sup> where God had made a place of safety ready, for her to be  
 11:3+; 12:14 looked after in the twelve hundred and sixty days.  
 20:2 And now war broke out in heaven, when Michael with his angels attacked the 7  
 Dn 10:13-17; 12:1 dragon. The dragon fought back with his angels, •but they were defeated and 8  
 driven out of heaven. •The great dragon, the primeval serpent, known as the 9  
 29:2-3 devil or Satan, who had deceived all the world, was hurled down to the earth  
 Gn 3:1-4 and his angels were hurled down with him. •Then I heard a voice shout from 10  
 Lk 10:19 heaven, 'Victory and power and empire for ever have been won by our God, and  
 Jn 12:31 all authority for his Christ, now that the persecutor, who accused our brothers  
 11:15 day and night before our God, has been brought down. •They have triumphed 11  
 over him by the blood of the Lamb and by the witness of their martyrdom, 12  
 because even in the face of death they would not cling to life. •Let the heavens 12  
 rejoice and all who live there; but for you, earth and sea, trouble is coming—

because the devil has gone down to you in a rage, knowing that his days are numbered.<sup>20:3  
2 Co 6:2+</sup>

- 13 As soon as the devil found himself thrown down to the earth, he sprang  
14 in pursuit of the woman, the mother of the male child, •but she was given a huge pair of eagle's wings to fly away from the serpent into the desert, to the place where she was to be looked after for *a year and twice a year and half a year*.<sup>Gn 3:15  
Ex 19:4  
Is 40:31  
11:3+; 12:6  
Dn 7:25+</sup>  
15 So the serpent vomited water from his mouth, like a river, after the woman,  
16 to sweep her away in the current,<sup>1</sup> •but the earth came to her rescue; it opened  
17 its mouth and swallowed the river thrown up by the dragon's jaws. •Then the dragon was enraged with the woman and went away to make war on the rest of her children, that is, all who obey God's commandments and bear witness for Jesus.<sup>Gn 3:15  
14:12</sup>

### The dragon delegates his power to the beast<sup>k</sup>

- 1 I was standing<sup>l</sup> on the seashore. 13 Then I saw *a beast emerge from the sea*: it had seven heads and ten horns, with a coronet on each of its ten horns, and its  
2 heads were marked with blasphemous titles. •I saw that the beast *was like a leopard*, with paws like *a bear* and a mouth like *a lion*; the dragon had handed  
3 over to it his own power and his throne and his worldwide authority.<sup>a</sup> •I saw that one of its heads seemed to have had a fatal wound but that this deadly injury had healed<sup>b</sup> and, after that, the whole world had marvelled and followed the beast.  
4 They prostrated themselves in front of the dragon because he had given the beast his authority; and they prostrated themselves in front of the beast, saying, 'Who  
5 can compare with the beast?'<sup>c</sup> How could anybody defeat him?' •For forty-two months the beast was allowed *to mouth its boasts* and blasphemies and to do  
6 whatever it wanted; •and it mouthed its blasphemies against God, against his  
7 name, his heavenly Tent and all those who are sheltered there. •It was allowed<sup>Dn 7  
2 Th 2:3-12  
=17:3,8  
Dn 7:3  
Dn 7:4-6  
Jr 27:6  
Lk 4:6  
17:8; 18:18  
Jr 27:6  
11:3+  
Dn 7:8,11;  
11:36+</sup>

e. The emperor Nero, type of Antichrist, cf. 13:1,18; 17:8 with notes.

f. The Great City here is Babylon i.e. Rome, cf. 16:19; 17:18; 18:10,16,18,19; it is called Sodom and Egypt for its two great crimes: refusing God's messengers and oppressing the people of Christ, cf. 17:4-6. The words 'in which their Lord was crucified', identifying the Great City with Jerusalem, are probably a gloss suggested by Mt 23:37, or can be justified by the responsibility of Roman authority for the crucifixion.

g. Var. 'I heard'.

h. The figure symbolises people of all classes of society (seven) and in great numbers (thousands).

i. The second disaster was described (the sixth trumpet) in 9:15-19. The third is to be the fall of Babylon (Rome) in ch. 17-18.

j. Add. (Vulg.) 'and he is to come'.

k. As opposed to the Jerusalem Temple referred to in vv. 1 and 2.

12 a. This chapter is made up of two separate visions: the attack of the dragon on the woman and her children, vv. 1-6 and 13-17; the attack of Michael on the dragon, vv. 7-12.

b. The woman is essentially an image of Israel as the mother of the messianic saviour, cf. Mt 4:9-10; Is 66:7; the son born to her is, like Moses, snatched from the dragon of water (in whom Leviathan of the Nile-Pharaoh can be seen) and taken up to the throne, while she herself escapes into the desert for a time of 42 months which recalls the 42 years of Israel's desert wanderings; the earth's swallowing of the dragon's river can be associated with the miraculous crossing of the Red Sea. The Messiah is here seen under the type of Moses. The woman's pain in travail may recall the curse of Eve, whose offspring would ultimately wound the serpent, so that Israel is seen as representing all humanity. It does not seem probable that John had Mary in mind or intended any allusion to the physical birth of the Messiah in the incarnation; cf. note to v. 5.

c. I.e. Satan, cf. v. 9 and 20:2; this Hebr. word,

rendered *diabolos* by LXX, in its primary sense means 'Accuser', cf. v. 10 and Zc 3:1-2 and see Jb 1:6+. In Jewish tradition the snake and the dragon symbolised the power of evil, the enemy of God and his people which God is to destroy at the end of time, cf. Jb 3:8+ and 7:12+.

d. Allusion to the fall of the angels seduced by Satan.

e. The Messiah considered simultaneously as an individual person and as head or leader of the new Israel, cf. the 'Son of Man' of Dn 7:13, and the 'Servant of Yahweh' of Is 42:1+.

f. Allusion to the ascension and the triumph of the Messiah that will result in the dragon's fall.

g. Traditional O.T. refuge for the persecuted, cf. Ex 2:15; 1 K 17:2f; 19:3f; 1 M 2:29,30. To exist, the Church must depend not on paganism but on her own divine life, cf. Ex 16; 1 K 17:4,6; 19:5-8; Mt 14:13,19.

h. Lit. 'a time and times and half a time'. Three-and-a-half years, cf. 11:3+.

i. The Roman empire, like a flood let loose by Satan, cf. Is 8:7-8, will try to engulf the Church, cf. Rv 13.

j. All faithful Christians.

k. This vision is inspired by Dn 7 (persecution of Antiochus Epiphanes). According to Rv 17:10,12-14, the Beast symbolises the Roman empire, type of all forces that are to oppose the Church. The seven heads are a series of successive emperors: the ten crowned horns are ten subject kings.

l. Var. 'he stood' which would join v. 18 to the preceding passage.

13 a. Satan, 'prince of this world', Jn 12:31+, can give imperial power to anybody he chooses, cf. Lk 4:6+.

b. Allusion to the empire recovering after some temporary setback; possibly Julius Caesar's assassination or the disturbances after Nero's death. The risen beast is a caricature of the risen Christ.

c. A parody of the name Michael, 12:7, which means 'Who-can-compare-with-God?'

**Dn 7:21** to make war against the saints and conquer them, and given power over every race, **Dn 7:6** people, language and nation; •and all people of the world will worship it, that **8** is, everybody whose name has not been written down since the foundation of **20:12+** the world in the book of life of the sacrificial Lamb. •If anyone has ears to hear, **9** **Mt 13:9** let him listen: •*Captivity for those who are destined for captivity; the sword for* **10** **Jr 15:2** *those who are to die<sup>a</sup> by the sword.<sup>e</sup>* This is why the saints must have constancy and faith.

### The false prophet as the slave of the beast

**Mt 7:15** Then I saw a second beast; it emerged from the ground;<sup>f</sup> it had two horns **11** like a lamb, but made a noise like a dragon. •This second beast was servant to **12** the first beast, and extended its authority everywhere, making the world and all its people worship the first beast, which had had the fatal wound and had **13** been healed. •And it worked great miracles, even to calling down fire from **14** **Dt 13:2-4** heaven on to the earth while people watched. •Through the miracles which it **14** **Mt 24:24** was allowed to do on behalf of the first beast, it was able to win over the people **15** of the world and persuade them to put up a statue in honour of the beast that **15:2** had been wounded by the sword and still lived. •It was allowed to breathe **15** life into this statue, so that the statue of the beast was able to speak, and to have **16** **Dn 3:5-7,15** anyone who refused to worship the statue of the beast put to death.<sup>g</sup> •He compelled **16** **7:3; 14:9,** everyone—small and great, rich and poor, slave and citizen—to be branded on **17** **11; 16:2;** the right hand or on the forehead, •and made it illegal for anyone to buy or sell **17** **19:20; 20:** anything unless he had been branded with the name of the beast or with the **4** the number of its name. **17:9** There is need for shrewdness here: if anyone is clever enough he may interpret **18** the number of the beast: it is the number of a man, the number 666.<sup>h</sup>

### =7:1-8+ The companions of the Lamb<sup>a</sup>

**2 K 19:30-31** **14** Next in my vision I saw Mount Zion, and standing on it a Lamb<sup>b</sup> who **1** **Jl 3:5** had with him a hundred and forty-four thousand people, all with his name **2** **Ob 17** and his Father's name written on their foreheads. •I heard a sound coming **2** **Zp 3:12-13** out of the sky like the sound of the ocean or the roar of thunder; it seemed to be **3** **Ac 2:21+** the sound of harpists playing their harps. •There in front of the throne they were **3** **5:9; 15:3** singing a new hymn<sup>c</sup> in the presence of the four animals and the elders, a hymn **3** **Ps 33:3; 98:1** that could only be learnt by the hundred and forty-four thousand who had been **4** **Is 42:10; 43:** redeemed from the world.<sup>d</sup> •These are the ones who have kept their virginity<sup>e</sup> **4** **19** and not been defiled with women; they follow the Lamb wherever he goes;<sup>f</sup> **4** **Jr 2:2-3** they have been redeemed from amongst men to be the first-fruits for God and **5** **Jm 1:18** for the Lamb. •They never allowed a lie<sup>g</sup> to pass their lips and no fault can be **5** **Zp 3:13** found in them.

### Angels announce the day of Judgement<sup>a</sup>

**8:13** Then I saw another angel, flying high overhead, sent to announce the Good **6** **Dn 3:4** News of eternity to all who live on the earth, every nation, race, language and **7** **4:11** tribe. •He was calling, 'Fear God and praise him, because the time has come for **7** **Mt 10:28p** him to sit in judgement; worship the maker of heaven and earth and sea and every **8** **Ex 20:11** water-spring'. **8** **=18:2-3** A second angel followed him, calling, 'Babylon has fallen, Babylon the Great has **8** **Is 57:17+** fallen,' Babylon which gave the whole world the wine of God's anger to drink'.<sup>j</sup> **9** **Jr 25:15** A third angel followed, shouting aloud, 'All those who worship the beast and **9** **13:15-17+** his statue, or have had themselves branded on the hand or forehead, •will be made **10** to drink the wine of God's fury which is ready, undiluted, in his cup of anger; **11** **16:19; 19:** in fire and brimstone<sup>k</sup> they will be tortured in the presence of the holy angels and **12** **20+: 20:** the Lamb •and the smoke of their torture will go up for ever and ever. There will **13** **Gn 19:28** be no respite, night or day, for those who worshipped the beast or its statue **14** **19:3** or accepted branding with its name.' •This is why there must be constancy in the **15** **Is 34:9-10**



- 13 saints who keep the commandments of God and faith in Jesus. •Then I heard a voice from heaven say to me, 'Write down: Happy are those who die in the Lord! Happy indeed, the Spirit says; now they can rest for ever after their work, since their good deeds go with them.'

12:17  
Ac 9:13+  
1:3+  
Sl 14:19  
2 Th 1:7  
Mt 11:28-29  
Heb 4:10

#### The harvest and vintage of the pagans'

Jl 4:12-13

- 14 Now in my vision I saw a white cloud and, sitting on it, one like a son of man  
15 with a gold crown on his head and a sharp sickle in his hand. •Then another angel came out of the sanctuary, and shouted aloud to the one sitting on the cloud, 'Put your sickle in and reap: harvest time has come and the harvest of the earth is ripe'. •Then the one sitting on the cloud set his sickle to work on the earth, and the earth's harvest was reaped.

1:7  
Dn 7:13

Jl 4:13  
Am 8:2  
Mt 13:36-43  
Jn 4:35  
Rm 2:6+

- 17 Another angel, who also carried a sharp sickle, came out of the temple in  
18 heaven, •and the angel in charge of the fire left the altar<sup>m</sup> and shouted aloud to the one with the sharp sickle, 'Put your sickle in and cut all the bunches off the  
19 vine of the earth; all its grapes are ripe'. •So the angel set his sickle to work on the earth and harvested the whole vintage of the earth and put it into a huge  
20 winepress, the winepress of God's anger, •outside the city,<sup>n</sup> where it was trodden until the blood that came out of the winepress was up to the horses' bridles as far away as sixteen hundred furlongs.

6:9-10; 8:3-5

19:15  
Is 63:1-6

19:14,21

#### The hymn of Moses and the Lamb<sup>a</sup>

- 1 **15** What I saw next, in heaven, was a great and wonderful sign: seven angels  
2 were bringing the seven plagues that are the last of all, because they exhaust the anger of God. •I seemed to see a glass lake suffused with fire, and standing by the lake of glass, those who had fought against the beast and won, and against his statue and the number which is his name. They all had harps  
3 from God, •and they were singing the hymn of Moses,<sup>b</sup> the servant of God, and of the Lamb:

=7:9,14;  
13:15-18

14:3+  
Ex 15

d. Var. 'he who kills by the sword must die...'

e. This seems to mean that God's decrees against the persecutors will be carried out inexorably; their punishment is at hand; cf. 14:11,12; Mt 26:52.

f. This second beast is later called the 'false prophet', 16:13; 19:20; 20:10. Before describing the return of the Son of Man, 14:14-21; cf. 19:11f and Mt 24:30, John describes the activities of the false messiahs (first beast) and false prophets (second beast) foretold by Christ himself, Mt 24:24; cf. 2 Th 2:9.

g. The second beast mimics the Spirit who works miracles in the Church to encourage faith in Christ. Similarly, the first beast had imitated the risen Messiah, 13:3. The Dragon, the first beast and the second beast form a caricature of the Trinity.

h. Var. '616'. In both Greek and Hebr., letters are used for numbers, the value corresponding to the place in the alphabet; by adding up the values of component letters the total 'number of a person's name' is obtained. Some commentators point out that in Hebr. the letters of Caesar Nero add up to 666, and that in Greek the letters of Caesar-God add up to 616 (the alternative reading).

14 a. The followers of the beast who are branded with his name and number, 13:16-17, are now contrasted with the followers of the Lamb marked with his name and the name of his Father. This is the 'remnant' of the new Israel, Is 4:3+, the faithful Christians who have survived persecution and who are to begin the restoration of God's kingdom when its enemies have been destroyed.

b. Var. 'the Lamb'.

c. Moses had celebrated the deliverance from Egypt, Ex 15:1-21; cf. Rv 15:3-5; the new hymn celebrates the new deliverance of God's people and of the new order introduced by the Lamb that was sacrificed.

d. Lit. 'the earth', which is here equivalent to the 'world' of the fourth gospel, cf. Jn 1:10+, i.e. the

pagan world, cf. 5:9.

e. Metaphorically. In the O.T. marital infidelity is a metaphor for idolatry, cf. Ho 1:2+, in this case the worship of the beast.

f. Just as Israel followed Yahweh at the Exodus, so the new Israel, newly redeemed, follows the Lamb into the desert, cf. Jr 2:2-3, where the marriage rites are renewed (Ho 2:16-25).

g. I.e. they have not invoked false gods, the beast.

h. Before God's vengeance strikes, the angels appear to exhort the persecutors to repentance by proclaiming the hour of judgement; but the appeal goes unheeded, cf. 16:2,9,11,21. See 15:5+.

i. The tense is the prophetic perfect.

j. Lit. 'who has made all nations drink the wine of anger' corr. 'drink the wine of the anger of her adultery' Greek, as in 18:3. The 'wine of anger' is a familiar image, cf. Is 51:17+, for the divine anger to which Babylon (Rome) has exposed all nations by making them worship her idols.

k. The lake of burning sulphur is where the wicked are punished, cf. 19:20; 20:10; 21:8.

1. The destruction of the pagan nations. The fulfilment of this prophecy is described in 19:11f.

m. Persecutors are annihilated in answer to the martyrs' prayers which are carried to God by the angel who tends the altar fire.

n. The pagans are to be destroyed outside Jerusalem according to Ze 14:21,12f; Ezk 38-39; cf. Heb 13:11; Lv 4:12+. See also Is 63.

15 a. The hymn of Moses, vv. 2-4, interrupts the development of the vision of the seven cups, just as the symbolic liturgy of 8:3-5 interrupted the vision of the seven trumpets. The severity of the divine punishment is thus vindicated before it is described.

b. The hymn of Ex 15 which celebrated Israel's triumph over Pharaoh. Here the conquerors of the



## B. THE PUNISHMENT OF BABYLON

## The famous prostitute

Ezk 16:23

- 1 **17** One of the seven angels that had the seven bowls came to speak to me, and said, 'Come here and I will show you the punishment given to the famous prostitute<sup>a</sup> who rules *enthroned beside abundant waters*,<sup>b</sup> •the one with whom all the kings of the earth have committed fornication, and who has made all the population of the world drunk with the wine of her adultery'.<sup>c</sup> •He took me in spirit to a desert,<sup>d</sup> and there I saw a woman riding a scarlet beast which had seven heads and ten horns<sup>e</sup> and had blasphemous titles written all over it. The woman was dressed in purple and scarlet, and glittered with gold and jewels and pearls, and she was holding a gold winecup filled with the disgusting filth of her fornication; •on her forehead was written a name, a cryptic name: 'Babylon the Great,' the mother of all the prostitutes and all the filthy practices on the earth'. •I saw that she was drunk, drunk with the blood of the saints, and the blood of the martyrs of Jesus;<sup>f</sup> and when I saw her, I was completely mystified. •The angel said to me, 'Don't you understand? Now I will tell you the meaning of this woman, and of the beast she is riding, with the seven heads and the ten horns.

Jr 51:13

18:3+  
Is 23:17  
Jr 51:7

Is 21:1f

=13:1

18:16

Jr 51:7

2 Th 2:7  
1 P 5:13+

## The symbolism of the beast and the prostitute

- 8 'The beast you have seen once was and now is not; he is yet to come up from the Abyss, but only to go to his destruction.<sup>h</sup> And the people of the world, whose names have not been written since the beginning of the world in the book of life, will think it miraculous when they see how the beast once was and now is not and is still to come. •Here there is need for cleverness, for a shrewd mind; the seven heads are the seven hills, and the woman is sitting on them.
- 10 'The seven heads are also seven emperors.<sup>i</sup> Five of them have already gone, one is here now, and one is yet to come; once here, he must stay for a short while.
- 11 The beast, who once was and now is not, is at the same time the eighth and one of the seven, and he is going to his destruction.
- 12 'The ten horns are ten kings<sup>j</sup> who have not yet been given their royal power but will have royal authority only for a single hour and in association with the
- 13 beast. •They are all of one mind in putting their strength and their powers at the

=13:3,4

20:12+

13:18

Dn 7:24

16:14

beast celebrate the justice of God in punishing the wicked persecutors.

e. Before finally destroying Babylon (Rome), 16:18-19, God sends a series of plagues on the wicked (several are reminiscent of the Egyptian plagues, Ex 7-10) to bring them to repentance; but, like Pharaoh, the wicked are obstinate.

d. According to 2 M 2:4-8 the reappearance of the sacred tent and the manifestation of God's glory as in the time of Moses, Ex 40:34-35, and of Solomon, 1 K 8:10, were to herald the coming of the messianic age and the renaissance of the chosen people. The 'glory' (cf. Ex 24:16+) is the sign of God's presence (cf. the 'silence' of 8:1, and the appearance of the ark of the covenant in 11:19).

16 a. Rome, type of all pagan powers hostile to God.

b. The Parthian kings, dreaded by the Roman world.

c. The work of these evil spirits is foreordained to bring the pagan nations to judgement.

d. I.e. 'the mountains of Megiddo'. The defeat of King Josiah near this town, 2 K 23:29f, made the place symbolise disaster for any armies assembling there, cf. Zc 12:11.

e. Add. '(proceeding) from the throne' or 'from God'.

f. These cosmic phenomena symbolise the powers of this world withering under God's anger.

g. Lit. 'about one talent'.

17 a. Rome, type of any place where evil is supreme. Prostitution symbolises idolatry as in Ezk 16 and 23, cf. Ho 1:2+. See also Rv 14:4+.

b. A literal description of Babylon, metaphorically explained in v. 15.

c. All pagan nations and their kings who have adopted the imperial cult.

d. Where unclean beasts live, cf. Lv 16:8+; 17:7+.

e. The seven heads are Rome's seven hills, v. 9, and the horns ten subject kings, v. 16. The beast, v. 8, is Nero himself; he is dead but will return as the ruler of the subject peoples to avenge himself on Rome, vv. 16-17—a reflection of popular belief that the dead Nero would return, at the head of a Parthian army. This return figures as a parody of Christ's resurrection just as the formula of v. 8, 'he once was and now is not (and he is to come)' echoes the divine name, 'He was, he is, and he is to come'.

f. Babylon is the symbolic name for Rome.

g. Allusion to Nero's persecutions. Like Jerusalem (Ezk 16:36-38 and 23:37-45) Rome is guilty of a double crime: idolatry, v. 4, and murder, v. 6.

h. Two different interpretations of the beast's symbolism are combined, vv. 8, 9, 15-18 and vv. 10, 12-14; these correspond to the two originally distinct texts of Rv (see Introduction).

i. Seven Roman emperors; the sixth, Nero, is now on the throne.

j. The kings of the satellite nations.

19:11-21 beast's disposal, •and they will go to war against the Lamb; but the Lamb is 14  
 14:4 *the Lord of lords and the King of kings*, and he will defeat them and they will  
 Dt 10:17 be defeated by his followers, the called, the chosen, the faithful.'

2 M 13:4  
 1 Tm 6:16  
 Jr 51:13  
 Dn 3:4

The angel continued, 'The waters you saw, beside which the prostitute was 15  
 sitting, are all the peoples, the populations, the nations and the languages. •But 16  
 the time will come when the ten horns and the beast will turn against the  
 prostitute, and *strip off her clothes and leave her naked*; then they will eat her 17  
 flesh and burn the remains in the fire. •In fact, God influenced their minds to do  
 what he intended, to agree together to put their royal powers at the beast's  
 disposal until the time when God's words should be fulfilled. •The woman you 18  
 saw is the great city which has authority over all the rulers on earth.'

Ezk 16:37-  
 41; 23:25-  
 29

11:8+

### An angel announces the fall of Babylon

Jr 50

Ezk 43:2

= 14:8  
 Is 21:9  
 Jr 50:15  
 Is 13:21-22;  
 34:11,14

17:2  
 Jr 51:7

**18** After this, I saw another angel come down from heaven, with great 1  
 authority given to him; *the earth was lit up with his glory*. •At the top of 2  
 his voice he shouted, '*Babylon has fallen*, Babylon the Great has fallen, and has  
 become *the haunt of devils* and a lodging for every foul spirit and dirty, loath-  
 some bird. •All the nations have been intoxicated by the wine of her prostitution;<sup>a</sup> 3  
 every king in the earth has committed fornication with her, and every merchant  
 grown rich through her debauchery.'

### The people of God summoned away

16:17

Is 48:20;

52:11

Jr 50:8;

51:6

Jr 51:9

Gn 18:20

Jr 50:15

Jr 16:18

Is 47:8

Is 47:9

A new voice spoke from heaven; I heard it say, 'Come out, my people, away 4  
 from her, so that you do not share in her crimes and have the same plagues  
 to bear. •*Her sins have reached up to heaven*, and God has her crimes in mind: 5  
*she is to be paid in her own coin*. She must be paid double the amount she exacted. 6  
 She is to have a doubly strong cup of her own mixture. •Every one of her shows 7  
 and orgies is to be matched by a torture or a grief. *I am the queen on my throne*,  
*she says to herself*, and *I am no widow* and shall never be in mourning. •For that, 8  
*within a single day*, the plagues will fall on her: disease and mourning and famine.  
 She will be burnt right up. The Lord God has condemned her, and he has great  
 power.'

Ezk 27-28

### The people of the world mourn for Babylon

Ezk 26:17

There will be mourning and weeping for her by the kings of the earth who 9  
 have fornicated with her and lived with her in luxury. They see the smoke as she  
 burns, •while they keep at a safe distance from fear of her agony. They will 10  
 say:

'Mourn, mourn for this great city,  
 Babylon, so powerful a city,  
 doomed as you are within a single hour'.

There will be weeping and distress over her among all the traders of the earth 11  
 when there is nobody left to buy their cargoes of goods; •their stocks of gold 12  
 and silver, jewels and pearls, linen and purple and silks and scarlet; all the  
 sandalwood, every piece in ivory or fine wood,<sup>b</sup> in bronze or iron or marble; •the 13  
 cinnamon and spices, the myrrh and ointment and incense; wine, oil, flour and  
 corn; their stocks of cattle, sheep, horses and chariots, their slaves, their human  
 cargo...

1 Tm 1:10+

Ho 10:5  
 Am 6:7

'All the fruits you had set your hearts on have failed you; gone for ever, never 14  
 to return, is your life of magnificence and ease.'

The traders who had made a fortune out of her will be standing at 15  
 a safe distance from fear of her agony, mourning and weeping. •They will be 16  
 saying:

'Mourn, mourn for this great city;  
 for all the linen and purple and scarlet that you wore,

- 17 for all your finery of gold and jewels and pearls; 17:4  
your riches are all destroyed within a single hour'.

All the captains and seafaring men,<sup>c</sup> sailors and all those who make a living 17:4  
18 from the sea will be keeping a safe distance, •watching the smoke as she burns, Ezk 27:27-29  
19 and crying out, 'Has there ever been a city as great as this?' •They will throw dust  
on their heads and say, with tears and groans:

'Mourn, mourn for this great city  
whose lavish living has made a fortune  
for every owner of a sea-going ship;  
ruined within a single hour.

- 20 'Now heaven, celebrate her downfall, and all you saints, apostles and prophets: =19:1-2  
God has given judgement for you against her.' Dt 32:43  
Is 44:23  
21 Then a powerful angel picked up a boulder like a great millstone, and as he Jr 51:48  
hurled it into the sea, he said, 'That is how the great city of Babylon is going Ex 15:3  
to be hurled down, never to be seen again.'<sup>d</sup> Jr 51:63-64  
Ezk 26:21

- 22 'Never again in you, Babylon, Is 24:8  
will be heard the song of harpists and minstrels, Jr 7:34; 16:9  
the music of flute and trumpet; Ezk 26:13  
never again will craftsmen of every skill be found  
or *the sound of the mill* be heard; Jr 25:10  
23 never again will shine *the light of the lamp*,  
never again will be heard  
*the voices of bridegroom and bride*.  
Your traders were the princes of the earth,  
all the nations were under your spell.

- 24 In her you will find the blood of prophets and saints, and all the blood that was =16:5-7  
ever shed on earth.' Mt 23:35-37

### Songs of victory in heaven

- 1 **19** After this I seemed to hear the great sound of a huge crowd in heaven,  
2 singing, 'Alleluia! Victory and glory and power to our God! •He judges 18:20+  
fairly, he punishes justly, and he has condemned the famous prostitute who Jr 51:48  
corrupted the earth with her fornication; he has avenged his servants that she =16:7  
3 killed'. •They sang again, 'Alleluia! *The smoke of her will go up for ever* and Dn 3:27  
4 ever.' •Then the twenty-four elders and the four animals prostrated themselves 6:9; 11:8  
and worshipped God seated there on his throne, and they cried, 'Amen, Alleluia'. 14:11  
5 Then a voice came from the throne; it said, 'Praise our God, you saints Is 34:10  
6 of his and *all who, great or small, revere him*'. •And I seemed to hear the voices 11:18  
7 of a huge crowd, like the sound of the ocean or the great roar of thunder, Ps 115:13  
8 answering, 'Alleluia! The reign of the Lord our God Almighty has begun; •let us 11:17  
be glad and joyful and give praise to God, because this is the time for the marriage Mt 22:9  
9 of the Lamb.<sup>a</sup> •His bride is ready, and she has been able to dress herself in dazzling Ep 5:27+  
white linen,<sup>b</sup> because her linen is made of the good deeds of the saints.' •The 15:6  
angel said, 'Write this: Happy are those who are invited to the wedding feast of Is 61:10  
the Lamb', and he added, 'All the things you have written are true messages Mt 22:12  
10 from God'. •Then I knelt at his feet to worship him, but he said to me, 'Don't 13+  
do that: I am a servant just like you and all your brothers who are witnesses to Mt 8:11+;  
20:4 22:1-14  
Dn 8:26  
1:1; 22:8-9

18 a. 'her prostitution'; var. 'the anger of her prostitution', cf. 14:8. 'have been intoxicated', lit. 'have drunk deep'; var. 'have fallen' or 'she has drunk deep'.  
b. Lit. 'very valuable wood'; Vulg. 'precious stone'.

c. Lit. 'Everyone who steers, everyone sailing to a place'; Vulg. 'who sail the sea'.

d. V. 21 is continued in v. 24. The description of 18:1-3 is completed here: Babylon is to be destroyed for its idolatry, 18:1-3, cf. 17:4, and for persecuting the Christians, 18:21.

19 a. The wedding of the Lamb symbolises the beginning of the heavenly kingdom described in 21:9f. See Ho 1:2+ and Ep 5:22-23+.

b. Symbol of victorious purity, a gift from God.



Jesus. It is God that you must worship.' The witness Jesus gave is the same as the spirit of prophecy.<sup>c</sup>

### C. THE DESTRUCTION OF THE PAGAN NATIONS

#### =20:7-10 The first battle of the End<sup>d</sup>

1:5; 3:7,14 And now I saw heaven open, and a white horse<sup>e</sup> appear; its rider was called 11  
 2 Th 2:8 Faithful and True; he is a *judge with integrity*, a warrior for justice. •His eyes 12  
 Is 11:4 were flames of fire, and his head was crowned with many coronets;<sup>f</sup> the name  
 1:14; 2:18 written on him was known only to himself; •his cloak was soaked in blood.<sup>g</sup> He is 13  
 Lk 10:22 known by the name, The Word of God.<sup>h</sup> •Behind him, dressed in linen of dazzling 14  
 Is 63:1 white, rode the armies of heaven<sup>i</sup> on white horses. •From his mouth came a sharp 15  
 Jn 1:1+ sword<sup>j</sup> to strike the pagans with; he is the one *who will rule them with an iron* 16  
 1:16; 14:20 *sceptre*, and tread out the wine of Almighty God's fierce anger.<sup>k</sup> •On his cloak and 16  
 Ps 2:9 on his thigh<sup>l</sup> there was a name written: *The King of kings and the Lord of lords*.  
 2:27+; I saw an angel standing in the sun, and he shouted aloud to all the birds that 17  
 14:19 were flying high overhead in the sky, 'Come here. *Gather together at the great* 18  
 Is 63:3 *feast* that God is giving. •*There will be the flesh of kings for you, and the flesh of* 18  
 Dt 10:17 great generals and heroes, the flesh of horses and their riders and of all kinds of  
 2 M 13:4 men, citizens and slaves, small and great.'  
 Ezk 39:17

17:12-14 Then I saw the beast, with all the kings of the earth and their armies, gathered 19  
 Ps 2:2 together to fight the rider and his army. •But the beast was taken prisoner, 20  
 Dn 7:11 together with the false prophet who had worked miracles on the beast's behalf  
 Mt 7:15 and by them had deceived all who had been branded with the mark of the beast  
 13:16 and worshipped his statue.<sup>m</sup> These two were thrown alive into the fiery lake  
 14:10+; of burning sulphur. •All the rest were killed by the sword of the rider, which 21  
 20:10,14 came out of his mouth, and *all the birds were gorged with their flesh*.  
 Ezk 39:20

#### Jn 12:31 The reign of a thousand years

9:1+ **20** Then I saw an angel come down from heaven with the key of the Abyss 1  
 12:7,9 in his hand and an enormous chain. •He overpowered the dragon, that 2  
 Gn 3:1 primeval serpent which is the devil and Satan, and chained him up for a thousand  
 Mt 12:28-29 years. •He threw him into the Abyss, and shut the entrance and sealed it over him, 3  
 12:12 to make sure he would not deceive the nations again until the thousand years  
 2 Co 5:2+ had passed. At the end of that time he must be released, but only for a short  
 2 Th 2:6-8 while.

Dn 7:22 Then I saw some thrones, and I saw *those who are given the power to be judges* 4  
 Mt 19:28 take their seats on them. I saw the souls of all who had been beheaded for having  
 19:10+ witnessed for Jesus and for having preached God's word,<sup>a</sup> and those who refused  
 13:15-17 to worship the beast or his statue and would not have the brand-mark on their  
 5:10 foreheads or hands; they came to life, and reigned with Christ for a thousand  
 years.<sup>b</sup> •This is the first resurrection; the rest of the dead did not come to life 5  
 1:3+ until the thousand years were over. •Happy and blessed are those who share 6  
 2:11+ in the first resurrection; the second death cannot affect them<sup>c</sup> but they will be  
 1:6+ priests of God and of Christ and reign with him for a thousand years.<sup>d</sup>

#### =19:11-21 The second battle of the End

When the thousand years are over, Satan will be released from his prison 7  
 and will come out to deceive all the nations in the four quarters of the earth, 8  
 Ezk 38:2,9 *Gog and Magog*,<sup>c</sup> and mobilise them for war. His armies will be as many as the  
 15 sands of the sea; •they will come swarming over the entire country<sup>f</sup> and besiege 9  
 16:14-16 the camp of the saints, which is the city that God loves.<sup>g</sup> But *fire will come down* 9  
 Lk 21:24 *on them from heaven* and consume them. •Then the devil, who misled them, will 10  
 Ac 9:13+ be thrown into the lake of fire and sulphur, where the beast and the false prophet  
 Ezk 38:22 are, and their torture will not stop, day or night, for ever and ever.  
 19:20

## The punishment of the pagans

Rm 2:6+

- 11 Then I saw a great white throne and the One who was sitting on it. In his  
 12 presence, earth and sky vanished, leaving no trace.<sup>a</sup> • I saw the dead, both great  
 and small, standing in front of his throne, while the book of life was opened, and  
*other books opened* which were the record of what they had done in their lives,  
 by which the dead were judged.<sup>f</sup>
- 13 The sea gave up all the dead who were in it; • Death and Hades were emptied  
 14 of the dead that were in them; and every one was judged according to the way  
 in which he had lived. Then Death and Hades were thrown into the burning  
 15 lake.<sup>g</sup> This burning lake is the second death; • and anybody whose name could  
 not be found written in the book of life was thrown into the burning lake.

21:1  
 2 P 3:7,10,12  
 3:5; 13:8;  
 17:8  
 Dn 7:10+  
 Lk 10:20

1:18+

19:20; 21:4  
 1 Co 15:26;  
 54

2:11+;  
 14:10+

## D. THE JERUSALEM OF THE FUTURE

The heavenly Jerusalem<sup>a</sup>

=7:15-17

- 1 **21** Then I saw *a new heaven and a new earth*;<sup>b</sup> the first heaven and the first  
 2 earth had disappeared now, and there was no longer any sea.<sup>c</sup> • I saw the  
 holy city, and the new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, as  
 3 beautiful as a bride all dressed for her husband.<sup>d</sup> • Then I heard a loud voice call  
 from the throne, 'You see this city? Here God lives among men. He will make  
*his home among them; they shall be his people*, and he will be their God; his name

Is 65:17  
 2 P 3:13  
 Jb 7:12+  
 Rm 8:19-23  
 19:7-8

7:15-17  
 Ezk 37:27

c. Lit. 'the witness of Jesus'; this is the word of God to which Jesus testifies and which is implanted in every Christian, cf. 1:2; 6:9; 12:17, and which inspires the prophets.

d. After the fall of Babylon, foretold in 14:8 and described in 16:19,20, Christ comes from heaven at the beginning of the Great Day of Yahweh on which all evil will be destroyed, as had been proclaimed in 14:14-20 and 17:12-14.

e. The colour symbolises victory.

f. Because he is King of kings, cf. v. 16.

g. Alluding (cf. v. 15) to Is 63:1. Symbol of the mortal ruin he deals his enemies, cf. Rv 5:5.

h. The rider comes from heaven: God's Word destroying the first-born of Egypt, Ws 18:14-18.

i. The angels, cf. Mt 26:53, or preferably, following 14:5 and 17:14, the white-robed martyrs, cf. 19:8; 3:5,18; 6:11; 16:15 and also Mt 22:11f.

j. Lit. 'a sharp blade issues out of his mouth', symbol of the destroying Word; cf. Is 11:4; Ws 18:16 and also Ho 6:5; Rv 1:16; 2 Th 2:8.

k. The winepress is a common image in prophetic literature for God's destruction of his people's enemies on the Great Day of his revenge; cf. Gn 49:9-12; Jr 25:30; Is 63:1-6; Jl 4:13. On the 'wine of anger', cf. 14:8+ and Is 51:17+.

l. Possibly meaning 'on his sword'; it has also been suggested that we should read 'on his standard', since the similarity of the two words in Hebr. could be responsible for the present reading.

m. This long parenthesis echoes the events described in ch. 13.

20 a. Lit. 'I saw thrones, they sat on them, judgement was given to them, and I saw the souls of those beheaded for the witness of Jesus and the Word of God'. This verse, scarcely intelligible as it stands, must have begun 'I saw the souls...' and must have been completed '...Word of God: they came to life and reigned...'. The remainder ('And I saw thrones on which all those took their seats who would not worship the beast and his image or be sealed on their foreheads or their hands') must have belonged to Text II (see Introduction) and should be read between vv. 11 and 12. Cf. Mt 19:28; 1 Co 6:2-3.

b. One interpretation makes this 'resurrection' of the martyrs (cf. Is 26:19; Ezk 37) symbolise the recovery of the Church after the Roman persecution; the 'reign of a thousand years' is then the period of the kingdom of Christ on earth from the end of persecution (the

fall of Rome) to the Last Judgement (in 20:11f). According to Augustine and others who follow him, the 'reign of a thousand years' is to be reckoned from Christ's resurrection, and the 'first resurrection' is baptism, cf. Rm 6:1-10; Jn 5:25-28. A literal interpretation of this verse was widespread in the early Church: after the first resurrection, of the martyrs, Christ was to return to reign on earth with his faithful for a thousand years. This literal millenarianism was censured.

c. The first death is on earth, the second 'death' is failure to win eternal life.

d. The messianic rule of Christians on earth is foretold in 5:9-10, and under the symbol of the New Jerusalem, in 21:9-22 and 22:6-15; this second passage has been inserted so that it follows the mention of the Last Judgement, 20:13-15.

e. Ezk 38-39 (see notes) mentions 'Gog, king of Magog', here the two names symbolise all the pagan nations leagued against the Church at the end of time. This is the eschatological combat of Text I and it corresponds to the war of Text II described in 19:11.

f. Palestine.

g. Jerusalem, symbol of the Church, cf. Lk 21:24.

h. At this point part of v. 4 should be inserted (see note to v. 4).

i. The first scrolls unrolled list human deeds, the scroll of life opened last is the list of the predestined, cf. Dn 7:10+; 12:1+; Ac 13:48+.

j. After the Last Judgement death itself will lose its power.

21 a. A vision of heaven, cf. 7:15-17. The opening is suggested by Is (51 and 65 especially).

b. In Is 51:16; 65:17; 66:12, the phrase is merely a symbol of the new messianic age. St Paul, following the lead of Jesus, cf. Mt 19:28, is more realistic: the whole of creation will one day be freed from the dominance of corruption, renewed and transformed by the glory of God, Rm 8:19+.

c. The sea symbolises evil because it was the home of the dragon, cf. Jb 7:12+; it will vanish as it did at the Exodus, but this time for ever, before the triumphant advance of the new Israel, cf. Is 51:9-10; Ps 74:13,14; Jb 26:12-13; Is 27:1.

d. The new and joyful wedding of Jerusalem and her God has taken place, cf. Is 65:18; 61:10; 62:4-6; the Exodus ideal has at last been achieved, cf. Ho 2:16+.

Is 8:8  
Is 25:8 is *God-with-them*.<sup>e</sup> • *He will wipe away all tears from their eyes*; there will be no 4  
more death, and no more mourning or sadness. The world of the past has gone.  
Is 35:10  
2 Co 5:17 Then the One sitting on the throne spoke: 'Now I am making the whole of 5  
creation new' he said. 'Write this: that what I am saying is sure and will come  
Dn 8:26 true.' • And then he said, 'It is already done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the 6  
1:8+ Beginning and the End. I will give water from the well of life free to anybody  
22:17  
Is 55:1 who is thirsty;<sup>f</sup> • it is the rightful inheritance of the one who proves victorious; 7  
2 S 7:14 and *I will be his God and he a son to me*.<sup>g</sup> • But the legacy for cowards, for those 8  
= 22:15  
Rm 1:29+ who break their word, or worship obscenities, for murderers and fornicators, and  
for fortune-tellers, idolaters or any other sort of liars, is the second death<sup>h</sup> in  
the burning lake of sulphur.'

Ep 5:27 **The messianic Jerusalem<sup>i</sup>**

One of the seven angels that had the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues 9  
2 Co 11:2 came to speak to me, and said, 'Come here and I will show you the bride that the 9  
Ezk 40:2  
Heb 11:10  
21:2 Lamb has married'. • *In the spirit, he took me to the top of an enormous high 10  
Is 60:1-2 mountain*, and showed me Jerusalem, the holy city, coming down from God out  
of heaven.<sup>j</sup> • *It had all the radiant glory of God* and glittered like some precious 11  
jewel of crystal-clear diamond. • The walls of it were of a great height, and had 12  
twelve gates; at each of the twelve gates there was an angel, and over the gates  
7:1-8  
Ezk 48:31-35 were written the names of the twelve tribes of Israel; • *on the east there were three 13  
gates, on the north three gates, on the south three gates, and on the west three gates.*  
Ep 2:20 The city walls stood on twelve foundation stones, each one of which bore the 14  
name of one of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.

The angel that was speaking to me was carrying a gold measuring rod 15  
to measure the city and its gates and wall. • The plan of the city is perfectly 16  
square, its length the same as its breadth.<sup>k</sup> He measured the city with his rod and  
it was twelve thousand furlongs in length and in breadth, and equal in height.<sup>l</sup>  
He measured its wall, and this was a hundred and forty-four cubits high—the 17  
Is 54:11-12 angel was using the ordinary cubit. • The wall was built of diamond, and the city 18  
of pure gold, like polished glass. • The foundations of the city wall were faced 19  
with all kinds of precious stone: the first with diamond, the second lapis lazuli,  
the third turquoise, the fourth crystal, • the fifth agate, the sixth ruby, the seventh 20  
gold quartz, the eighth malachite, the ninth topaz, the tenth emerald, the eleventh  
sapphire and the twelfth amethyst. • The twelve gates were twelve pearls, each 21  
gate being made of a single pearl, and the main street of the city was pure gold,  
transparent as glass. • I saw that there was no temple in the city<sup>m</sup> since the Lord 22  
Jn 2:19-21 God Almighty and the Lamb were themselves the temple, • and the city did not 23  
need the sun or the moon for light, since it was lit by the radiant glory of God  
Is 60:1-2, 19-20 and the Lamb was a lighted torch for it. • *The pagan nations will live by its light 24  
2 Co 3:18 and the kings of the earth will bring it their treasures. • The gates of it will never 25  
Is 60:11 be shut by day—and there will be no night there—and the nations will come, 26  
Is 60:3,11 bringing their treasure and their wealth. • Nothing unclean may come into it: no 27  
Is 35:8; 52:1  
Zc 13:1-2  
2 P 3:13 one who does what is loathsome or false, but only those who are listed in the  
Lamb's book of life.*

Ezk 47:1-12  
Jn 4:1+ **22** Then the angel showed me the river of life, rising from the throne of God 1  
and of the Lamb<sup>a</sup> and flowing crystal-clear • down the middle of the city 2  
2:7; 22:14  
Ezk 47:12 street. *On either side<sup>b</sup> of the river were the trees of life, which bear twelve crops  
of fruit in a year, one in each month, and the leaves of which are the cure for the  
pagans.*

= 7:15  
Zc 14:11  
1 Co 13:12  
1 Jn 3:2 The ban will be lifted.<sup>c</sup> The throne of God and of the Lamb will be in its place 3  
in the city; his servants will worship him, • they will see him face to face, and his 4  
name will be written on their foreheads. • It will never be night again and they 5  
will not need lamplight or sunlight, because the Lord God will be shining on them.  
They will reign for ever and ever.

19:9; 21:5  
Dn 8:26 The angel said to me, 'All that you have written is sure and will come true: 6

- the Lord God who gives the spirit to the prophets has sent his angel to reveal  
 7 to his servants *what is soon to take place*. •Very soon now, I shall be with you again.' Happy are those who treasure the prophetic message of this book. 1:1;22:16  
 8 I, John, am the one who heard and saw these things. When I had heard and seen them all, I knelt at the feet of the angel who had shown them to me, 1:3+  
 9 to worship him; •but he said, 'Don't do that: I am a servant just like you and like your brothers the prophets and like those who treasure what you have written in this book. It is God that you must worship.' 19:10  
 10 This, too, he said to me, 'Do not keep the prophecies in this book a secret, 10:4  
 11 because the Time is close. •Meanwhile let the sinner go on sinning, and the unclean continue to be unclean; let those who do good go on doing good, Dn 12:10  
 12 and those who are holy continue to be holy.<sup>d</sup> •Very soon now, I shall be with you again, *bringing the reward to be given to every man according to what he* Is 40:10  
 13 *deserves*. •I am the Alpha and the Omega, *the First and the Last*, the Beginning Ps 62:12  
 14 and the End. •Happy are those who will have washed their robes clean, so that 1:8+  
 15 into the city.<sup>e</sup> •These others must stay outside: dogs, fortune-tellers, and Is 41:4;  
 fornicators, and murderers, and idolaters, and everyone of false speech and false 44:6  
 life.' 7:14; 12:1+;  
 22:2  
 = 21:8  
 Nb 5:1-4  
 Rm 1:29+

## EPILOGUE

- 16 I, Jesus, have sent my angel to make these revelations to you for the sake of 1:1,11f; 22:6  
 the churches. I am of David's line, the root of David and the bright star of the morning. 2:28+  
 17 The Spirit and the Bride<sup>f</sup> say, 'Come'. Let everyone who listens answer, 'Come'.<sup>g</sup> Then let all who are thirsty come: all who want it may have the water Is 55:1  
 of life, and have it free. 21:6  
 18 This is my solemn warning to all who hear the prophecies in this book: if 1 Co 11:26  
 anyone adds anything to them, God will add to him every plague mentioned in Dt 4:2  
 19 book; •if anyone cuts anything out of the prophecies in this book, God will cut off his share of the tree of life and of the holy city, which are described in the book.  
 20 The one who guarantees these revelations repeats his promise: I shall indeed Ac 3:20-21  
 be with you soon. Amen; come, Lord Jesus. 1 Co 15:23+  
 21 May the grace of the Lord Jesus be with you all.<sup>h</sup> Amen.

e. Lit. 'and he, God with them, will be their God' Vulg.; var. 'and God himself will be their God' or 'and God himself will be with them'. The *shektnah*, or presence, is an essential part of God's covenant with his people, cf. Ex 25:8 and Jn 1:14+, and is to be real and total after the end of the world, cf. Jl 4:17,21; Zc 2:14; Zp 3:15-17; Is 12:6.

f. In the O.T., fresh, drinking water is a symbol of life, and as such is to be a feature of the messianic age. In the N.T. it is a symbol of the Spirit, cf. Jn 4:1+.

g. The title 'Son of God' was to be conferred on King-Messiah, David's heir, on the day of his enthronement, 2 S 7:14+; hence Jesus was proclaimed 'Son of God' in virtue of his resurrection, Ac 2:36+; Rm 1:4+.

h. Eternal death. The fire, like the water of v. 6, is symbolic.

i. This is Jerusalem on earth during the last or messianic days since the pagan nations have not yet been destroyed, 21:24, and have a chance of conversion, 22:2; but it foreshadows the heavenly Jerusalem that develops from it. The details of the description are mostly from Ezk 40-47.

j. I.e. renewal in these present, messianic times;

the transformation of humanity by an act of God.

k. The symbol of (terrestrial) perfection.

l. Symbolic number: twelve (for the new Israel) multiplied by one thousand (for immensity).

m. The destruction of the Jerusalem Temple symbolises the end of the old covenant; there is now a new temple, the Body of Christ; cf. Jn 2:19-21.

22 a. Allusion to the Trinity, since the river of living water is a symbol of the Spirit (Jn 4:1+), cf. Rv 21:6+.

b. Or punctuate 'Down the middle ... on either side'.

c. Vv. 3-5 (Text II) should be inserted after 21:4. Cf. Introduction.

d. God pursues his design whatever man may do.

e. The Jerusalem described in 21:9f.

f. The Church, wife of the Messiah, cf. 21:10.

g. The appeal is addressed to the Messiah; it is the *Marana tha* refrain of the liturgical assemblies, 1 Co 16:22, expressive of the Christians' longing for the *parousia*, see 1 Th 5:1+.

h. Lit. 'with all'; var. 'with the saints' or 'with all the saints'.





# SUPPLEMENTS



# CHRONOLOGICAL TABLE

The columns to the right of the date column deal with Palestinian and biblical history; those to the left deal with general history; but this distinction is less strict from the Christian era onwards. In the right-hand column, extra-biblical writings are in *italics*, and (before the Roman period) extra-biblical facts or those not taken from Josephus are also in *italics*.

The names of rulers, kings, governors and high priests are in SMALL CAPITALS or CAPITALS according to their importance. In the list of the kings of Judah the succession is from father to son unless anything different is indicated. The names of prophets, and of biblical books when mentioned at the time of their composition, are in **bold type**; and the most important of other items are also in **bold type**.

## I. THE BEGINNINGS

Gn 1-11

Prehistoric period: Stone Age	B.C.	[Bible: popular account of creation]
Protohistoric period:	4000	[Popular account of man's inventions, Gn 4:16f]
Historical period: Writing, properly so called; more widespread use of bronze. Egypt: <b>Old Kingdom</b> (Great Pyramids). Capital: Memphis. Mesopotamia: Sumerians, followed by Akkadians	3000	<i>Palestine: Early Bronze Age, 3100-2100. The Canaanites. Abraham's ancestors as nomads in Mesopotamia</i>

## II. THE PATRIARCHS

Gn 12-50

Egypt: <b>Middle Kingdom</b> : about 2030-1720. Mesopotamia: Sumerian revival (3rd dynasty of Ur) followed by the growing importance of the Amorites	2000	<i>Middle Bronze Age: about 2100-1560. In the 20c. and 21c. Egypt controls the Syro-Palestinian coast but not the interior (Memoirs of Sinuhe the Egyptian). About 1850: arrival of ABRAHAM in Canaan, Gn 12</i>
About this time, the <i>Akkadian poems of Creation</i> (Enuma elish) and of the Flood (Gilgamesh)		
18c. and 17c.: 1st Babylonian dynasty (Amorite): <b>HAMMURABI</b> about 1700 His code. Egypt: the Hyksos, about 1720-1560; capital: Tanis	1700	<b>The patriarchs in Egypt</b>

## III. MOSES AND JOSHUA

Ex / Nb / Dt / Jos

Egypt: <b>New Kingdom</b> : 1560-715. Capital: Thebes.	1500	<i>Late Bronze Age: about 1550-1200</i>
<b>THUTMOSE III</b> : 1502-1448 (campaigns in Palestine and Syria)	1400	<i>The el-Amarna Letters; (the Habiru; Puti-hepa king of Jerusalem)</i>