



# Revelation

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## Chapter 1

Obedience is the key to being blessed by G-d. The book of Revelation teaches us how to be obedient – especially in light of the last days. It reveals the events that will take place and helps us to prepare for judgment that is to come. If we are wise, we will prepare for the last days. Israel was unprepared for what G-d wanted to do at Mt Sinai. They rebelled, chose a man above G-d, and missed out on the opportunity of participating with G-d in His plans. The church needs to “watch” (Matthew 25:13), to be “awake” (Romans 13:11-12), so that we will not be unprepared for what G-d will do as He establishes His Kingdom. This book teaches us how to position ourselves, in the place that G-d wants us to be, doing what He wants us to do, so that we can be found faithful.

The books in the Scripture did not come with names. They were given the names of the individuals who wrote them, or they were given traditional names. The book of Revelation was known primarily by two names – “The Apocalypse (vision) of John”, and “The Revelation of Messiah Yeshua”. This second name (as seen in Rev 1:1) is the better of the two names. Our focus in The Book of Revelation should be primarily centred upon “Who” (Messiah Yeshua), rather than on “what”, “where”, “when”, etc. If we read this prophecy through the lens of “the revelation of Yeshua” (especially the revelation of Him within a last day’s context), then this is not a book that we need to be afraid to read.

Throughout this book, John was inspired to write down the things that he saw. G-d revealed many of these things to John in light of prophetic truths that had already been written down (eg: Revelation 1:7,14; Zechariah 12:10; Daniel 7:9 etc). We are going to see that John, inspired by the Holy Spirit, built on prophetic truth already laid down (in the Old Testament - OT), but often he changed one part or the other in regard to that truth. These changes do not change the Word of G-d (as written down in the OT). However, these changes help us to understand prophetic revelation from a New Testament perspective – ie: understanding OT prophecy through the lens of the birth, life, death and resurrection of Messiah Yeshua.

Another thing we need to bear in mind is that, especially in the end times, many people are going to be confused as to who Messiah Yeshua really is. Many people today see Him as “meek and mild”. The Book of Revelation reveals Him as He is and will be – a Lamb, yes, but also the Lion of the tribe of Judah! At Yeshua’s first coming, He did not come to judge or condemn the world – He came as the Lamb (John 3:17, John 12:47). However, at His second coming, He is coming as a righteous Judge – the Lion (John 5:22, Revelation 19:11-16).

**Verse 1:** “*The Revelation of Messiah Yeshua, which G-d gave to Him (Yeshua) to show His servants (those who have made Him L-rd, ie believers) what will be quick. Which He made known when He sent, in the hand of His messenger, His servant John*”.

1. This revelation was given by G-d (the Father), to His Son, so that we can understand the identity, the work and the judgment of Messiah. [We need to have a proper, Biblical, view of Messiah Yeshua - Jesus Christ of Nazareth. All judgment has been given to Him (John 5:22). Even for the believer, there is a judgment of deeds/works (Romans 2:6, 1 Corinthians 3:12-15, 2 Corinthians 5:10 Revelation 20:13). The prophets revealed that, before the Kingdom is established, a time of judgment is coming. The book of Revelation instructs us on how to be ready for this judgment which is to come.]

There are two ways to understand this concept of happening quickly:

1. It is a word that is linked to G-d's timing. Yeshua told the Jewish people, in Matthew 23:39, that they would not see Him again (ie His Kingdom would not be established on earth) until they were ready to say, “Blessed is He who comes in the Name of the L-rd”. G-d knows the specific time that Messiah is going to return. However, it is not so much we who are waiting upon G-d to instruct His Son to come, but rather that G-d is waiting on the Jewish people to be ready to say these words. Israel will not reach this point of utterance until they have gone through great persecution – a time known as “Jacob's trouble” – Jeremiah 30:5-7.
2. This time, when it finally comes, is going to come upon the inhabitants of the earth suddenly/quickly. When this time suddenly arrives, the time for preparation will also be over (see Matthew 25:1-13). We need to prepare ourselves ahead of this time so that we are not found lacking. Prophecy is the key to preparedness. It reveals truth, concerning the last days, so that we might know what is about to take place and be praying/responding correctly. (Matthew 26:41).

Every aspect of Scripture gives us revelation – insight and wisdom - assisting us in understanding the truth of G-d. It is not by chance that this book was authored by a man named ‘John’. In Hebrew the name for John is “Yohanan”. This name means that “G-d is gracious”. It can also mean “one who supplicates (asks for grace from) G-d”. John was saved by grace (Ephesians 2:8). He, like believers today, still needed to ask God for grace. Grace has a two-fold purpose: It leads us to salvation, but it also, after salvation, teaches us to say “NO!” to ungodliness (the things of the flesh), as well as teaches us how to obey G-d by living self-controlled, upright and G-dly lives (Titus 2:11-14)

**Verse 2:** “*who testified of the Word of G-d and the testimony of Messiah Yeshua, and of all things that he saw.*”

John saw (he was an eyewitness of/bore testimony to), and then he spoke/testified about Yeshua.

There is an inherent relationship between the Word of G-d (Scripture) and the testimony of Yeshua (“... so that the Scripture would be fulfilled, Jesus said...” – e.g. John 19:28). Yeshua is called the “Word” (John 1:1-4, 14-15).

Many times, we are told that Yeshua did something ('doing' implies a testimony) to fulfil Scripture – the Word of G-d (Matt 5:17, Matt 21:4-5). The better we understand the Word of G-d, the more we are going to understand the person and work (deeds, testimony) of Messiah Yeshua. The primary purpose of the Book of Revelation is to reveal Yeshua to us (Revelation 1:1). Not only is He the Son/Lamb of G-d 'who takes away the sin of the world' (John 1:29), but He is also the One who is going to bring judgment upon the world (John 5:22). The book of Revelation reveals 'Yeshua, the Righteous Judge', to us.

**Verse 3:** *"Blessed is the one who reads and blessed is the one who hears (obeys) the words of prophecy, and who keeps what is written. For the time is near."*

Many believers equate 'blessing' with material things [with getting their WANTS/ (often, fleshly) desires met]. As believers, our primary desire should not be for our own needs or desires to be met. Our first priority should be to seek first the Kingdom of G-d and His righteousness – G-d's wants and desires need to be placed high above our own (Matthew 6:33). When we get our priorities into the right order, '*all these things* (the necessities of life) *shall be added*'. When we are Kingdom minded, AND then receive all that we NEED for life and G-dliness (2 Peter 1:3, Matthew 6:32), we are truly blessed.

There are three blessings found here: A blessing for those who read the book of Revelation, a blessing for those who hear it and a blessing for those who keep it.

To 'keep', in Biblical language, is a call to obedience. Obedience to G-d's Word is ground zero for receiving G-d's blessing in our lives. Obedience to G-d's Word positions us in the will of G-d (first His general will, which will then lead us to find His specific/personal will for our lives). Being positioned in the will of God will help to prepare us for what is still to come.

**Verse 4:** *"John (writes this), to the seven congregations which are in Asia: Grace to you, and peace, from the One who is, and was and will be; and from the seven Spirits which are before His throne."*

The number 'seven' (here, and throughout this Book) speaks of holiness, perfection or sanctification. These were congregations outside of Israel, i.e in exile. The seven congregations refer to believers in general. These messages are especially pertinent to those believers who will be alive in the last days. Within the context, it is unlikely that these seven churches refer to or represent different epochs of time.

Every time we see the word '*grace*' in the Bible, we need to remember that it has a twofold purpose – for salvation, and for teaching us to live G-dly lives (Titus 2:11-14). Living G-dly lives (changing to become 'new creations') leads to us fulfilling the purpose/will of G-d for our lives. '*Peace*' is only experienced when we are living in the will of G-d. It guards our hearts and minds (Philippians 4:7). We cannot experience peace before we have experienced grace. G-d's grace precedes peace ("grace and peace" ...2 Peter 1:2, 1 Peter 1:2, Philemon 1:3, Titus 1:4, etc – a very common expression in the NT).

*'From the One who is, and was and will be':* This is an idiom which speaks of the transcendent G-d – the G-d who is over everything and who is not limited to time or space.

In the last days, things are going to get very difficult (especially for believers). In the last days we are going to need to know this identity of G-d – that He is above our circumstances, that He is in control, that we need supernatural assistance from Him if we are going to walk in a way that is pleasing to Him in those days. With Him on our side, we can overcome and be victorious.

**'Seven Spirits':** There is only ONE Holy Spirit. This, therefore, is a reference to the perfect Holy Spirit. G-d the Father, Messiah Yeshua and the Holy Spirit are One G-d, revealed as Three, who are in perfect unity. Tri-unity. G-d, by His Holy Spirit, wants to move in these congregations to perfect, sanctify and to bring about holiness within them.

**Throne:** The throne (seat) of G-d is one of the words that appears very frequently in this prophecy. Currently, G-d's throne is in the heavens, but a time is coming when His throne (His rule and Kingdom) will come into this world.

**Verse 5:** *And from Yeshua the Messiah; the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, over all the kings of the earth. To Him who loved us and, in His blood, has washed us from our sins."*

Yeshua, as a '*faithful witness*', was an example, to us, of how we ought to live (how G-d wants us to live, to talk, to think, to behave, etc). He taught us how to rely on G-d, with the help of the Holy Spirit, in order to be faithful to Him.

Being the '*Firstborn*' implies a superiority – Yeshua accomplished G-d's will perfectly. He is above all. We are the "*dead*" that He has brought from death to life. (Ephesians 2:1) **The festival of first fruits** can also be called the **festival of the resurrection**, because it was on this day that Messiah rose (the '*firstborn from the dead*') from the dead. The festival of first fruits was celebrated the day after the Sabbath of the Days of Unleavened bread, i.e. following the Passover (Leviticus 23:9-14). This day of First Fruits, almost 2000 years ago, coincided with the day that Yeshua rose from the dead (Mark 16:1-2, 1 Corinthians 15:20-26), after having purchased salvation for us. Yeshua's resurrection was G-d the Father's testimony that He was pleased with, and that He accepted, Yeshua's sacrifice made on our behalf. Yeshua willingly laid down His life for us. He had the power to take up His own life again, but He did not. Yeshua submitted to death. G-d the Father, as a stamp of approval so to speak, raised Yeshua from the dead (Romans 10:9). The Father will also raise us, who are in Messiah, to life (1 Corinthians 6:14). **Resurrection** is synonymous with **Kingdom victory**.

Christ is going to rule over all things (1 Corinthians 15:27) Ruling '*over all the kings of the earth*' again alludes to the superiority of Yeshua. He is the ultimate authority, the supreme leader over ALL things. Many people want the benefits of salvation, but they do not want to respond to Messiah as the supreme ruler over their lives. Do we want Him to rule and reign over every aspect of our lives? If we are going to submit to His rulership, it is reassuring to know that He loves us. (Love gives – John 3:16)

***Loved us...in His blood has washed us:*** Love gives (John 3:16). The most supreme act of love that someone can display is to die in the place of the one that they love.

While we were still sinners, Messiah displayed this supreme act of love for us – giving of His very self to redeem us. There is no redemption (being set free from the bondage of sin and death, becoming the purchased possession of the One who paid the price to redeem us) without the shedding of blood (Hebrew 9:22).

**Verse 6:** *"Who has made us kings and priests to G-d His Father – all the honour and power to Him for ever and ever. Amen."*

'*Made us kings and priests*' comes from Exodus 19:6. In many places in this book, John, inspired by the Holy Spirit, wrote down many OT passages (which were well known in the Jewish community) but, in order to reveal Biblical revelation to us, he used them within a new context. This new revelation could only be understood in light of the life and work of Yeshua. After we have been redeemed, and after we are IN Messiah, G-d brings a supernatural change into our lives. In Exodus 19:6, G-d had just brought His people out of bondage, and they were at Mt Sinai. He wanted to bring a supernatural change into their lives. An identity change - to that of a royal (kingly) priesthood. G-d's desire is that we would rule and reign with Messiah – a royal priesthood (1 Peter 2:9, Revelation 20:4). We have a calling to rule and reign with Messiah in the Kingdom (2 Timothy 2:12). The degree of rulership, we have then, is dependent on how we live right now (faithfulness, obedience and submission – Luke 19:12-26).

Everything that G-d does is rooted in His 'power'. G-d turned over His power, authority and rulership to His Son (Ephesians 1:19-22, 1 Corinthians 15:25-28, John 5:22). What G-d wants to do is to make us recipients of His power, so that we might be able to rule in His Name, carrying out His purposes and plans while we are still alive on this earth today.

'*Amen*' is a word that reminds us that what has been said is true and can be believed.

**Verse 7:** *"Behold! He is coming in the clouds, and every eye shall see Him, and those who pierced Him. They are going to mourn Him, all the families of the earth. Thus, it shall be. Amen."*

Whenever the word '*Behold*' is used in Scripture, it should remind us to pay attention, as what follows this word is very important in helping us to understand truth and, therefore, giving us the ability to act in faith.

*He is coming in the clouds:* Yeshua, currently seated at the right hand of the Father who is in heaven (Psalm 110:1, Hebrews 1:3), is coming back to earth from heaven in order to set up His Kingdom. However, the purpose of this citation is not solely to inform us of this fact. In its original context (Daniel 7:13), Yeshua '*coming with clouds*' speaks of Yeshua's ascension – going from earth to heaven. Yeshua ascended from earth into the presence of His Father, the Ancient of Days (Acts 1:9-11). The rabbi's, in commentating on Daniel 7:13, state that this verse helps us to understand the identity of Messiah. When Messiah, the Son of man, presented Himself before His Heavenly Father (after His death and resurrection), He inherited all honour, glory and power – John 3:35, Hebrews 1:3-4. He died. He inherited. We die (Romans 6:10-11). We inherit (Ephesians 1:11-14).

*'Every eye will see Him'* comes from Isaiah 52:8-10 (see also Isaiah 33:17, Isaiah 40:5). In this verse, we see watchmen who are looking for G-d to fulfil His prophetic promises. (Kingdom establishment). They shout for joy because of G-d's faithfulness. The verse preceding this one (Isaiah 52:7) sets it in the context of the proclamation of the gospel (the good news of how we can be in the Kingdom – i.e. the cross of Messiah and justification). Messiah, at His second coming, is returning to Israel (Zechariah 14:4).

*'Those who pierced Him...are going to mourn Him'* is found in Zechariah 12:10. At the time of Messiah's return, Israel will be in the midst of great persecution and hardship (Jeremiah 30:7).

*'All the families of the earth'* first appears in Genesis 12:3. The Abrahamic covenant is rooted in the Seed of Abraham. (i.e. Messiah Yeshua - Galatians 3:16) – the ultimate blessing of this covenant is the establishment of the Kingdom.

**Verse 8:** *"For I am the Beginning (Alpha) and the End (Omega), the First and the Last. The One who is, and was and will be, the Almighty G-d".*

*'The First and the Last'* comes from Isaiah 44:6 – In its original context (ie in the OT), this verse speaks about G-d as the Redeemer. When John uses these verses (again weaving OT prophecy into this book of Revelation – setting OT prophecy within a NT context), he is alluding to the fact that G-d has begun the process of redemption (we understand this in the NT context as relating to the blood of Yeshua), in individuals and within the church, and He will complete it – within His Kingdom. (Philippians 1:6) The barrier (sin) between man and G-d is removed by the blood of Messiah. We have been justified and are able to now enjoy fellowship with G-d. (In Judaism another name for Redeemer is 'Messiah').

*'Almighty G-d'* speaks of El Shaddai. The G-d who is ALL sufficient. Part of the redemptive process (not our justification, but for our purification) is to go through persecution, hardships, trials and affliction (James 1:2-4). Things are going to get tough. Persecution, hardship, trials and affliction are going to increase for the people of G-d. It is through these tough times that we need to remember that G-d is our Redeemer, the One who is all sufficient. He allows us to go through trials, but never more than we can bear. It is through redemption, not through justification, that G-d's Kingdom is established. Think of it like this: Justification is like being declared a citizen of a new kingdom — a legal change of status (we have received the "passport" of the Kingdom, and it is in our new name). **Justification** is crucial, but it's **not the whole story**. **Redemption** includes justification, but it goes further — it leads to **transformation** (becoming a new creation in Messiah) and the **actual implementation of G-d's reign** on earth. Redemption is the **building of that Kingdom**, the **liberation from old rule**, and the **creation of a new life** under a new King.

**Verse 9:** “*I, John, your brother, your fellow partaker in affliction, and in the Kingdom, and in patience. On account of Messiah Yeshua I was on the island, which is known by the name of ‘Patmos’, because of the Word of G-d and on account of the testimony of Messiah Yeshua.*”

*Brother...fellow partaker:* John doesn't set himself up to be different or better than us. We are all under the authority of Yeshua, servants of Messiah (Galatians 3:26-28). No matter who we are, we can all learn something from those around us.

*In...affliction and in the Kingdom and in patience:* Scripture reveals that we are going to have to go through tribulation and suffering. We need to persevere and endure (have patience) until we receive what G-d has promised – His Kingdom, in all its fullness.

*Patmos* is a small island on the eastern side of the Mediterranean - very close to Turkey. John was exiled to this island because the Roman government did not want his revelation of Messiah to be preached to the people. This foreshadows what is coming (Luke 21:12-19, Matthew 10:17-23). Those who testify about the truth of Messiah in the last days are going to be dealt with harshly by the rulers in this world.

This is the second time that '*the Word of G-d and...the testimony of Messiah Yeshua*' is spoken of (see Revelation 1:2). Repetition, in Scripture, shows emphasis. If we are people who live according to the testimony of Yeshua (ie if others can see that He is living in us, by means of the Holy Spirit), then we will be people who live in accordance to/in obedience to the Word of G-d. When we live according to the Word of G-d, our lives are going to reflect the testimony of Yeshua (2 Corinthians 3:14-18).

**Verse 10:** “*I was in the Spirit on the L-rd's day. I listened and there was a great voice, the sound of a trumpet.*”

Our first introduction to the *Holy Spirit* is in Genesis 1:2. In this verse, He is hovering over the chaos. At G-d's Word, He brings order out of chaos. When we believe, we receive the Holy Spirit. He helps us to bring G-dly order from the chaos in our own lives, so that we might have a proper testimony and might be positioned for the events that are going to bring about His Kingdom.

*The L-rd's Day* could be referring to

1. The Sabbath. There is a relationship between the Sabbath and the Kingdom of G-d. On the 6<sup>th</sup> day G-d created man. On the 7<sup>th</sup> day, G-d instituted a day of rest, a day whereby He could enjoy fellowship and intimacy with those He had created (Genesis 2:2-3). It is for this same reason (fellowship and intimacy with mankind) that G-d establishes His Kingdom. In many ways, G-d's Kingdom is likened to the Garden of Eden, the “Garden of the L-rd” (Isaiah 51:3).
2. Some commentators are of the opinion that *the L-rd's Day* refers to a Sunday – the day that Yeshua rose from the dead – resurrection being synonymous with victory (victory over sin and death).
3. *The L-rd's Day* should also remind us of judgment (The Day of the L-rd – Joel 2:1, 2 Peter 3:10. G-d's Kingdom is only established on earth AFTER His judgment).

There are two types of ‘trumpets’ spoken about in the Bible.

1. Silver trumpets were used to make announcements - a call to battle or a call to worship – 1 Corinthians 14:8.
2. The shofar or ram’s horn was a trumpet specifically associated with G-d’s provision (Genesis 22:13-14). G-d provides in order that His will be brought about/established. John, in writing of this voice sounding like a trumpet, may be trying to help us to understand that G-d has already provided what is necessary for us to be faithful to Him – especially in the last days.

**Verse 11:** “*I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last; and, 'What you see, write in this book, and send it to the seven congregations which are in Asia; to Ephesus, and to Smyrna, and to Pergamos, and to Thyatira, and to Sardis, and to Philadelphia, and to Laodicea.'*”

This is the second time that ‘Alpha and Omega, the First and the Last’ is mentioned (See Revelation 1:8, where it is set in the context of redemption.) In Isaiah 48:12, where these words are also recorded, the context is of G-d’s faithfulness/commitment to Israel. G-d will fulfil His covenant promises! This is true for the promises He made to Israel, and it will continue to be true for believers (the followers of Messiah) – His faithfulness will be especially seen and experienced by those who live in the last days.

***Seven congregations:*** Seven, Biblically, is a number that speaks of sanctification – being set apart for a (Kingdom) purpose. In a collective manner, G-d has sanctified the body of believers for a purpose – to demonstrate the character and principles of the Kingdom of G-d to the dying world around us (Luke 17:20-21).

**Verse 12:** “*I turned to see the voice who was speaking to me. And it came about, when I turned, I saw seven golden menorahs (lampstands).*”

‘The voice’ serves to remind us of Numbers 7:89. Moses, making atonement for the people, was in the Holy of Holies, before the mercy seat, when the Voice of G-d spoke to him. Moses, on that day, experienced intimacy with G-d. This parallels Messiah Yeshua doing the same thing, in preparation for the Millennial Kingdom of G-d. G-d, in calling out the seven congregations (the body of believers) has a purpose. We are called, as faithful witnesses, to testify to others about the grace of G-d. Those who testify of the things of G-d have intimacy with him.

The ‘menorah’ stood in the Holy Place (Exodus 25:31-40, 2 Chronicles 4:7). The menorah did not stand in the Holy of holies. The purpose of the menorah was for its light to testify, to the people, that G-d was with them. The menorot, here, are symbols representing the congregations (see Revelation 1:20). These congregations, like lampstands, are supposed to live, and behave, in such a way that others see the Presence of G-d in their lives – so that those who are in the world would begin to desire that same reality (ie that they would want the Presence of G-d in their own lives).

**Verse 13:** *"And in the midst of these seven menorahs was one, like the Son of Man, dressed in a coat; and he was girded with a golden girdle around His heart."*

Immanuel. G-d is with us. He is *in our midst!* In trials, tribulations and persecution we can take comfort in the fact that G-d is with us, that He will not leave or forsake us. If G-d was not with us, we could do nothing in regard to fulfilling His will for our lives.

*The Son of Man* is a name that Yeshua frequently referred to in regard to Himself (Luke 19:9-10, John 3:13, etc).

**Verse 14:** *"And His head and His hair were white like fine wool, white like snow. And His eyes like a flame of fire."*

The "Ancient of Days" is a name for G-d the Father. In this verse, the description of Messiah is reminiscent of the description of G-d the Father, which is found in Daniel 7:9 - *His head and hair were white like wool...* The OT description of G-d the Father is now a description attributed to G-d the Son. In no ways does this attack the concept of the trinity. The G-dhead remains three equal, distinguishable 'parts' – Father, Son and Holy Spirit – and yet G-d is One.

**Verse 15:** *"And His feet were burnished bronze as refined in a furnace. And His voice as a voice of many waters."*

Messiah is depicted in the likeness of G-d His Father. (Daniel 7:9-10) Yeshua is going to inherit, from His Father, a name that is above all names (Philippians 2:6-11) A transition is going to happen when the Kingdom of G-d is established.

A *Furnace* is similar to an oven – that which heats up to a very high degree.

**Verse 16:** *"And it came about that was in His right hand the seven stars. And out of His mouth came a sharp, double-edged sword. His face was like the shining sun, mighty in power."*

These 'seven stars' have a connection to the seven lampstands – they work together (Revelation 1:20).

A *double-edged sword* is a two-sided, strong weapon used for separation. At Messiah's second coming (which is an event that happens AFTER the rapture) He is going to separate the sheep from the goats (those who are for Him are separated from those who are against Him- Matthew 25:31-46). This separation is a very important concept in regard to the Kingdom (light was separated from darkness, the waters above were divided from the waters below, etc – Genesis 1. We are called to be separated from the world, from its mindset and its works of darkness – 2 Corinthians 6:17).

*Mighty in power* alludes to great strength, being full of power

**Verse 17:** *"And when I looked at Him, I fell upon His feet as dead. But He touched me with His right hand, and He said to me, 'Do not fear. I am the First and the Last.'*

Many believers think that when they see Yeshua they are going to run to Him, hug Him, cheer and applaud Him, etc. We need to have a right understanding of Messiah. John was a believer. He had known Yeshua intimately – as one of His closest friends. Yet John's response, when he saw the resurrected Yeshua, was to *fall at His feet as though dead*. A fear of G-d is a healthy sign in a believer's life. (Proverbs 9:10)

This is the third time that Messiah has used these names ('*the First and the Last*') to refer to Himself (See also Revelation 1:8, 11). This is a verse which, in its original context, was set within the context of redemption. Sin is a barrier that separates us from G-d. When we are redeemed, by the blood of the Lamb, that barrier is removed. It is only after redemption that we can draw close to G-d and experience intimacy with Him. The number one "goal" of the Kingdom of G-d is intimacy – G-d (the Father) and man dwelling (walking) together in harmony (Revelation 21:3, Genesis 3:8).

**Verse 18:** *"I am the Living. I was dead and behold I live forever and ever, Amen. For in my hand are the keys of Sheol and death."*

Yeshua came to earth in order to give us life (John 10:10). Through His death and resurrection, He could give us life – victory over sin.

'*Forever*' is related to the Kingdom. Yeshua lay down His life, but He rose again and purchased victory for us. We can have this victory through intimacy with G-d. '*Amen*' is a word that reminds us that what has been said can be trusted as it is true.

All manner of judgment has been given to the Son (John 5:22, 1 Corinthians 15:25-28, Ephesians 1:22, Hebrews 2:8)). Yeshua is the ONLY One who will open up the gates of hell and therefore *the keys of Sheol and death* are in His hand. Those who are going to be cast into hell are cast into it by His Word. (Matthew 25:41) Likewise, through Him, people will also be saved from it.

**Verse 19:** *"And now, write these things which you saw, and what has been done now, and what will be afterwards."*

*These things which you saw* refers to those things that John had witnessed in the past. *What has been done now* refers to those things which were happening in John's day (present). *What will be afterwards* refers to those things which were yet future – they had not yet happened in John's day.

**Verse 20:** *"For the secret of the seven stars which you saw in my right hand and the seven golden menorahs: The seven stars, they are the messengers (leaders) of the seven congregations. And the seven menorahs, which you saw, they are the seven congregations."*

In Revelation chapter 2 and 3 we are going to read about how G-d's revelation is given to these 'stars' – these leaders (see Daniel 12:3).

These leaders will receive the revelation in order to share it with the ‘golden menorahs’ - their churches. It’s only through this message, that they receive, that the congregations (‘churches’) can manifest G-d’s glory, both in their words and in their deeds. Believers are called to be a living testimony, so that others may see the manifest presence of G-d in the world – especially prior to the day of judgement.

## Chapter 2

The church is made up of a body of believers (those who have believed in Messiah Yeshua as their L-rd and Saviour) who have been called out, from sin and from the mindset of this world, in order to fulfil the purposes of G-d. They are people who testify to the Word of G-d - not just in speech, but primarily through their lives, their behaviour. The lives of believers should be such that they are living witnesses to the dying world around them – reflecting and manifesting G-d's Presence, His Glory, to those in the world.

Some commentators have speculated that the seven congregations, spoken of in Revelation 2 and 3, relate to seven different dispensations of time throughout church history (ie spread out over the past 2000 years). Although this is a popular interpretation, we do not see any Biblical, or otherwise, evidence for this theory. For the purpose of this study, we are not going to view these churches through the lens of being spread out over seven different time periods. G-d gave these seven letters to seven congregations for the purpose of sanctifying or setting them apart. No matter what generation (or time dispensation) we are in, we can learn from each of these letters all that we need to hear – specific to our generation. These letters are G-d's perfect revelation to the body of believers throughout history, no matter what time period we live in.

**Verse 1:** *"To the messenger of the congregation of Ephesus write: Thus says the One who holds in His right hand the seven stars, the One who walks in the midst of the seven golden menorahs."*

Instead of using the word 'messenger', many translators prefer to use the word 'angel'. Within the context, this word is probably not referring to a supernatural or heavenly being. It is a word that can probably be better understood as being written to the leader of that congregation.

At the time of John, *Ephesus* was known as an Educational Centre. They had a massive library in the city, and it was considered to be a place of great learning (the Oxford/Cambridge of that day).

The book of Revelation is more about WHO (the revelation of Yeshua – 'the One who holds...who walks') than about WHAT. In every letter, the congregation is named and then Yeshua is immediately introduced. It is important to note that every church receives its own unique and different description of Messiah's character. Yeshua gave each of these congregations the lens through which He wanted them to view Him.

*Seven stars:* We do not have to guess who/what these stars represent. Revelation 1:20 tells us that these stars represent the leaders of the congregations.

Messiah is holding these leaders in His hand. They have been called/commissioned by Him to give a message to the churches that they are leading, and they receive their support from G-d. Revelation 1:20 also tells us that these menorahs (lampstands) represent churches – the body of believers. This verse emphasises G-d's Presence (by means of His Holy Spirit) with those who believe in Him. G-d's Presence, in our *midst*, sustains us and helps us be faithful to His purposes.

**Verse 2:** “*I know your works, your labour, and your patience* (perseverance). *For you are not able to tolerate those who are wicked. And you have tested those who say that they are apostles but are not. For they have been found to be liars.*”

What we DO, and not only what we believe, is important to G-d. G-d is not evaluating these churches in regard to salvation – they are already part of the body of believers and are already saved. What is being evaluated is their fruitfulness – what they have done with what they have received (the gospel message). Believers are not going to be judged as to whether they go to heaven or to hell. When we believe in Messiah Yeshua, and accept Him as our L-rd and Saviour, we are guaranteed eternal life (not eternal death/hell). However, believers are going to go through a judgment of works (1 Corinthians 3:9-15, Revelation 20:12-13). Our works DO NOT determine our eternal destination, but they DO determine our eternal rewards. Some people will receive many eternal rewards. Others will receive eternal life but will not receive a single reward (1 Corinthians 3:14-15). Our deeds will be either pleasing, to G-d, or shameful.

It is significant that the first thing Messiah emphasizes about this congregation is that it *did not tolerate wickedness* in its midst. We are called to deal ruthlessly with wickedness. (1 Corinthians 5:13). This congregation did not turn a blind eye to wickedness within their congregation. They radically confronted and dealt with wickedness in their midst. “*Those who are wicked*” is not referring to people in the world. It is referring to those who claim to be believers (“brothers”), but their lives suggest otherwise. These are the ones we should not tolerate (1 Corinthians 5:11-13).

‘*Tested those*’ relates to discernment. Believers are called to exercise discernment. We are to hold people and teachings up to the Word of G-d (Acts 17:11). Discernment is one of the outcomes of the Holy Spirit working and moving in our lives. We are called to make a distinction between right and wrong. True and false. (Malachi 3:18) At the time of the end, strong delusion will come and will lead people astray. (2 Thessalonians 2:11) There needs to be a body of believers that speak, teach and warn others in ways that people need to hear. This congregation was wise enough to exercise spiritual discernment (1 Corinthians 2:13-16). They were able to hold people and behaviours up to the Word of G-d and were then able to make a distinction between that which is right and wrong, good and evil, of G-d or against G-d (1 John 4:1-6).

We live in the days of great deception and “fake news” (*‘found to be liars’*). Now, more than ever, people need to know truth from lies. In the last days, a strong delusion or a great deception is going to come upon the world and many people will be led astray (2 Thessalonians 2:9-12). The only antidote for this deception will be knowing Truth. This Truth can only be found in the Word of G-d (John 14:6, Revelation 19:13).

**Verse 3:** “*You have done much, and you have patience, and on account of my name you have not grown tired in doing good.*”

G-d applauded this congregation for all the good things that they were doing.

**Verse 4:** *"But I have this against you: You have left your first Love".*

G-d, firstly, commended this congregation for what they were doing well, and then He counselled them/chastised them/disciplined them ('but') in regard to what they lacked. He showed them their strengths and then He revealed their weaknesses to them.

Ephesus was a place of great learning. Knowledge had given this congregation discernment and wisdom. They knew the truth, but this truth was not leading them to intimacy with G-d ('left your first Love'). They had book/intellectual knowledge but lacked heart knowledge – ie love. They did what they did because they knew it was the right thing to do. They were not motivated to do things out of love and out of an acknowledgment of G-d (with the desire to be pleasing to Him).

**Verse 5:** *"Remember from where you have fallen. Repent and do your former works. But if you do not, behold I am coming unto you quickly and I will remove your lampstand (menorah) from its place if you do not repent."*

G-d wanted this congregation to *remember* that they had been lost and without hope (Ezekiel 16:4-14). Through redemption (the blood of Yeshua), G-d had brought about an incredible change in their lives. They had forgotten that their lives had been empty and hopeless before/without Messiah.

*Repent*, in Hebrew, is a word that means to change direction. They were going their own way. They needed to turn around and start to walk in G-d's way. In Greek (which the book of Revelation was written in), this word is depicted by two words: *meta* (with) and *noieo* (knowledge). Repentance has to do with responding to truth. Knowledge, yes, but based out of a love for G-d – what He has done in loving us and giving of Himself. After receiving knowledge, G-d wanted this congregation to respond to truth.

'Former works': G-d wants them to behave in the way they did when they first came to faith. He wants the response, from all of us, to be out of the love that we have received. We love because He first loved us (1 John 4:19) If we aren't responding out of love then we will not be able to bear proper testimony, as we should. 'But if you do not' - G-d is speaking about free will.

The purpose of the lampstand (the church) is for the manifestation of light. We are called to manifest the glory of G-d, the light of G-d, to this world (Matthew 5:14-16). If we are not fulfilling this purpose (ie: to be a light), G-d *removes* us from a place of influence etc. He steps us down, so to speak, as we are in rebellion to Him and are doing more harm than good. An outcome of salvation is to reflect G-d's glory. If our lives do not reflect Him, it is an indication that we are not truly saved.

David was called a 'man after G-d's heart' (Acts 13:22). One of the reasons for this was because he was quick to *repent*. When G-d's conviction comes upon a believer we need to be quick to repent. Unwillingness to repent is a sign that one is not a believer.

**Verse 6:** *"But this you have: That you have hated the works of the Nikolasim, those which I hate also."*

The word 'Nikolasim' (Nicolaitans) is two Greek words. The first means 'conquering', and the second, 'people'. These Nikolasim were people who loved to rule over or dominate other people. They infiltrated the house of G-d in order to build themselves up. They liked authority – not to submit to it, but to be it. They didn't lift people up. They came to push them down and triumph over them.

**Verse 7:** *"He who has an ear let him hear what the Spirit says to the congregations. The one who overcomes I will give to him to eat from the Tree of Life, which is in the garden of G-d."*

*He who has an ear:* This is talking about a spiritual ear. When we are saved, the Holy Spirit begins to dwell in us. The ability to hear and listen to the Holy Spirit (His wisdom, insight, counsel and conviction) is an outcome of salvation – being a new creation.

The word 'congregations' is written in the plural. Proper hermeneutics tells us that this message is applicable to all seven congregations – not only for the Ephesian congregation. This also makes null and void the interpretation that each message is for a specific time period in history. This is a message that has been applicable to all churches, throughout the past 2000 years – it is still able to be taken to heart and applied in our churches today.

In the Garden of Eden there were two primary trees that were set apart from all the rest – the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil and *the Tree of Life* (Genesis 2:8-9, 15-17). Adam was allowed to eat from the Tree of Life, yet, in rebellion, he chose to eat from the only tree that G-d had forbidden them to eat from. Adam was barred from the garden of Eden so that he would no longer have access to the Tree of Life, which, if he had eaten of it, would have caused him to live forever (Genesis 2:22-24). Today, through Yeshua (who was nailed to a tree for our salvation), we can have eternal life (John 3:16).

*In the garden of G-d:* See Isaiah 51:3. John took OT prophecy (Isaiah, in this verse, alluded to the garden of the L-rd) and, looking at it from a NT perspective, John slightly changed what was said so that we could receive greater revelation. We are not going back to a merely garden of Eden type of experience (where the Presence of G-d was temporal – Genesis 3:8) in the Kingdom of Heaven. We are looking forward to a new and improved Garden – a place where the eternal Presence of G-d the Father dwells with man.

**Verse 8:** *"And to the messenger (leader) of the congregation at Smyrna write: Thus says the First and the Last, the One who was dead and is alive."*

This *congregation* (body of believers) at *Smyrna* is going to go through intense persecution.

*The First and the Last:* Repetition emphasises. This is a name that the L-rd commonly uses (in the book of Revelation) to describe Himself. It is a term that reminds us that G-d is our Faithful Redeemer (see commentary from Revelation 1:11, 17). This congregation needed to remember that G-d was committed to them. They, in turn, needed to be committed (faithful) to G-d – even through really difficult times.

*Who was dead, and is alive:* Messiah came to earth to die. But His story did not end with death! He is alive forevermore! G-d is reminding this church that many of them would have to face death (Matthew 24:9, Luke 21:16-19, John 16:2-4). Death should not be a problem for us who believe in Messiah. It is not the end of our story. Even if we should lose our lives on earth, for the sake of Messiah, we are promised life forevermore! (Matthew 16:24-27, Matthew 10:38-39). Our hope is not based in living in this world. Our hope is based on resurrection - leaving this world and entering into the Kingdom of G-d (Hebrews 11:17-19).

**Verse 9:** *"I know your works, your trials and your poverty. However, you are rich. I know the blasphemy of the ones who say 'we are Jews' but are not. It is a house of satan."*

*I know your works:* Every believer (who makes up the congregation of believers) is going to be judged/evaluated (not for salvation, but for reward) according to what they did or did not do. The reward that we receive, measured out to us according to the works that we did while still on earth, is related to the responsibility that we will be given in the Millennial Kingdom (the 1000-year reign of Messiah on this earth – Revelation 20:4-6. See also Matthew 25:14-30).

This congregation was poor in the things of this world/age, but they are rich from a Kingdom perspective.

*Jews:* Although this could be referring to the descendants of Jacob, the term “Jew” has a much broader meaning. It is derived from the Hebrew name “Judah”, which means to “Praise the L-rd” (Genesis 29:35). Within this context, we are more likely dealing with people who fit the description of the second explanation. Those who are persecuting this church are those who declare that they are the true followers and praisers of G-d. The two words ‘blasphemy’ and ‘satan’ go together. These people claim that they were praising G-d but in actuality they were blaspheming everything that G-d stands for.

The term “house” (synagogue) comes from a Greek word meaning “place of assembly”. In John’s day, a synagogue was similar to the community centres in our day and age (open to all people within the community). Today we associate the word “synagogue” with a Jewish house of worship. This was not the case 2000 years ago (Acts 6:9. Acts 13:42, Acts 14:1, Acts 17:17,)

**Verse 10:** *"Do not fear what you are about to suffer. Behold! In the future the devil is going to cast you into prison. On account of this you are going to be tested. You shall be in affliction for ten days. Be faithful unto death. I will give to you the crown of life."*

This congregation was called to go through intense persecution. Faithfulness to the truth of G-d does not exempt believers from suffering and persecution. Faithfulness to G-d and to Messiah Yeshua will lead to an increase in persecution and affliction for believers (especially as we approach the last days).

*Cast you into prison:* Mark 13:9-13. Luke 21:12

The *testing* being done here is NOT Messiah trying to determine whether these are really believers or not, whether they are people who are really committed to G-d or not. This is not the purpose for this testing. G-d knows everything. He does not need to gauge how we react in certain circumstances. He knows how we would respond. This testing is related to being a testimony or a witness to others of our true faith in the word of G-d. Testing produces patience in our lives, which in turn leads to us becoming perfect, complete and lacking nothing in our faith (James 1:2-4). Enduring through testing proves (to ourselves and to others) the genuineness of our faith, and results in the testimony of our lives being for the praise, honour and glory of Yeshua (1 Peter 1:6-7).

*Ten days* could be taken to mean a literal ten days. However, it can also be thought of as, if not literal, to be referring to a fixed period of unalterable time – ie there is a marked/predetermined end to this suffering...this suffering will only happen up to a certain point and then it will come to an end (having an end in sight keeps hope alive). Another way we can look at this is that the number 10, Biblically, is a number that relates to completion. When we go through trials (G-d can bring good out of evil) they have the potential to be instrumental in reminding us that G-d's grace is sufficient for us (2 Corinthians 12:7-10). If we fix our eyes on Yeshua (Hebrews 12:1-3), going through the complete/full measure of the trial (not tapping out halfway through it) brings about a glorious change in our lives.

*Death* is not our end. Death is simply a transformation, a transition from this age to the age to come. It is in death that we are able to identify/be united with Messiah (Luke 9:23-25, Philippians 3:10-11, Colossians 1:24).

Right now, in this age, we are not experiencing the fullness/abundance of life that we have been promised (John 10:10). As believers, we have a foretaste of life (given to us on this earth, while we are still alive), but it is only in the Kingdom of G-d that we will experience life to its fullest. This *crown of life* is similar in concept to a badge of honour – if you will. Crowns are synonymous with rulership and authority. This persecuted church had the potential to be given great authority in the Kingdom of G-d (Revelation 20:4-6). These crowns, that we receive, will be used in our eternal worship of G-d (Revelation 4:9-11). Laying our crowns at the feet of G-d is part of acknowledging that anything praiseworthy that we could have done, while alive on earth, is only because of Him working in and through our lives.

**Note:** This persecuted church receives no words of rebuke from G-d, only encouragement to endure through the trials. G-d does not add to their burden. His encouragement helps them to lift their eyes above their circumstances and to see the bigger picture (Matthew 11:28-30).

**Verse 11:** *"He who has an ear let him hear what the Spirit says to the congregations. And the one who overcomes will not be harmed by the second death."*

It is through suffering that we hear from G-d. We may be one of those called to die for our faith, but we have been told (Revelation 2:10) not to fear death. We all (except those who will be raptured) die the first death. What G-d delivers us from is the potential of the second death. The second death is what happens after the millennial Kingdom (Revelation 20:11-15).

Those who receive the Gospel and walk in obedience to it, empowered by, and listening to, the Holy Spirit will have triumph in the Kingdom of G-d. The second death will have no authority over our lives. Unwise people reject truth, scorn repentance and live in bondage to their sin. God wants to bring about change in our lives, making all things new (2 Corinthians 5:17). People who are wise will repent when sin, in their lives, is exposed. The first death refers to the physical death we go through on earth. The second death refers to eternal separation from G-d (Revelation 20:6, 14-15)

**Verse 12:** *"To the messenger of the congregation of Pergamos write: Thus said He who has a sharp, double-edged sword."*

Sometimes we find ourselves in a location that we would prefer not to be in (spiritually, emotionally, physically). So, we try to flee from that location, or we pray and plead with G-d to remove us from it. We may think that we are in the wrong location, but G-d not only redeems time (Joel 2:25), but He also has the ability to redeem location (restore, renew, and bring purpose out of what was broken or lost – Isaiah 41:18-20, Psalm 107:35). G-d can **bring transformation to places**—not just people. Even if a place has a painful history (a city, a home, a nation, a workplace), G-d can **bring healing, restoration, and purpose** there. No matter **where** we are—even if we are in a place that feels wrong, forgotten, or cursed—G-d can still **work powerfully in our lives in that place**. He can turn a place of failure into a place of victory!

These seven congregations are in Asia – not in the land of Israel. Biblically (like John exiled on the island of Patmos) these congregations are considered to be in exile. Exile demands a change, because it **destabilizes what once was**—forcing transformation, insight or rebirth. It's not just a journey away from something, but is a journey toward something new, often unknown. G-d desired to see a change in these congregations. He wanted to see them begin to fulfil His will and purposes for their lives.

A *double – edged sword* is a weapon that has the potential to bring about death. Sometimes death is exactly what we need. There are things in our lives that need to be put to death, as they are things that are not pleasing to G-d. In this congregation there were many things that needed to be brought under the authority of G-d. If we are going to find ourselves coming against the enemy, we need to be prepared. We need to have One on our side who has, available to Him, an instrument for warfare.

**Verse 13:** *"I know your works and the place where you dwell, which is there the throne of satan. But you cling to my name and have not denied My truth, even in the days of Antipas, My faithful servant, who was killed at your place. In the place of satan's seat."*

This congregation was in a difficult location – in a location where the enemy's presence was very strong. They were right in the thick of enemy territory and needed to be well prepared for spiritual warfare. Their answer was not to flee from this situation/location. They needed to be trained and equipped, made ready for the battle that they were called to face.

**Name:** Associated with character. This congregation lived in a way that reflected the character of Yeshua. They did not lie (*not denied...truth*), even in the face of martyrdom, in order to create a false impression of Truth and so save their own skins.

*Antipas* was a man who gave up his life, in Pergamos, for the truth of Messiah. We do not know anything else about Antipas (family, occupation, etc) except for this – His life is summed up by the fact that it was poured out for the sake of Messiah.

**Verse 14:** *“But a few things I have against you: for there, with you, are men that cling to the doctrine of Balaam; who taught Balak to put a stumbling block before the Children of Israel, to eat from the sacrifices of idolatries and to fornicate.”*

This congregation were doing many positive things for the L-rd, however, there were also some things within it that were displeasing to the L-rd. *Balaam* (Numbers 22-24) was a prophet of G-d. He was someone who G-d communicated truth to, but the problem was that, although he knew the truth, he was not wholly committed to it (he subtly rebelled against it). Jude 1:11 alludes to the fact that Balaam was a greedy man. He was a prophet after profit. 2 Peter 2:15-16 also speaks of the fact that Balaam was a man who loved the wages of unrighteousness. This verse speaks about the wicked things that Balaam did – he taught Balak to put a stumbling block (eating food sacrificed to idols and sexual immorality) before the children of Israel (Numbers 25). As a prophet, Balaam had deeper insight and perspective. He was able to perceive the weakness of Israel, and he taught Balak how to exploit that weakness in order to bring Israel down. This is at the heart of the doctrine of Balaam – exploiting, rather than strengthening, those that are weak. This exploitation leads to the “rich getting richer” and the “poor getting poorer”. Balaam was a man who set out to accomplish his own objectives, but he presented himself in such a way that others still thought of him as a G-dly person (false impressions). G-d hates this kind of behaviour.

**Verse 15:** *“For thus, there is found also there, men who cling to the doctrines of the Nikolaitim, those I hate.*

‘Nicolaitans’ is a word made up of two Greek words. The first word means “to conquer”. The second word means “people”. The Nicolaitans were people who loved to rule over and dominate others. They hated authority (unless they were the ones who were in the positions of authority) and refused to submit to it. They did not build up or edify others, but they delighted in pushing others down.

**Note:** Those who followed these two doctrines (the doctrine of Balaam and the doctrine of the Nicolaitans) had self-centeredness in common. They had their own best interests at heart and did not ask G-d how they could be used to be a blessing or an encouragement to others. They were people who loved bringing glory and honour to themselves – rather than glorifying or honouring G-d. This congregation has some positive things attributed to it. Their downfall was that they didn’t confront the negative influence, these self-centred people were having on the weaker minded people within the congregation.

**Verse 16:** “*Repent; and if you will not now, I will come against you quickly and I will war against you with the sword of my mouth.*”

There is still hope for these people! *Repentance* involves bringing ourselves under the authority or L-rdship of Messiah (The Word of G-d). Repentance, then, also involves a change – becoming like Messiah, in character and nature (Romans 8:29, Ephesians 5:1-2). True believers, when they realise that they are in conflict with the Word of G-d, are convicted and quickly repent. They want their lives to measure up with the truth of G-d. Those who know that their lives do not measure up to the Word of G-d, but they are not convicted by that and nor do they repent for it, are not believers – they are false “brethren”.

G-d is speaking to a congregation of believers who needed to have some doctrines purged out of (separated from) it. What we need to understand is that when our lives are in conflict with the truth of the Scripture, we are setting ourselves up for judgment. It is not an accident that Yeshua initially identified Himself to this congregation as the One who holds a sharp, double-edged sword (Revelation 2:12). The L-rd was trying to strengthen this congregation. In order to strengthen it, He had to remove its weaknesses (like going through a refining fire, this removal is a painful process).

**Verse 17:** “*For he who has an ear let him hear what the Spirit says to the congregations. To the one who overcomes I will feed him with the hidden manna. I will give to him a white stone and upon the stone is engraved a new name, which no one is able to know except the one who receives it.*”

There is a connection between repentance and *overcoming*. When we repent, we are sorry for what we have done (or for what we have not done – James 4:17), and we make the necessary changes in our lives. It is only once we have made these changes in our lives that we are going to experience the victory (the overcoming) that G-d wants us to experience.

There are two primary interpretations of this phrase ‘*hidden manna*’.

1. The first mention of manna in the Bible (Exodus 16:4-31) was that it was a test to see if the people would walk in the law of the L-rd or not (Exodus 16:4). In Exodus 16:32-34, a jar of manna (together with the 10 commandments and Aaron’s budding staff – Hebrews 9:3-5) was placed into the Ark of the Covenant (also called the Ark of Testimony – Exodus 25:16). When we are nourished by G-d – with supernatural food, which is found in His Word (manna being a pictorial reminder of this) – we are given the strength and ability to keep the laws of G-d (the 10 commandments), which in turn will lead to fruitfulness in our lives (the budding staff). G-d could be telling this congregation that He would supernaturally feed them, helping them to be obedient and fruitful.
2. Another interpretation could be this: The children of Israel were in the wilderness (a difficult place) when they received this manna. They would never have been able to make the journey, that they had to make, without this manna that G-d had supernaturally supplied for them. G-d could be telling this church, who lived in a place known to be a place where satan dwelt, that they would not be able to conquer or give witness if they relied upon their own strengths or abilities.

Them overcoming was reliant upon G-d's supernatural provision (hidden manna) in their lives.

Ancient Greek courts would cast *a white stone* to signify acquittal/being vindicated or to show that a person was "not guilty" (justified). If a person was given a black stone, it was pronouncing that they were found to be guilty. A *new name* signifies a changed/new person/character (2 Corinthians 5:17, Isaiah 62:2, Isaiah 65:15-16). 'Written' literally means 'Engraved'. Zechariah 3:9. This should remind us of the work of Messiah. His work in our lives is not temporary. An engraving shows permanence

This passage deals with change. If we run from (spiritual) battles, we will not be prepared for the last days. It is when we face obstacles, and go through difficulties and afflictions, that we are given the opportunity to demonstrate to others our trust and our commitment to G-d. What we fear is what we give priority to. We do not need to fear/panic and give priority to all of the things going on around us. G-d is the ONE we need to fear. This means that He is the One that needs to be our priority, our focus when we are going through the tough times. He is the One who will feed us, nourish us and supply our every NEED so that we might give witness that we belong to Him. If we adopt this attitude, it will be a great weapon against our enemy – satan. He can never defeat those who trust in the L-rd!

**Verse 18:** *"And to the messenger of the congregation of Thyatira write: Thus says the Son of G-d who has eyes like the flames of fire and whose feet are like burnished bronze."*

This phrase, *Son of G-d*, speaks about the divinity of Messiah Yeshua. This is the way Yeshua identifies Himself, first and foremost, to this congregation. **Sons serve** their fathers. Yeshua came to earth in service to His Father – bringing about the outcome of G-d's will (John 6:38-40). **Sons** are also those who **inherit** from their fathers (John 3:35).

*Fire* is for the purpose of refining. When G-d looks at us, He sees everything about us. These eyes, flames of fire, remove things in our lives that stand in the way of us becoming what G-d wants us to be.

In those times, *bronze* was the metal of choice used for decorative purposes – to make something of beauty (Romans 10:15, Isaiah 52:7). This burnished bronze is a reminder to us that we are called to be the workmanship of Messiah (Ephesians 2:10). He works in our lives so that we can manifest the beauty, attributes and character of G-d. When others see what G-d has done in our lives, they praise Him (Matthew 5:16).

**Verse 19:** *"I know your works; your love, your faith, your service and your patience. For your latter works are greater than your former works."*

This congregation is maturing. The good that they were doing is increasing.

**Verse 20:** *"I have a few things against you; that you allow the woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophet, to teach and to cause my servants to go astray - into fornication and eating at the altar of idols."*

*Jezebel* was a woman who stood out as evil. Her behaviour was completely rejected by G-d. This congregation allowed her evil influence to be present in their midst (bringing garbage doctrine and practices into the congregation). Just because someone calls themselves a *prophet* does not mean that they are one. When someone presents themselves in a certain way, it does not mean that that is the reality. 1 John 4:1-6 exhorts us to use discernment, to test the spirits to see whether they are of truth or of error.

*Fornication and eating at the altar of idols:* Acts 15:19-20. The church before this one had the same problem (Revelation 2:14), but in the reverse order. Satan is not creative (he doesn't really need to be, as his unimaginative works seem to have great success – for example: Israel fell prey to the same idolatrous practices time and time again). As believers, we should be able to discern, and avoid, the work of Satan.

**Verse 21:** *"I have given her time to repent from her fornications, but she is not willing."*

When true believers are made aware of their sin, they fall under conviction and want to repent immediately. They do not want to keep on sinning. (1 John 3:9-10). God gives people *time to repent* (2 Peter 3:9). When G-d shows people the sin in their lives (the things which are displeasing to Him and which are in conflict with His Word), but they are *unwilling* to repent, it shows that they are not truly believers. True believers have responded to the gospel because they have desired to leave or depart from their sin. When given the opportunity to repent of sin, true believers respond immediately.

**Verse 22:** *"Behold, I will cast her upon the bed of her idolatry. And those who commit adultery with her I will give over to great tribulation, if they will not repent from their deeds."*

G-d sometimes allows the consequences of our own (unrepented for) sins to play out in our lives, bringing about our defeat.

*Give over to Great Tribulation:* The last/final seven years of life on Earth, as we know it right now, is broken up into two 3.5 year periods of time [3.5years+3.5years=7 years – Daniel 9:27. (One week = 7 days = 7 years)] The first +-3.5 years, of this seven-year period, are years of persecution, predominately aimed at believers. The origin of this persecution is satanic – it is not classified as the wrath of G-d (the origin of the wrath of G-d is obviously G-d, but believers in Messiah Yeshua are exempt from the wrath of G-d – 1 Thessalonians 5:9). The believers are going to be raptured after this initial persecution – before the wrath of G-d falls on this Earth (in the rapture, we meet Yeshua in the clouds – 1 Thessalonians 4:17. This is different to His second coming).

At His second coming He (together with all the saints that had previously been raptured) descends all the way to Earth, His feet touching down in Jerusalem - Zechariah 14:4-5

In the second half of this seven-year period, the church would have been raptured (the fullness/time of the Gentiles comes to an end – Romans 11:25), and G-d turns His attention back to the Jewish people, as He still has unfinished “business” with them (Joshua 21:45, Romans 11:25-32). In this second half of the final seven years, there will be intense persecution against the Jewish people (known as the Great Tribulation or as Jacobs Trouble – Jeremiah 30:4-9 – persecution/tribulation is instigated by satan), but (AT THE SAME TIME) the wrath of G-d (trumpet and bowl judgments) will also be falling upon this world. The Jewish people (who did not give their lives to Yeshua before the rapture) will go through this double whammy of troubles (which will only end with the second coming of Yeshua to this Earth). According to this verse, those who had called themselves believers, but who had failed to repent of their wicked deeds (unrepentance reveals that although they claim to be believers they are not), are not going to go in the rapture but are going to be cast into this Great Tribulation.

**Verse 23:** *“I will kill, with death, her children; and all the congregations shall know that I am the One that investigates both kidneys and heart; and I will give to you and to every man as the fruit of his works.”*

*Kill...with death* is not redundant. This is referring to eternal death. To *investigate* means to search thoroughly. G-d perceives/knows the tiniest details in our lives.

“*Kidneys and heart*” is a Hebrew idiom. The physical organs of the bodies, according to the Jewish sages, have a spiritual application. A “heart” is considered to be the place where our conscious thinking takes place (as a man thinks in his heart...Proverbs 23:7). The kidneys (according to Judaism) hold the innermost/deepest thoughts of a person – even referring to the thoughts we do not consciously think (ie our subconscious).

*I will give to (every person) as the fruit of his works:* G-d is not a respecter of persons (Acts 10:34). This means that He never shows favouritism. G-d is going to judge every aspect of every single person’s life – conscious and subconscious. Believers in Messiah Yeshua will not be judged for salvation (they automatically receive eternal LIFE when they confess Yeshua as their L-rd and Saviour – Romans 10:9-10), however, our works (post salvation) will be judged for eternal reward.

Man is without excuse. When a person sees G-d’s workmanship in creation (Romans 1v19-20) he knows that G-d is a G-d of order, he sees that this world is moving in a direction. When people are confronted with creation, they see that there are changes. Therefore, they should seek the author of change, so that they might find change in their own lives.

**Verse 24:** *“But, I say to you, and the rest of the ones remaining in Thyatira, all who are not of this teaching and those who do not know the depths of satan. I will give to them no other burden.”*

*Thyatira* was a difficult place to live in. Many people had left. The ‘*ones remaining in Thyatira*’ refers to those who had stayed and who were willing to stick it out. These are the ones who understood that G-d had a purpose for them in the difficult place they found themselves in.

If we are going to grow and mature, becoming the people that G-d wants us to be, we are going to be individuals who do not try to flee from difficult circumstances. Difficult circumstances give us the opportunity to “overcome”, to be victorious.

This ‘teaching’ is referring to the doctrines in this church regarding sexual immorality and eating things sacrificed to idols (ie: at the heart of this Jezebel teaching is the thinking: ‘I want what I want, and I will become who I want to become’ – consistently moving in the desires of our own flesh – physical and sexual appetite not in alignment with G-d’s Word). The people who adhered to these false teachings set themselves up to fulfil their own plans and purposes for their lives. They were unwilling to hear what G-d’s plans and purposes for their lives was.

Those who knew *the depths of satan* were those who had begun to experience satan’s influence in their lives. Satan does pay dividends for a period of time. For a time, people enjoy receiving the desires of their flesh. However, these gratifications of the flesh eventually are seen to be what they are – empty and meaningless. Those who have not known the depths of satan are those who have said ‘yes’ to G-d and have said ‘no’ to satan and the desires of their own flesh.

**Verse 25:** “*What you have, hold fast to it until I will come.”*

Continue to say ‘no’ to satan and ‘yes’ to G-d.

**Verse 26:** “*To the one who overcomes and keeps My works until the very end, to this one I will give rule over the nations.”*

We cannot overcome in our own strength. We overcome because of the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives. We overcome because He enables us to put spiritual truth into practice in our lives.

*Keeps My works:* i.e. Does the will of G-d.

*Give rule (power) over the nations:* G-d is viewing our lives right now, determining how much authority we are going to receive in the Millennial Kingdom (this is a period of time – 1000 years – when G-d’s Kingdom will be established on THIS Earth. Messiah, together with His saints (believers), is going to rule and reign from Jerusalem for a period of 1000 years (Revelation 20:1-6). We are called to be those who rule and reign with Messiah (2 Timothy 2:12, 1 Corinthians 6:2, Revelation 5:10), and we will do so based upon how we live out our lives today. Are we trustworthy? Are we faithful in little and in much? Are we putting G-d’s truth into practice in our lives?

**Verse 27:** “*And He shall rule with a rod of iron, as with a potter’s vessel – just as I have received also from My Father.”*

See Psalm 2:7-12. The Father gave Yeshua, the Son, great authority and rulership over the nations. Yeshua ‘received’ this power as part of His inheritance from His Father. The *rod of iron* has the ability to strike and destroy all that is in opposition to G-d’s will.

**Verse 28:** “*I will give to him the morning star.*”

The morning star gives guidance, insight and direction.

## Chapter 3

**Verse 1:** *"To the messenger of the congregation of Sardis write: Thus, says He who holds the seven Spirits of G-d and the seven stars (leaders), I know your works. You have a name that you are alive, but behold you are dead."*

There is only One Holy Spirit. The *Spirit of G-d* brings righteous order into our lives, that we might be faithful to the things of G-d. The number 'seven' reminds us, however, that He is perfect, powerful to bring righteous order/sanctification into our lives. He enables us to be faithful in fulfilling the purpose of G-d for our lives.

The leaders ('seven stars') were important instruments in getting powerful, perfect, pure and undiluted truth to the people. It was then the responsibility of the people to take this truth and to be faithful to obey it.

The majority of people within this congregation ('dead') did not understand spiritual truth – primarily prophetic truth. There is a connection between prophecy and the testimony (character) of Messiah (Revelation 19:10). If we do not understand the prophetic truth of G-d, we are not going to be able to live lives that testify of our faith in Messiah Yeshua.

**Verse 2:** *"Watch out and strengthen that which remains, because it is close to dying. For I have not found your works complete before G-d."*

'Watch' is a word that Yeshua used in regard to the last days (Matthew 24:42,-44, Matthew 25:13, Mark 13:33-37, Luke 21:34-36). It is a word of warning, but it is also a word that speaks of being diligent. Are we diligent in the things of G-d? Do we perceive things from His perspective? Are we recognising the prophetic signs around us, which are indicating to us that we are nearing the last days? Are we positioning ourselves to be found faithful and obedient in these last days? This congregation is not diligent in the things of G-d, and not aware of prophetic truth.

There were things in this congregation that were not yet dead, but they were *close to dying*. These things, too, will die if action is not quickly taken. G-d desired their works to be *complete*, perfected.

**Verse 3:** *"Remember that which you have received and what you have heard (prophetic truth). Guard this and repent. If you will not be diligent I will come upon you as a thief in the night and you will not know at what hour I am coming unto you."*

*Remember...received and heard:* This church was not being diligent in the things of G-d. With one ear they had received and heard prophetic truth (what G-d is going to bring about), but then it had gone right out of the other ear (so to speak). They did not take prophetic truth seriously. If we are people who are not concerned about prophetic truth (thinking about it and preparing ourselves for what is ahead) we are not going to be prepared for what is at hand in our generation. A lack of preparation leads to being easily defeated (i.e. we will live lives that do not reflect G-d's glory).

Messiah's predominant message to most of the churches is to *repent*. These are letters written to believers. G-d is telling BELIEVERS to repent.

*I will come upon you as a thief:* If we are watching for the return of Messiah, it will not take us by surprise. Messiah is not returning as 'a thief in the night' to faithful believers who are 'watching' (Luke 12:35-48, 1 Thessalonians 5:1-11 – take careful note of v4-6). See also Revelation 16:15. Messiah will come as a thief to those who are unprepared. Those who are watching for Him will not be caught off guard, as they will be aware (because of the prophetic signs) that the day and hour of Messiah's return is fast approaching (Matthew 24:32-35, Luke 21:29-33). This church is not being watchful. If they do not repent of this, then Messiah is going to return to them 'like a thief in the night'. This is a punishment/consequence of a lack of watchfulness. This (coming like a thief in the night) is not the norm for believers, who are watching and eagerly waiting for the return of Messiah (Philippians 3:20-21, Hebrews 9:28).

*You will not know at what hour I am coming unto you:* The implication is this: if we are living rebellious lives, quenching the Holy Spirit, and if we are unwilling to repent in regard to the truth of G-d, then the outcome of this will be that He will come as a thief in the night to us. However, if we repent and respond to truth then we are going to be aware that we are in that final season, we will be aware of the nearness (the 'hour'/time) of Messiah's coming (1 Thessalonians 5:1). Why does Paul not need to write to the Thessalonians about the times and seasons? Because these have already been written down and revealed to us through the prophets). We will not know the day or the hour of the rapture, but we will know the season we are in and that the time is 'at hand' – near. Birth pains (the NKJV calls it 'the beginning of sorrows') are things which position the world for the events of the last days (Matthew 24:3-14).

**Note:** In the days of Noah, people were blissfully unaware that the time of the flood was approaching. They continued to eat and drink, marry and give in marriage (Matthew 24:37-39). They only realised that they were in trouble when it was too late – the doors of the ark were shut, and the rain was pouring down. However, this "Flood Day" did not take Noah and his family by surprise. G-d did not tell Noah years or months in advance (not even 8 days before) of the exact day when the flood was going to arrive. But G-d told Noah, seven days before "Flood Day", that the flood would take place in seven days – see Genesis 7:4 (isn't it interesting that we are told of a final seven years...before the "Day of the L-rd"?)

**Verse 4:** *"You have also at Sardis a few names which have not soiled their garments, and who walk with me in white garments, For they are worthy of this."*

*A few names* refers to a few people. These few people are prophetically savvy. They have an understanding of the time and season that they are in (see also 1 Chronicles 12:32).

*Not soiled their garments...they are worthy:* We need to be a diligent people – those who respond to Biblical truth. We need to be aware of the prophetic indicators that inform us of where we are on G-d's timeline (birth pains indicate that a woman is going into labour. We cannot tell the exact time she will give birth to her baby, but we would have a very good idea that she was within hours of giving birth). Why do we need to know where we are on G-d's timeline?

So that we will be ready for the changes that G-d promises will take place, positioning ourselves in such a way that we would be considered 'worthy' by G-d (when a woman starts experiencing birth pains she positions/readies herself for the birth – packing her bag, going to hospital, etc). Once these end time changes begin to happen, things are going to start moving very quickly. As we near the final seven years, many changes are going to start to take place. These changes will begin slowly but they will begin to speed up, (like birth pains) getting faster and faster and more and more painful/intense as the end approaches. If we are not paying attention, and adjusting to each change as it occurs, we are not going to be able to adjust quickly enough when the changes are flying in at us like a flood. Prophecy prepares us for the future. We need to be paying attention! If we only prepare ourselves for good things 'around the corner' then we are going to panic when times get difficult. When we panic, we do not think clearly, and we begin to doubt G-d. We do not want to be people who face the end being tossed about to and fro (Ephesians 4:11-15) in our thinking and in our actions. We want to be people who are steadfast and immovable (1 Corinthians 15:58).

**Verse 5:** *"The one who overcomes will put on white garments and I will not blot his name out of the Book of Life. And I will confess his name before My Father and before the angels."*

Those who are clothed in *white garments* are those who walk in the justification of G-d – spotless and without blemish (Ephesians 5:27, 2 Peter 3:14, Revelation 19:8, 14). G-d gives these garments to each one (Rev 6:11) through the work of Messiah on the cross. These garments are not earned.

*The one who overcomes...I will not blot his name out of the Book of Life:* Calvinists, when talking of predestination, believe that G-d has chosen some people for His Kingdom and has chosen others for eternal damnation. This is NOT something we see in the Scripture. G-d's desire (His will) is that ALL men will repent and find life (Ezekiel 18:32, 2 Peter 3:9, John 3:16). When a baby is born G-d has a perfect purpose for it. (Ephesians 2:10) The potential for maximum reward, in the eternal Kingdom, is there. It is up to us to respond in obedience. Every time we disobey we suffer a loss (1 Corinthians 3:15)

There is no Scripture saying that when a person is saved his name is written in the Book of Life. On the contrary, Scripture seems to imply that the names of ALL people who are born into this world (given life) are written into the Book of Life. However, when people sin against G-d and reject Him, He then blots them out of this book (Exodus 32:30-33). G-d says to Moses that 'Whoever has sinned against Me I will blot out of My book.' Those who sin (everyone) need a new way to be part of the Kingdom. This is, of course, through faith in Yeshua, the Lamb of G-d; and through faith in Him, our names are now written in the Lamb's Book of Life. Only those whose names are found in the Lamb's Book of Life will be saved. The Book of Life is not the only book that G-d has written in (Revelation 20:12-15). We are also told the names of another two books: "The Lamb's Book of Life" (Revelation 21:27), and the Book of Remembrance (Malachi 3:16).

One of the best outcomes of having a relationship with Messiah is that He becomes our Advocate before the Father (Hebrews 7:25, 1 John 2:1). This means that He speaks up on our behalf. There is much joy when one soul repents. (Luke 15:10) The *angels* are going to rejoice when Yeshua confesses our name before the Father.

**Verse 6:** “*For he who has an ear let him hear what the Spirit says to the congregations.*”

This message is not only for one church, or for one dispensation of time. This message is appropriate for all believers ('congregations'), at all times. They are messages, however, that are key for believers who are being made ready for the last days.

**Verse 7:** “*And to the messenger of the congregation of Philadelphia write: Thus, says the Holy One and the True One, which is in His hands the Key of David. The One who opens, and it is not closed and the One who closes, and it does not open.*”

Yeshua begins His message to this church in the way that He has done in all of these letters: He reveals His attributes/His character/something about His nature (*Holy...True*). Here we see a correlation between holiness and truth. When we do not walk in truth, we are not going to be manifesting holiness. When we are not applying truth to our lives, we are not going to understand the purposes of G-d.

One of the ways that the Bible refers to believers is with the word 'saint'. This is a word that means a 'holy one'. Yeshua calls Himself the 'Truth' (John 14:6). As we apply Truth to our lives (ultimately that truth being Messiah Yeshua), it has a sanctifying influence – leading to us living holy/set apart lives. This message of holiness is the message that Messiah gives to this congregation in Philadelphia. Yeshua did not find anything in this congregation that He wanted to comment on in a negative fashion. We need to pay attention to what this church was doing so that we can learn from it and apply the same truth to our lives, so that we can walk in the same holiness that they walked in – a people who are pleasing to G-d.

In Revelation 1:18, Messiah identified Himself as the One who holds the keys of Hades (Hell) and Death (ie: Messiah is the One who determines who will be in hell or not. He is the One who separates the sheep from the goats). In this verse, He identifies Himself as the One who holds another kind of key – *the key of David*. The name 'David' is synonymous with the Kingdom. G-d made a covenant with David that His Son (whom we now know as Yeshua the Messiah) would have an eternal throne (2 Samuel 7:12-16, see also Isaiah 22:22).

*Who opens and it is not closed...who closes and it does not open:* This is a reference to eternal security. Once we are saved, can we lose our salvation?

Is it a case of 'once saved, always saved'? Romans 10:9-10. Believing in Yeshua leads to salvation. But believing in Him also guarantees that we will not perish but will have ETERNAL life (John 3:16). When do we receive this eternal life? The minute we believe? If we receive salvation the minute we believe, then it means that we also receive eternal life the minute we believe. Eternal means 'forever'. Something that is 'eternal' cannot be lost or taken away. When G-d saves us, it is with an eternal salvation – eternal life. If it could be lost it was never eternal. This does not give us a license to sin. We do not become perfect people when we are saved. We go through a process of sanctification. Sin grieves us and, through the Holy Spirit's counsel and help, we begin to learn to say "no" to ungodliness (Titus 2:11-14). If we continue to delight in sin, after a "confession of faith", if the overwhelming fruit in our lives continues to be wickedness, then we need to question if we were truly saved...

**Verse 8:** “*For I know your works. Behold! I have set before you an open door which no man will be able to close. For, although you have a little strength, you keep my Word and have not denied My name.*”

Every single congregation (every single person) goes through an evaluation (G-d looks at what they do and what they don't do - *I know your works*). Even this faithful church is not exempt from this. Our works do not impact our salvation, but they do impact our spiritual maturity/growth and our eternal rewards.

When we are obedient to the Word of G-d (loving G-d, loving others) He gives us an *open door* – we are positioned in a place where the enemy cannot hinder or defeat us. Even with little strength, this congregation had been obedient to live according to G-d's Word. They applied the Word of G-d to their lives (*keep My Word*). This congregation also *did not deny the name* of the L-rd. John 5:19 tells us that Yeshua only did what He saw His Father doing. Paul tells us to imitate him like he imitated Messiah (1 Corinthians 11:1). This church was doing just that - they were faithful to live according to the character/nature of Messiah. Living according to the Word of G-d and according to the nature of Messiah (no matter what situations we find ourselves in) causes us to live victorious lives.

**Verse 9:** “*Behold I am making the men from the synagogue of satan, the ones who say 'we are Jews', but they are not for they are liars, behold I am making that they should come and bow down at your feet, and they will know that I have loved you.*”

This *synagogue* refers to an assembly house, a community centre. It does not refer to exclusively Jewish houses of worship, so we should not read it in that way.

*Jews:* See commentary on Revelation 2:9

No matter what situation we find ourselves in, we have a call to speak the truth (to say what is right and what is wrong – according to the standard of the Word of G-d – ie we should not be *liars*). We should be more concerned about G-d's response to what we say, rather than public response.

*Bow down at your feet:* This does not mean that those who fear G-d, and who do what He says, are to be worshipped.

This is saying that those who profess to worship and praise G-d, but who do not (i.e. they are liars), are going to be brought under the authority and rulership of G-d's saints (1 Corinthians 6:2, see also Romans 8:36-39).

*I have loved you:* Some interpret this to mean that these ones who were lying are going to see the love of G-d demonstrated in this congregation's life. This, in turn, is going to bring them to repentance and to worship the true G-d.

**Verse 10:** “Because you have guarded the Word with patience, I will keep you from the hour of trial which is coming upon the whole world; To test those who dwell upon the earth.”

*The hour of trial* is possibly referring to the last 3.5 years of that final 7-year period of time. This is not an unlimited period of time, and in light of eternity it is an extremely small (but extremely important) portion of time (Matthew 26:40).

**Note:** The rapture of the church will NOT take place until another temple is built (the third temple), and the antichrist goes into the Holy of Holies (around the midway mark of that 7-year period of time...i.e. around 3.5 years), declares himself to be G-d and demands to be worshipped. This is what the Bible refers to as the “abomination of desolation” (Daniel 9:27, Daniel 11:31, Daniel 12:11, Matthew 24:15, Mark 13:14, 2 Thessalonians 2:3-4). The church will experience increasing tribulation up to this point. This “abomination of desolation” is one of the last events that believers will see. Shortly thereafter, the rapture of the church will take place, and G-d will then turn His attention back to Israel (“Jacob’s trouble”). We are not yet in these last seven years. Two very specific things have to still happen before this seven-year period is ushered in:

1. A battle needs to be fought. This battle allows for the antichrist to rise up and come into power (Daniel 8).
2. A temple needs to be built in Jerusalem, and the sacrificial system needs to be reinstated. These sacrifices will be neither pleasing nor acceptable to G-d, but they will be there.

In the book of Revelation there are two types of people:

1. Those who *dwell on earth*; an idiom for those who live according to the world’s standards.
2. Those who dwell in heaven; an idiom for those who live according to Kingdom principles.

Where they ‘dwell’ has nothing to do with their physical location (see Ephesians 1:3, Ephesians 2:6, Ephesians 6:12).

**Verse 11:** “Behold I am coming quickly. Therefore, strengthen what you have, on account that no man should take your crown.”

*I am coming quickly:* This is in regard to the rapture. We need to be living with an expectation of the promises of G-d being fulfilled (Romans 8:18-25, James 5:7-8, Titus 2:13, Philippians 3:20-21, Hebrews 9:28).

*No man should take your crown:* No one can take away our salvation, but we can become deceived (led astray) and lose our reward (our crown). This verse is warning us to not give in to deception (2 Thessalonians 2:3, Ephesians 5:6, Matthew 24:4). If we live lives that are in conflict with truth, or lives that are not praiseworthy, we are going to suffer loss (1 Corinthians 3:12-15).

**Verse 12:** “*The one who overcomes I will make him a pillar in the sanctuary of My G-d, and he shall not go outside. I will write upon him the Name of My G-d, and the name of the city of My G-d and My new name.*”

*Pillars* are firmly established on strong foundations. Pillars give support and strength to a building. Do we want to play a part in the building up of G-d’s house (His body), so that it can more effectively worship Him?

*He shall not go outside:* This speaks of continual intimacy with G-d.

Three names (‘name’ speaks of character/nature/reputation) are promised here...

1. We inherit the name of Father G-d (Ephesians 1:5-6, Romans 8:14-17, Galatians 4:5-7, John 1:12-13). The Father’s character will become our character (John 8:29).
2. We inherit the name of the city of our G-d, the New Jerusalem (this is the first time in the Bible that Jerusalem is introduced to us by this name. It is alluded to in the OT, but this is the first time we hear of its new name/new character). The New Jerusalem is Jerusalem in her final state – her completed and perfect state. Like Jerusalem, we, too, are promised a final and complete overhaul (Philippians 1:6, 1 Corinthians 15:50-52, Revelation 21:5). Like Jerusalem, if we overcome, we too will be given a new name (Isaiah 62:2, Revelation 2:17).
3. We inherit the name of Messiah Yeshua. This means that if we have been faithful and have allowed the love of G-d to transform us, we are going to understand the true identity of Messiah.

**Verse 13:** “*He who has an ear let him hear what the Spirit says to the congregations.*”

We *hear* in order to respond, in order to obey.

**Verse 14:** “*And to the messenger of the congregation at Laodicea write: Thus says the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the Ruler of the Creation of G-d.*”

Yeshua of Nazareth was not pleased with this next *congregation* at all. In fact, out of all the congregations, this was probably the one that He was most displeased with. This Laodicean church had the wrong perspective. Unless we have the perspective of G-d, we will not be pleasing to Him. We need to be people who “have the mind of Messiah” (1 Corinthians 2:10-16, Philippians 2:5). We need to be a people who have renewed our minds (Romans 12:2). This Laodicean church had a reputation, with the world, that they were believers. However, in reality, they were far removed from the purposes and perspective of the Living G-d.

As to each congregation, Messiah starts this letter by describing Himself in a unique way. Here He describes Himself as the ‘*Amen*’. This word means ‘the Faithful One’ or the ‘True One’. It is a word used for a response. This congregation was not making a right response to the revelation of G-d. Their lives were not in congruency with the truth of G-d.

*Amen...Faithful...True:* These three words all come from the same Hebrew root word.

Messiah faithfully responded to the truth of the Living G-d.

He manifested this Truth to us when He (the Word) became flesh (John 1:14). His life on earth perfectly reflected the Father's plan and purpose.

*The Ruler of the Creation:* Also translated 'the Source', 'the Originator', 'the Chief'. Yeshua, being G-d, was NOT created. The Bible identifies Yeshua as the One who was the Creator (John 1:1-3, Colossians 1:15-18). Yeshua is the One who has supremacy (He is the Chief, the highest Authority) over creation – over angels, man or beast. There was never a time when Yeshua (who is eternal – in the past, present and in the future) did not exist. He has ALWAYS existed.

**Verse 15:** *"I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot. I wish that you were either cold or hot."*

Once again, Yeshua is evaluating. Do our deeds please G-d, or not? G-d does not only look at what we say or what we believe. He also looks at what we do (*works*). The problem with this congregation was that they were *neither cold nor hot*. They were not strongly committed to carrying out G-d's plans and purposes. They were individuals who lacked passion for carrying out the purposes of G-d.

**Verse 16:** *"But because you are lukewarm, neither cold nor hot, I will vomit you from My mouth."*

*Lukewarm:* Not passionate. Half hearted. This congregation makes G-d sick (want to *vomit*). Spiritually they are a disappointment to Him.

**Verse 17:** *"Because you have said I am rich, and I have found power (authority) and lack nothing. But you do not know that you are miserable, repulsive, poor, blind and naked. "*

*You have said I am...:* They evaluated themselves based upon earthly standards of measurement, and they were well pleased with themselves. They had bought into the lie/deception that financial security = G-d's blessing or pleasure. Messiah does not evaluate us based on our bank statements. He evaluates us according to how we respond to the truth of G-d.

*Miserable, repulsive, poor, blind and naked:* G-d describes the state of this church with these 5 adjectives. 5, Biblically, is a number that speaks of lack.

- *Poor:* They are lacking in the things of G-d. They lack power. They lack fruitfulness/effectiveness. They lack in their witness.
- *Blind:* They do not see things from G-d's perspective.
- *Naked:* Nakedness in the Bible is associated with shame.

**Verse 18:** “I counsel you to buy (acquire) from Me gold, refined with fire on account that you shall be rich, and white garments that you should cover yourselves that no one might see the shame of your nakedness. And anoint your eyes with eye salve on account that you shall see.”

If there is going to be a change in this congregation's life (in our lives) this change begins and ends with Messiah. HE is the only One who can bring a righteous and lasting change into our lives ('buy from Me').

*Gold* which is *refined in the fire* speaks of a removal of impurities. G-d wants to refine (purify) every aspect of our lives – our thoughts, our words, our deeds. He wants to remove everything in us which is impure (i.e. all those things which are in conflict with His character). This purification process does not result in a richness as far as our bank balance is concerned. This is talking about being rich in good deeds (1 Timothy 6:18-19) – deeds all done to bring glory to G-d.

Being clothed (*covered*), Biblically, is associated with good deeds – the “righteous acts” of the saints (see Revelation 19:8). Those who are clothed in *white garments* are those who display the truth of G-d in their lives.

It is significant that the final exhortation, to the congregations, has to do with vision. We want to be a people who see things clearly, to see things from G-d's perspective. If we do not see things according to His truth, then our lives will not reflect His plans or purposes. It is for this reason that He calls us to *anoint our eyes*.

**Verse 19:** “Those whom I love I reprove and discipline. Therefore, be diligent and repent.”

G-d sets our lives in order through reproof and discipline. We need to be people who do not live lives that are out of order. We need to ask G-d to bring His order into our lives. If His rebuke does not cause us to change, we need to ask Him to bring His discipline into our lives. Discipline forces a change. G-d's discipline puts us into a situation whereby we are forced to be conformed to the image of His Son. Hardship in our lives produces obedience (Hebrews 5:8, Romans 5:3-5)

**Verse 20:** “Behold, I am standing at the door and knocking. And if anyone should hear My voice and open up the door I shall come unto him and I will dine with him and him with Me.”

*Behold* is a word that reminds us to pay attention, as what is to follow is of great importance.

*I am standing at the door and knocking:* This is not a verse addressed to unbelievers. Yeshua is inviting His people into a deeper intimacy with Him. We will never be the people G-d wants us to be, and we will never grow and mature in our spiritual lives, until we grow in intimacy with G-d. Yeshua stands...and knocks. '*Standing*' and '*knocking*' shows that He is persistent. He doesn't knock once and then walk away. He keeps on knocking – desiring a response.

*I will dine with him and him with Me:* These words speak of relationship. They speak of fellowship. Good intentions/hard work will not move lukewarm people toward change. It is through fellowship and intimacy with G-d that lukewarm people are compelled to change.

**Verse 21:** *"And the one who overcomes I will allow him of sitting with Me upon My throne, just as I also have been victorious, and I sit upon my Father's throne."*

Intimacy with G-d (knowing Him, listening to Him, being still before Him, experiencing Him daily through worship) leads to us becoming *overcomers*. Overcoming/being victorious positions us in the very presence of G-d. This congregation loved wealth and power. However, it is only through intimacy with G-d, being in His Presence, that we are given an authority (to rule and reign with Messiah) which is approved and sanctioned by G-d.

## Chapter 4

**Verse 1:** *"And it came about, after these things, and I looked and behold a door was opened in the heavens; and the first voice which I heard was as the sound of a trumpet speaking to me. It said, 'come up here and I will show you what will be afterwards.'"*

*A door was opened in the heavens:* Many scholars, applying incorrect methodology of interpretation, tie the rapture/blessed hope to this verse. The word 'rapture' does not appear in the Bible. Paul, instead, calls it 'our Blessed Hope' (Titus 2:13). 'Rapture' is a word that means to be snatched away or taken away. Revelation 4 is NOT speaking of the rapture. In this chapter, John (written in the singular: "I....I....I....") goes up into the heavens to be shown things from G-d's perspective. In no way, hermeneutically, can we draw the conclusion that John (singular) represents the body of believers (plural), or that his being taken up into heaven refers to the rapture of the church. *'Opening up'* usually has to do with revealing. John (not the body of believers) received an invitation to 'come up' into the heavens.

*The first voice...was as the sound of a trumpet:* The Bible speaks of two types of trumpets – the shofar/ram's horn and the silver trumpet. The ram's horn is a trumpet that speaks of the provision of G-d for salvation (Genesis 22:13-14). Within this context, this voice was probably more like the silver trumpet – which was a trumpet that would announce something, revealing what was about to take place (Numbers 10:1-10).

This chapter alludes to a transition that is going to take place. John was called up to heaven to be shown what was going to happen at the end of this age (*afterward*), leading up to the last days. Many scholars point out that John was called up so that he could be given a heavenly perspective, enabling him to interpret what is going to happen in the last days. It is VITAL for us to understand what G-d is up to in those final days, so that we can faithfully position ourselves to demonstrate our commitment to G-d and to His Kingdom.

**Verse 2:** *"And in a moment I was in the Spirit; and behold a throne appeared in the heavens. And One who sat upon the throne."*

The word '*throne*' (the rule of G-d) appears 14 times in this chapter. Repetition in the Bible is for the sake of emphasis (it is the old-fashioned way of highlighting something). The primary message of the book of Revelation is to inform us of what needs to take place in order for the throne of G-d, which is currently in the heavens, to be established on earth – i.e. in Jerusalem. The throne (which reminds us of the rule and reign) of G-d on earth is synonymous with the inauguration of the Kingdom of G-d.

- *A throne...in the heavens:* G-d's throne is currently in the heavens. This tells us that we ought not to expect justice in this age. In this age, we can expect injustice and unrighteousness. Right now, the only force for justice and righteousness is true believers (Micah 6:8, Zechariah 8:16). It is only when the throne of G-d comes and is established in this world that we can expect G-dly judgment.
- *One who sat upon the throne:* 'The One who sat on the throne' is another phrase repeated throughout Revelation. This is (initially) speaking about G-d the Father.

**However, take note:** Even in the heavens a transition takes place. In Mark 14:62 Yeshua is spoken of as being at the right hand of the One who sits on the throne. Revelation 5:6 (and Revelation 7:17) speaks of Yeshua now positioned in the midst of the throne. Revelation 21:5-6 speaks of Yeshua being on the throne. All the glory, honour, authority and power that belongs to G-d the Father is going to be inherited by G-d the Son (Yeshua of Nazareth).

**Verse 3:** *"And the One who is sitting, His appearance was as the appearance of a (Jasper) green and red stone. And a rainbow was around the throne and its appearance was as emerald."*

These stones are predominantly red and green in colour. Biblically, the colour green is associated with life. The colour red is synonymous with the means of life – redemption; the shedding of blood.

**Verse 4:** *"And around the throne were twenty-four thrones. And upon the thrones I saw twenty-four elders sitting, and they were clothed in white garments and golden crowns were upon their heads."*

*White* is synonymous with purity (they are made pure as an outcome of redemption). The *crowns* are synonymous with authority. When we walk in purity and integrity, reflecting Kingdom character, G-d is going to give us authority to be used by Him for His purposes.

**Verse 5:** *"And from the throne went forth lightening, thunder and sounds. And seven torches of fire were burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of G-d."*

50 days after Passover, the people, at Mt Sinai, witnessed *lightning, thunder and sounds* (See Exodus 19:16-19, Exodus 20:18). Then the L-rd gave them the 10 commandments. After the giving of the commandments, G-d began to move toward the people, but they panicked and backed away from Him – asking that He not speak to them directly, but to speak to them through Moses. G-d desired to draw close to His people, but they were unprepared and unwilling for Him to do so. The Israelites failed this test on that day. T his same imagery is repeated here. Are the congregation of the redeemed (i.e. believers) going to be prepared, ready for G-d to move near and establish His rule and reign on the earth?

*Seven Spirits:* Refer to the commentary of Revelation 3:1. The Holy Spirit is key to the changes/transitions that are going to take us from this age into the establishment of the Kingdom of G-d on earth. Throughout this period of transition, G-d's truth, anointing and power are all going to be manifested through the Holy Spirit in a much greater way (Joel 2:28-32).

**Verse 6:** *"And before the throne was a sea of glass like ice and in the midst of the throne and around the throne were four living creatures that had eyes before them and after them."*

Biblically, 'four' is a number that has to do with the world (north, south, east and west). 'Four' through repetition, is emphasised in Revelation – four corners of the earth, four winds of the heaven, etc. G-d is bringing about a transition that will affect the entire world.

These *four living creatures* are also emphasised throughout Revelation. They play a very important role in the midst of and around the throne – as they reveal important characteristics of G-d to us (glorious, majestic, all-knowing, supernatural). Their *eyes* speak of intelligence or knowledge – knowing everything. G-d is going to bring this transition about with perfect knowledge. Nothing is going to escape His knowledge.

**Verse 7:** *“And the likeness of the first creature was as a lion, and the second as an ox, and the face of the third creature like the face of man, and the likeness of the fourth as a flying eagle.”*

These creatures (*lion...calf (ox)...man...eagle*) are not new to us. They are also mentioned in Ezekiel 1. The *lion* is a reminder of glory, the *ox* a reminder of power, *man* is a reminder of wisdom or intelligence and the *eagle* reminds us of that which is supernatural (flying, Biblically, is associated with the supernatural).

**Verse 8:** *“And to each one of the four creatures there were six wings. And around them and before them they were full of eyes. And they were never silent. Day and night they said: ‘Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord of Hosts. Who was and is and is coming.’”*

These *creatures* (although not necessarily seraphim) are alluded to in Isaiah 6:2-4. The seraphim were angels who also had *six wings*. ‘Six’, Biblically, is a number that reminds us of G-d’s grace. These seraphim say almost exactly the same thing as the living creatures. G-d’s world is going to become holy – by the fact that He is coming into it.

*Who was and is and is coming:* This has been changed from “The whole earth is full of His glory” (Isaiah 6:3). This NT perspective embellishes on the OT truth...how will the whole earth be filled with G-d’s glory? It will be filled with His glory when Yeshua comes to this earth to establish His throne and Kingdom here.

**Verse 9:** *“And each time these living creatures gave glory and honour and thanksgiving to the One who sat upon the throne, and lives forever,”*

*The One who sat upon the throne* is a reference to Yeshua now being on the throne. How do we know its Yeshua on the throne? Revelation 4:11 speaks of the elders worshipping the One who created all things. Creation is attributed to Yeshua (John 1:1-3, Colossians 1:15-18).

**Verse 10:** *“The twenty-four elders fell upon their faces before the One who sits upon the throne. And they worshipped the One who lives forever and ever. They laid their crowns before the throne and say:”*

*Elders* receive their position because of a testimony - they demonstrate how the people should respond. These elders receive these *crowns* (reward) for the good deeds that they had done while on earth. These crowns were not a symbol of the elder’s wealth or used to indicate that which he could be proud of. These crowns had one purpose – they were used to worship G-d – to bring HIM glory and honour and power. These elders went into eternity with something that they could use to offer up in their worship to G-d. Will we?

**Verse 11:** “*You are worthy our L-rd to take honour and glory and power, for You have created all things. And all things according to Your will they were made.*”

They called Him *L-rd*, He was the Ruler of their lives.

**Note:** Chapter 4 ends with worship. Worshipping G-d will be one of the chief characteristics of the Kingdom of G-d.

## Chapter 5

**Verse 1:** *"And I saw, on the right side of the One who sits upon the throne, a book/scroll written on the inside and outside and it was sealed with seven seals."*

When *scrolls* are opened up and read, they reveal truth to us. This scroll has one main purpose: To reveal the truth concerning the establishment of G-d's Kingdom to us. This scroll was *written on the inside and outside*. This should remind us of the 10 commandments. These were written on the stone tablets in this way - see Exodus 32:15-16. The commandments of G-d reveal the character of G-d. That is to say this: the commandments of G-d reveal how G-d would live if He were to become a man. That is why, throughout the gospels, the religious leaders were always trying to accuse Yeshua of sin. If Yeshua had sinned, He would not have been Emmanuel – G-d with us. If He had sinned (gone against the commandments), He would NOT have reflected the character of G-d. Like the writing on the stone tablets, the scroll was also supernaturally written on.

This scroll was also *sealed with seven seals*. See Daniel 8:15-17, 26-27. Daniel was told to seal up a prophecy that he received, for that prophecy was not for his time but for the time of the end (the end is a time of transition – from this age into the age to come). This prophecy made Daniel sick for days afterward.

The seven seals (which acted like a lock on the scrolls) speak of holiness and sanctification. It reminds us that what is being spoken about has been set apart for the purposes of G-d.

**Verse 2:** *"And I looked, and I saw a mighty angel calling in a great voice: 'Who is worthy to open the scroll and to loosen its seals?'"*

A *mighty angel* alludes to a unique angel – an angel who is stronger, apparently, than a typical angel. This powerful angel was commissioned to speak, to ask a question. The scroll needed to be opened up and read. As it was read, the things being read about would come to pass – they would happen/become a reality. (The first creation came about through the spoken Word. The establishment of G-d's Kingdom begins and ends with the Word). The angel asked who was worthy to merit the privilege to open the seals on this scroll.

**Verse 3:** *"And there was not any man, not in the heavens, not in the earth and not underneath the earth, who could open up the scroll or even look at it."*

Man cannot bring this transition about. When this transition happens, we can be assured that not a single man can even glance at it, let alone have a fingerprint on it (not Karl Schwab, King Charles, Elon Musk, the pope – not even Artificial Intelligence). The transition from this age into the next is something only G-D can orchestrate and bring about – in His time. Left to ourselves, we are utterly hopeless, and the Kingdom of G-d is out of our reach.

**Verse 4:** *"And I cried a great weeping on account that there was no one found worthy to open the scroll and to read it or even to look upon it."*

This vision was being given to John (written in the singular).

In no way does the Bible give us leeway to assume that John is symbolic of the whole church being in the heavens (it does not give us leeway to assume that a rapture has taken place) before these seals are opened. The only ones we see in the Heavenly places at this point are G-d, John, the four living creatures, the elders, and certain unique angels. We do NOT, at this point, see the presence of the body of Messiah from “every nation, tribe and tongue”.

**Verse 5:** *“And one of the elders said to me, ‘Do not cry. Behold the Lion, has conquered (is victorious), who is from the tribe of Judah the root of David, to open the scroll and to loosen its seven seals.”*

The Bible does not tell us who these 24 elders are – so that means that we should be okay with not knowing who they are. Many assume that John would have been one of these elders (being one of the 12 disciples), but in this vision John is standing outside of the circle, so to speak. In this vision he is NOT one of those 24. Assumption leads to confusion. Assumption should in no way impact our doctrine or theology.

‘Root of David’ – David is synonymous with King/Kingdom. Messiah, the Son of David, is the root, the foundation, of the Kingdom. ONLY He can open up this scroll. ALL hope of Kingdom life, all hope of justice, righteousness and peace rests upon Messiah Yeshua. Yeshua is worthy to open the scroll!

(It is only through Him that we are made worthy before G-d. He, who knew no sin, took our unworthiness...only through Him can we become part of His kingdom)

**Verse 6:** *“I looked and behold in the midst of the throne, and between the four creatures and the elders, stands a Lamb like it was slain (slaughtered). And to Him were seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of G-d, sent into all the earth.”*

There are a few words in the Bible for *lamb*. The word, for Lamb, used here is one associated with the Passover Lamb. This tells us that what makes Messiah unique is, not just that He is the Son of G-d but, that the Son of G-d is also the Redeemer who did the work of redemption. We see that there is a case being made, theologically, to show that there is a connection between the Kingdom and Redemption. Without experiencing redemption, we won’t experience the Kingdom.

*Seven horns:* Biblically, horns (‘shofar’) have to do with salvation – G-d has provided perfect and complete (alluded to by the number ‘seven’) salvation for us. Yeshua, the perfect and complete sacrifice, took our place, dying so that we could live (Genesis 22:13-14). The *seven eyes* speak of perfect intelligence. All knowing.

**Verse 7:** *“And He came, and He took the scroll from the right hand of the One who sits upon the throne.”*

Yeshua (the Lamb) took the scroll out of the hand of Father G-d.

**Verse 8:** “And it came about, when He took the scroll, the four creatures and the twenty-four elders fell before the Lamb. And every man had a harp in His hand and a golden bowl full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints.”

When Yeshua took the scroll, those around Him *fell down*. This is an idiom for worship. They worshipped Yeshua. As part of worship, *incense* was very important from a temple standpoint. It was offered up, twice a day, in the Holy Place (on the golden altar of incense – Exodus 30:1-10). Only a priest, who was anointed to do so, could offer up incense. There is a connection between the incense offering going up and *the prayers of the saints*. We should be careful to pray in such a way that our prayers are pleasing to G-d – a sweet aroma in His nostrils (Matthew 6:5-13).

**Verse 9:** “And they sang a new song saying: ‘For You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals. For You were slain, and by Your blood You have purchased us for G-d; from every family, tongue and every people and nation.’”

Yeshua had the scroll which He was about to open. The words in this scroll reveal His Kingdom plans and purposes. There is a connection between G-d’s Kingdom and worship. G-d is about to reveal His Kingdom plans and purposes. The response of the creatures and elders, to Kingdom revelation, is to fall down and worship by *singing a new song*. ‘New’ is an adjective used, in a unique way, to describe the Kingdom – new creation, New Jerusalem, ‘behold all things are new’, New Covenant, etc.

Yeshua is the only One who is *worthy*. It is ONLY through Him, by His grace, His forgiveness and by the shedding of His blood, that we can be made worthy. In and of ourselves we can never achieve worthiness before G-d. It is only when we receive what Messiah has done for us that His worthiness is transferred to us, making us worthy. Messiah takes our unworthiness upon Himself and, in exchange, He gives us His worthiness.

*By Your blood:* Blood is synonymous with redemption (there is no forgiveness of sins without the shedding of blood – Hebrews 9:22. To have a Kingdom hope, we HAVE to be redeemed. Redemption can only be found through Messiah, who purchased us, for Himself, with His blood.

*Family, tongue...every people and nation:* The Bible uses these words to describe the body of believers (the church).

**Verse 10:** “And You have made them kings and priests to our G-d, and they shall reign over the earth.”

In Exodus 19:6, G-d’s plan was to take the 12 tribes of Israel and make them into a kingdom of priests. [Their calling was to be a blessing to the nations (Genesis 12:3) and a light to the Gentiles (Isaiah 49:6 and Acts 13:47)] They were not ready for what G-d wanted to do and, at Mt Sinai when G-d started to approach them in order to bring about a transition in their lives, they rebelled. They chose to listen to a man (Moses) over G-d. God’s plan never changed. His desire is still for a kingdom of kings and priests to rule and reign with Him.

True believers in Messiah have been equipped, as a new creation, with this potential to rule and reign in this world. [Sadly, we so often quench the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 4v:0 and 1 Thessalonians 5:19) and don't reach the full potential of G-d, in our lives, in this age.] As believers, we already, in a sense, have the potential to reign right now – being a force for the Kingdom of G-d in our homes, communities, etc. Additionally, when the Kingdom of G-d is established on earth, believers (as kings and priests) are going to rule and reign (have authority) with Messiah (Revelation 20:4)

**Verse 11:** *"And I saw and heard the voices of many angels round about the throne, and about the creatures and the elders. Their number was exceedingly great - tens of thousands and thousands of thousands."*

Who are mentioned as being around the throne at this point? Millions of angels, the four living creatures and the 24 elders. There is NO mention of the church (every tribe, tongue, people and nation) being in heaven at this stage.

**Verse 12:** *"And they called in a great voice: 'Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and splendour and glory and blessing."*

Messiah completely emptied Himself when He came to earth (Philippians 2:5-8). What was the Father's response to Yeshua emptying Himself? The Father exalted Him to the highest place (Philippians 2:9-11). That is what we also see in this verse.

Yeshua receives from the Father these (seven = perfect/complete) things: power, riches, wisdom, strength, honour, glory and blessing.

**Verse 13:** *"And all of the creatures, which are in heaven and in the earth and under the earth and which are upon the sea and all which is in the sea, all of them I heard them speak saying: 'To the One who sits upon the throne and to the Lamb, blessing and honour and glory and power forever and ever!'"*

The position of the Lamb changes throughout this book. From being near the throne, to being on the right hand of the throne, and more and more He is likened to the One who sits upon the throne. We are given a glimpse into this transition that is happening.

The time is coming when the Father gives all aspects of judgement to the Son, who is the King of kings and the L-rd of lords.

**Verse 14:** *"And the four creatures said 'Amen'. And the twenty-four elders fell upon their faces and worshipped the One who lives forever and ever."*

*Amen* is a word that means "truth". What has been said or proclaimed is true, it will happen. 'Amen' is a word of response. Do we respond to the truth of G-d in our lives, or do we ignore it? Messiah is worthy of, and has earned, our obedience. He didn't need to do a single thing, to be worthy of our worship or obedience, but nevertheless he emptied Himself to death, for us, so that we could experience redemption, so that we could be transformed by the Holy Spirit, so that we could have the privilege of serving Him and demonstrating His power in our lives.

*The twenty-four elders fell...and worshipped:* Whenever Yeshua is revealed and proclaimed, when we see His true identity and see Him taking His rightful place, the elders fall down and worship. The more we are in tune with what G-d is up to, the more we understand the person and work of Messiah Yeshua, the more we are going to worship Him. ‘Falling down’ on our faces is an act of total surrender. Humility positions us in a place whereby we can truly worship G-d.

## Chapter 6

The opening of these seven seals, and the effect that they have on earth, are very similar to what Yeshua spoke of in Matthew 24:3-14. In Matthew 24 Yeshua is talking to His disciples (who were believers and part of the “church” age). Notice that Yeshua uses the personal pronoun ‘you’ in Matthew 24:1-15. This pronoun changes in Matthew 24:16 to ‘those’, ‘him’, ‘they’. The end time believers (“you”) are going to go through all of the tribulation that Yeshua warned about from Matthew 24:1-15 (the source of tribulation is satanic). Then the church is going to be raptured (before the wrath of G-d is poured out – as we are not going to experience G-d’s wrath – 1 Thessalonians 5:9), and Yeshua turns His attention back to the Jewish people (the ‘him’, ‘they’, ‘those’ spoken of from Matthew 24:16 onwards). This period of time, after the rapture of the church (“Jacob’s trouble – Jeremiah 30:7”), is a time of both tribulation (satanic in origin) as well as G-d’s wrath (G-dly in origin) being poured out on the world.

The seals are NOT the wrath of G-d. The coming of His wrath is only announced after the 6<sup>th</sup> seal is completed (see Revelation 6:16-17). The seals are part of a tribulation period that believers are going to go through (like Yeshua has told us in Matthew 24:1-15). G-d’s wrath only falls (in the form of trumpets and bowls) after the seals are completed.

The first four seals involve four unique horsemen who work together for a common purpose – to destroy mankind. The horsemen have nothing to do with the work of Messiah (not even the first one on the white horse). The only connection that Messiah has with them is to speak the words, of this scroll, into being and therefore orchestrate the events that will take place. (These things have to take place, because of the rebelliousness of man and their unwillingness to surrender to spiritual truth. – Luke 21:9)

G-d will act in such a way that it will be very clear that people are saying ‘No’ to G-d. There will be no room for them to say: ‘I didn’t know’ or ‘I didn’t understand’.

Chapter 6 takes place after the battle found in Daniel 8:19-26. A beast from the East (Media and Persia) will rise up and cause havoc, and the world will say ‘we have no helper’. Another beast (antichrist) will rise up, from the West, and destroy the one out of the East. People will think evil has been dealt with and ‘peace and safety’ are here, and then sudden destruction. (1 Thessalonians 5:3). What we see in Revelation 6 is the work of the antichrist. His power and authority are released into the world for a limited amount of time. The rapture will not take place until we, as believers, see the revealing of this man of sin. (2 Thessalonians 2:3-4)

**Verse 1:** *“And I saw when the Lamb opened up the first of the seven seals. I heard one of the four living creatures speaking, in a voice like thunder, saying: ‘Come, and look.’”*

Things, at the end, are going to get very difficult. There will be great suffering and hardship. Things are going to go from bad to much, much worse. Yeshua is the One who opens the seals. He is not the source of tribulation (satan, through the antichrist, is) but He allows the tragic things to take place. This verse should bring comfort to us. Messiah is absolutely in control (this is similar in principle to how G-d allowed satan to have a field day with Job’s family and his health – G-d was not the source of Job’s trouble, but He allowed the trouble, putting boundaries around satan as to how far satan could go).

Yeshua said these things had to take place (Matthew 24:6). They have to take place because of the rebellion of man and his unwillingness to surrender to spiritual truth. Even through this time, people will continue to say ‘no’ to G-d. They will continue to rebel against the plans and purposes of G-d.

*Come and look* is an invitation. It implies a change/a response/a new perspective.

**Verse 2:** *“I looked and behold a white horse! The one who sat upon it a bow was in his hand. And it was given to him a crown and he went forth, conquering on account that he should conquer.”*

This rider, because he is riding a *white* (“purity”) horse, is often mistakenly thought of to be Yeshua. However, the rider on this horse is in no way related to Messiah Yeshua (We need to look at the fruit. Yeshua does ride a white horse – Revelation 19:11-14, but this is not yet Him). The (bad) fruit that follows these first four horses is chaos, scarcity and death. Yeshua allows these things to happen (He opens the seals and allows these events to take place), but He is not the source of them (Yeshua is the source of life. He allows death, but He is not the source of it). The rider on this horse goes out with the purpose to conquer. Conquered people raise a white flag in surrender or as a sign that they will submit to the one conquering them. Conquered people are people who are easily controlled. The purpose of this first rider is domination.

A *bow* is a weapon of warfare (bow and arrow). A *crown* is a symbol of authority. This rider has a weapon which he uses to force people (on a global scale) to submit to him. The world is going to be brought into submission by this first rider. **He is a conqueror.** He takes control by removing all opposition. He also takes control in order to shed blood (He conquers a fourth of the Earth – Revelation 6:8).

**Verse 3:** *“And when He opened up the second seal, I heard the second creature saying: ‘Come and look.’”*

**Verse 4:** *“And the second horse went out. He was red. And to the one who sat upon him was given to remove peace from the earth, on account that a man should kill his brother. And there was given to him a great sword.”*

‘Red’ has to do with **bloodshed** or **war**. This rider took control to shed blood and remove all opposition to himself (These seals are outplayed on a global scale – not just in isolated pockets). The purpose of this second rider – to **remove peace** from the earth (again, this is not coming from a G-dly source. Yeshua is the Prince of peace. His purpose is never to remove peace). See Matthew 24:7. The intent of this rider, who has a *great sword*, is to kill (Matthew 24:9).

**Verse 5:** “And when He opened up the third seal, I heard the third creature saying: ‘Come and look.’ And I looked and behold a black horse! And the one who rode upon him had scales in his hand.”

The rider on this horse ushers in famine and pestilence (which in turn lead to mass hunger and **death** – see Matthew 24:7). The purpose of a scale is for weighing things. In those days, scales were used, in the markets, to find out how much something was worth.

**Verse 6:** “And I heard what seemed to be a voice, in the midst of the four living creatures, saying: ‘A measure of wheat for a denarius, and three measures of barley for a denarius, but the oil and the wine do not harm.’”

*A measure of wheat* is a small amount of wheat (wheat is used to make bread). *A denarius* is the equivalent of one day's wage. It's going to take one full day to buy a relatively small amount of wheat. *Three measures of barley for a denarius* informs us that the price of food is going to soar. The price of food soars in times of famine and pestilence.

*The oil and the wine do not harm:* Oil is synonymous with the Holy Spirit. In the midst of this bloodshed, famine and pestilence, the Holy Spirit will still be moving/functioning and available to us. Wine, in the Scripture, is associated with joy.

Even in the midst of chaos, we can have access to great joy. Our joy is not based upon our circumstances. Our joy is rooted in our relationship with Yeshua of Nazareth. Knowing G-d and His gift of salvation give us great hope and joy. Joy produces strength (Nehemiah 8:10-12). G-d's strength/joy enables us to be strong in these terrible times, so that we are not moved away from where G-d wants us to be.

**Verse 7:** “And when He opened up the fourth seal, I heard the fourth creature saying: ‘Come and look.’”

**Verse 8:** “And I looked and behold a greenish horse! And the one who sat upon him, his name was Death; and Sheol (hell) followed after him. And it was given to him rule (1st horseman) over a fourth of the Earth to kill with a sword (2nd horseman) with famine, with pestilence and with the beasts of the earth (3rd horseman).”

The equivalent of this word, ‘greenish’, in Hebrew is found in Jeremiah 30:6. The faces of these men were green (a ‘green face’ speaks of having a sickly appearance, expression or pallor). The colour of this horse has to do with excruciating pain. These times are going to be times of great affliction. This is not yet the wrath of G-d. The source of this tribulation is still satanic. Believers are not exempt from tribulation (Romans 5:3-5, Romans 12:12, James 1:2-4, 1 Peter 4:12-19, etc)

*Name was Death:* These riders CANNOT be G-dly. Death is never synonymous with G-d. G-d is the G-d of LIFE (John 10:10). *Sheol* is another name for Hell. The place of the dead. Hell follows this fourth horseman. These four horsemen have come to steal, to kill and to destroy. What we are seeing here is NOT the wrath or judgment of G-d. This is a worldwide, satanic persecution. Scripture exempts believers from the wrath of G-d, but it does not exempt them from persecution (John 15:18-21).

*Given...a fourth of the earth:* The Earth consists of three-fourth's water and one-fourth land. What this is speaking about is a worldly reign – a one world government, ruled by this one called 'Death'.

*Kill with sword...famine...pestilence...beasts:* Jeremiah 16:4, Ezekiel 5:12, 17.

**Verse 9:** *"When He opened up the fifth seal, I saw, underneath the altar, the souls that were slain - on account of the Word of G-d and on account of the testimony which they had."*

*Altars* are a place of sacrifice or death. Many people are going to be martyred. (Matthew 24:9)

*Slain on account of the Word of G-d and on account of the testimony which they held:* Those who fit into this category are believers. Believers value Scripture (the Word of G-d) and we hold to the testimony of Yeshua (Revelation 19:10). Are we willing to lay down our lives, to death, for these two things? Once again, this is NOT a picture of the wrath of G-d. This is the wrath of satan – hating, to death, those who believe in Messiah.

**Verse 10:** *"And they cried out, in a great voice, and they said: 'How long, O L-rd, Holy and True until You judge and avenge our blood from those who dwell upon the Earth?'"*

*They cried:* This is referring to the believers who had been slain (When Yeshua was slain, He cried out in a loud voice. These believers, like Him, do too).

*Those who dwell upon the earth:* This has nothing to do with where people are physically located/positioned. It refers to those who have earthly mindsets and perspectives. These ones do not have in mind the things of G-d. Their allegiance is to the things of this world and to the antichrist.

**Verse 11:** *"And it was given to each one of them a white garment. And it was said unto them to rest a little while longer - until the full number of their fellow servants, and their brothers, who would be killed like them."*

There is a cap on/a limit to those who are slain for Messiah (*the full number*). Some believers (*fellow servants...brothers*) will still be alive when the rapture of the church takes place – this should be something we can take comfort in (1 Thessalonians 4:17-18). In 1 Thessalonians 5:11, Paul exhorts the believers to "comfort each other and edify one another". John does not tell us these things so that we will fear what is going to take place in the end. Instead, we are told what is going to happen so that we can prepare our hearts and minds to have a faith that conquers fear when these things begin to happen. In Jude 1:20 we are encouraged to build up our faith. If we have "built up our faith", we will be part of those who are able to comfort and edify each other as well as comfort and edify those of weaker faith.

**Verse 12:** “And I looked. And when He opened up the sixth seal, behold, there was a great earthquake. And the sun became dark as sackcloth, and the moon turned to blood.”

v12: *Behold*: A word that is used to capture our attention. Pay attention to what is coming next!

By using the word ‘*behold*’ G-d is trying to capture our attention. He is using this *earthquake* to announce something that will have global implications (see also Matthew 28:2, Acts 16:26).

Within prophecy, especially, there are clues and hints to help us to arrive at the proper conclusion (e.g. In Matthew 24:29 the moon does not turn red – here it does not give light. This verse speaks of a different occasion, a different time, to the time referred to in Revelation 6:12. i.e. Matthew 24:29 refers to the 2nd coming of Messiah)

The first time Scripture references the sun becoming dark and the moon turning to blood is in Joel 2:31. In this Scripture, the wrath of G-d is announced. In Joel it alludes to the fact that this is the last chance for people to turn and call upon the name of the L-rd, before the wrath of G-d falls. These verses (Revelation 6:12 and Joel 2:31) announce the nearness of the RAPTURE (Messiah gathering up those who have been redeemed). *Sackcloth* alludes to a time of repentance. A (*blood*) red moon links repentance and redemption – a visual picture to remind us of the blood of the Lamb.

**Verse 13:** “And the stars of the heavens fell to the ground, just as a strong wind shakes the fig tree and casts its figs to the ground.”

See Joel 2:30. John is about to announce the wrath of G-d.

**Verse 14:** “And the heavens rolled back as a scroll, and every mountain and island was moved from their place.”

In this verse we see a transition. Things on earth are physically changing (everyone worldwide will be affected).

**Verse 15:** “And the kings of the Earth, and those who are mighty leaders, the leaders of thousands, the wealthy ones, the powerful ones and every servant and every free man, hid in the caves and under the rocks.”

G-d is not a respecter of persons. He does not show favouritism. Every man who has not repented, no matter what their earthly status has been, will find themselves in the same position – trying to hide themselves away from the wrath of G-d which is about to begin.

**Verse 16:** “They said to the mountains and to the rocks: ‘Fall upon us and hide us from the One who sits upon the throne, and from before the wrath of the Lamb.’”

Instead of turning to G-d and putting their trust in Him, these men turned to the rocks and mountains in an attempt to find refuge.

*The wrath of the Lamb:* It is only after the sixth seal that we see **the FIRST mention of the wrath of G-d being alluded to**. His wrath does not fall in the sixth seal, but the people are aware that His wrath is imminent.

**Verse 17:** “*For the great day of His wrath has come and who is able to stand?*”

The wrath of G-d is announced. It does not yet fall. As believers we have been promised that we are not appointed to suffer wrath, but we are going to receive salvation through Messiah Yeshua (1 Thessalonians 5:9)

## Chapter 7

There are two events that happen before the wrath of G-d falls:

1. **A sealing of the 12 tribes of Israel.** G-d has not forsaken, or replaced, Israel. The 2nd coming of Yeshua (not to be confused with the rapture, which happens a period of time before Messiah's 2nd coming) will only happen when Israel repents and comes to faith in Him. (Matthew 23:37-39)
2. **The rapture.** [This only takes place after a falling away (apostasy) occurs, and the man of lawlessness (antichrist) is revealed – he who is against the commandments of G-d. He will go into the Holy of holies and announce that he is G-d – this is called ‘the abomination that causes desolation’ (2 Thessalonians 2:1-4, Matthew 24:15, Daniel 9:27)]

**Verse 1:** “*And after these things I saw four angels standing in the four corners of the Earth and they stopped the four winds of the Earth so that the wind would not blow upon the earth, or the sea or on any tree.”*

*After these things:* Like in Revelation 4:1, John is now given a heavenly perspective – a glimpse into what is going on in the heavens at this time.

*Four angels...four corners...four winds:* The number ‘four’ has to do with the world. It is at this point, after the 6<sup>th</sup> seal, that G-d’s wrath is about to come on the whole world. However, the job of these angels is to push pause, so to speak. The winds of G-d’s wrath are put on a slight hold.

**Verse 2:** “*And I looked and saw another angel, going up from the east, and in his hand he had the seal of the Living G-d. He called, with a great voice, to the four angels – that was given unto them to harm the earth and the sea – saying:*”

There is a Biblical relationship between the east and the coming of G-d's judgment (Exodus 10:13, Jeremiah 18:17, Ezekiel 17:10, Jonah 4:8).

The *seal*, that this angel has, is a seal that marks ownership or shows possession.

**Verse 3:** “*Do not harm the earth or the sea or the trees, until we have sealed the servants of our G-d upon their foreheads.”*

This angel makes a proclamation that delays the wind of G-d’s wrath coming upon the globe. Something has to happen before G-d’s wrath falls (G-d’s wrath strongly resembles the plagues of Egypt. The book of Exodus is about the redemption of G-d’s people – the Israelites freed from Egypt and brought into a covenant relationship with G-d. This is very similar to what is going to happen in the last days. The Jewish people are going to be brought into a New Covenant relationship with G-d, through Messiah Yeshua – Jeremiah 31:31-34 – “all Israel will be saved” – Romans 11:26). In Egypt, a mixed multitude (Jews and Gentiles) left (Exodus 12:38). In a similar way, even though the church has been raptured (the church is made up of Gentiles + a remnant of Jewish people), a remnant of the nations (Gentiles) is going to come to faith in Messiah, post rapture.

*Sealed... upon their foreheads:* There are paradigms in Scripture. This means that G-d takes something that has happened in the past, and He uses that same imagery, in a different Scriptural context, to teach us wisdom and truth. In Genesis 4, Cain murdered Abel. Cain was afraid that if anyone found him, they would kill him because of the murder of his brother. In Genesis 4:13-15, G-d put a mark/seal on Cain so that no one could harm him. Cain was not righteous. He didn't merit this mark of divine protection. However, G-d marked Cain because of, firstly, His sovereignty, but secondly because Cain had a call on his life – G-d had a purpose for Cain that needed to be fulfilled. Israel, like Cain, has been placed into this world, as a vessel, for a purpose. Through this time of G-d's wrath, they are going to receive this mark/seal of divine protection. They do not receive this seal because they deserve or merit it. They receive it because of G-d's Sovereignty.

**Verse 4:** *"I heard the number of those sealed: 144 000. Sealed from every tribe of the sons of Israel:"*

There are a few major interpretations of the 144 000.

1. This number can be taken literally. i.e. a literal 144 000 people, from the 12 tribes of Israel, are sealed. They are going to be used by G-d to evangelize (primarily to the Jewish people) during the tribulation.
2. Some people say it is not a remnant of the Jewish people (i.e. a small amount), but it is the Jewish people, as a nation, who G-d is going to preserve - as His wrath and judgement falls upon the world. (i.e. 144 000 is a figurative number standing for a collective sealing of the whole of Israel - The problem with this view is that when the 144 000 are mentioned, in Revelation 14, such an interpretation becomes problematic, and most are forced to spiritualize the information in this chapter)
3. The 144 000 in chapter 7 do not refer to the same, identical people as in chapter 14. (We will deal further with this in chapter 14)

For the purpose of this study, we are going to view the 144 000, in chapter 7, as relating to the tribes of Israel in a general sense (i.e. The Jewish people who will be alive on earth during the final 7 years.) The seal shows G-d's protection and recognition of Israel as His covenant people. The gospel will be proclaimed to them through the two witnesses and ultimately at the Second Coming of Yeshua.

**Verse 5:** *"12 000 from the tribe of Judah were sealed, 12 000 from the tribe of Reuben, 12 000 from the tribe of Gad."*

*The tribe of Judah:* Even though Judah was the fourth son of Jacob (Genesis 29 and 30), it should not surprise us that his name is mentioned first in this sealing. Yeshua is called the Lion of the tribe of Judah (Revelation 5:5). Judah is going to have leadership and pre-eminence of the tribes in the last days. *Reuben* was the first born of Jacob's sons, by Leah. *Gad* was Jacob's 7<sup>th</sup> son – born to Leah's maid Zilpah.

**Verse 6:** “12 000 from the tribe of Asher, 12 000 from the tribe of Naphtali, 12 000 from the tribe of Manasseh.”

*Asher* was Jacob’s 8<sup>th</sup> son – through Zilpah, Leah’s maid. *Naphtali* was the 6<sup>th</sup> son – through Rachel’s maid, Bilhah. *Manasseh* was Joseph’s oldest son, Jacob’s grandson (see Genesis 48:5, 14).

**Verse 7:** “12 000 from the tribe of Simeon, 12 000 from the tribe of Levi, 12 000 from the tribe of Issachar.”

All three sons mentioned here were born to Jacob from Leah. *Simeon* was Jacob’s 2<sup>nd</sup> son, *Levi* the 3<sup>rd</sup> son, and *Issachar* Jacob’s 9<sup>th</sup> son.

**Verse 8:** “12 000 from the tribe of Zebulun, 12 000 from the tribe of Joseph, 12 000 from the tribe of Benjamin.”

*Zebulun* was the 10<sup>th</sup> son of Jacob. His mother was Leah. *Joseph* and *Benjamin* were Jacob’s 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> sons. Their mother was Rachel

In relation to the 144 000 this is what we know with certainty so far:

1. We are dealing with 12 tribes, but there are some changes. The 1st tribe mentioned is Judah, instead of the ‘firstborn’ Reuben. Judah will have leadership and pre-eminence of the tribes in the last days. (Genesis 49:10)
2. The tribe of Dan is left out of this accounting. When the tribes received their allotments of land as inheritance Dan was given the territory by the Philistines. He rebelled against this and went up into the North of Israel in order to take a land that he considered better and easier for him to conquer. (Joshua 19:40-48, Judges 18:1- 2) He was not committed to G-d’s inheritance or purposes and so many believe that that is why he is not mentioned here.
3. Manasseh, Joseph’s firstborn son (Genesis 48:14), is mentioned in this sealing. Ephraim, the 2nd son, had received Jacob’s special blessing. In the Kingdom there is going to be a transition back to what G-d had always intended. A correct ordering.

**Note:** G-d has sealed Israel for the purpose of redemption, and to be used mightily in the last days.

The “time of Jacob’s trouble” (spoken of in Jeremiah 30:7) happens at a parallel time to G-d’s wrath falling upon the world. Without the seal of G-d upon them, the children of Israel would not survive. For G-d to be faithful to His Word, there is going to be a remnant from the house of Israel used by G-d in the last days. (Zechariah 8:23 – the hem of the robe/fringe garment represents the commandments of G-d) The testimony, of many Gentile people taking hold of this robe, will show the desire of many in the nations to serve and obey the G-d who first revealed Himself to the Jewish people. We are not saved by our obedience, but we are saved to obey and submit to G-d.

This picture, of one Jew bringing ten Gentiles into the Kingdom of G-d, reveals to us that He has a purpose for His people in the last days.

**Verse 9:** *"Afterwards, I looked. And behold, a great multitude which no man could number, from every nation and family and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb. They were clothed in white garments and had palm branches in their hands."*

*Afterwards* refers to the time immediately after Israel is sealed.

*A great multitude...every nation...family... peoples and languages:* This is the Biblical description of the congregation of the redeemed – i.e. the church. The church is made up of people from every nation, tribe and tongue. G-d, through the name of Messiah Yeshua (Acts 4:12), calls out people from every nation, tribe, language and background to be His people (ALL who call on the name of the L-rd will be saved – Joel 2:32). Believers have not been appointed for wrath (1 Thessalonians 5:9) and in this verse they receive their blessed hope, the rapture (Titus 2:13) – they are '*standing before the throne and before the Lamb.*'

These '*white robes*' speak of being purified/cleaned. They are given to the believers as an outcome of redemption – they CANNOT be earned (see Revelation 6:11).

During the Feast of Tabernacles, the leaves and branches of four types of trees are used to put together what is known as a 'lulav'. The foundation piece, for the lulav, is *a palm branch* (Leviticus 23:40). The palm branch is a symbol of dependence upon G-d. During the Feast of Tabernacles, the lulav is taken, by each man, and waved in six directions (North, South, East, West, Up and down) 6 is a number that speaks of G-d's grace. The way we demonstrate dependence upon G-d is by accepting the grace of G-d. The lulav are a testimony of faith, trust and dependence upon G-d and His redemption.

**Verse 10:** *"And they called in a great voice saying: 'Salvation to our G-d, the One who sits upon the throne and to the Lamb.'"*

The people around the throne have just received the full outcome of salvation – a new, incorruptible and eternal body (see 1 Corinthians 15:35-57, 2 Corinthians 5v1-5).

**Verse 11:** *"And all the angels stood around the throne, and around the elders, and the four creatures. And they fell upon their face before the throne and they worshipped G-d."*

The *angels...elders and the four* (living) *creatures* are still in the throne room of G-d (see Revelation 5:11, as well as the commentary in respect of it. John is also still in the throne room – see Revelation 7:13). The only difference now is that these ones are now joined by a multitude of people (the raptured church).

*They worshipped:* There is a relationship between salvation and worship. It is only after salvation that we can worship G-d – in spirit and in truth (John 4:23-24).

**Verse 12:** “*And they said: ‘Amen! Blessing and honour and wisdom and thanksgiving and splendour and power and might to our G-d forever and ever. Amen!’*”

*Amen* is a word of response. It is also a word that lets us know that what is said is faithful and true – it can be trusted.

**Verse 13:** “*And one of the elders responded and he said to me: ‘These who are clothed in white garments, who are they and from where do they come?’*”

John is still in the throne room...together with a multitude of people. This negates John from being a symbolic representation of the church being raptured in Revelation 4.

**Verse 14:** “*And I said to him: ‘My lord, you know’. And he said to me: ‘These are the ones who have come out of the great tribulation; and they have washed their garments, and they have made them white in the blood of the Lamb.’*”

These are the ones who were persecuted, who suffered and who were put to death because of the Word of G-d and because they held to the testimony of Yeshua (Revelation 6:9-11). These ones, who take part in the first resurrection, are all of those who died in faith (or those who are in the faith and still alive at the time of the rapture - 1 Corinthians 15:20, 23).

**Verse 15:** “*Therefore, they are before the throne of G-d and they serve Him in His sanctuary day and night. And the One who sits upon the throne, He will place His tabernacle with them.*”

*Place His tabernacle with them* is another way of saying that G-d will dwell with them. Intimacy with G-d, and dwelling with Him, is also an outcome of salvation.

**Verse 16:** “*They will not hunger anymore, nor thirst anymore. And the sun shall not strike them or any hot wind.*”

Yeshua personally takes care of His people. That is why the church will no longer hunger or thirst, why they will no longer be scorched by the sun.

**Verse 17:** “*For the Lamb, who is in the midst of the throne, He will shepherd them and by the fountains of living water lead them. And G-d will wipe every tear from their eyes.*”

## Chapter 8

The primary purpose of the book of Revelation is to reveal G-d to us through the person of Messiah Yeshua. We need to understand that G-d does not change (Hebrews 13:8). This has some serious implications for us. The G-d of the Old Testament and Old Covenant (the G-d of wrath and justice) is exactly the same G-d of the New Testament and New Covenant. He does not change, and nor have His standards changed. He still hates and deals with sin. Throughout this book, G-d teaches us about the last days so that we can be found faithful – not caught off guard. Through Revelation, we get a glimpse into what G-d will be up to in those final days, as well as what His expectations are for us in those final days.

Another purpose of this book is to teach us what must happen (the transition that needs to take place) in order for the throne of G-d (ie the rule of G-d) to be established on earth. First comes judgment, and then comes the Kingdom of G-d (1 Peter 4:17)

In this chapter we see a transition. Six seals have been completed. The rapture has taken place. G-d, now, in a very unique way is working with the children of Israel (in order for them to fulfil their purpose and calling of being a testimony and a light to the nations - Genesis 12:3, Isaiah 60:1-3). He is also working among those within the nations who had not called on the name of the L-rd pre-rapture. G-d desires to see the nations repent (Ezekiel 33:11).

**Verse 1:** *"And when He opened up the 7th seal, there was silence in the heavens for about half an hour."*

Messiah Yeshua is completely in charge. *He* is the One who opens the seal, and He opens them in His time. The purpose of this *silence in the heavens* is to capture the attention of man (a dramatic and noticeable pause after the rush of the six seals). G-d's wrath is about to begin.

**Verse 2:** *"And I saw the seven angels which stood before G-d, and it was given to them seven trumpets."*

The *trumpets* mentioned in this passage probably refer to the silver trumpets (not the shofar – which is the trumpet which is related to the provision and the salvation of G-d – Genesis 22:13-14). The silver trumpets were used to make announcements, call to battle, etc (Numbers 10:1-10). The announcement here is related to G-d's judgment, His condemnation of those who have rejected Him.

**Verse 3:** *"Another angel came and approached the altar with a golden firepan in his hand. And it was given to him much incense, to place it with the prayers of all the saints, upon the golden altar which is before the throne."*

This *altar* was not the altar used for sacrifices. This was the altar of incense. There is a connection between the incense offering and the prayers of the saints. The incense offerings were offered up to G-d as a pleasing aroma (Psalm 141:2, Ephesians 5:2). This teaches us that we should make sure that our prayers are pleasing to G-d - that we don't pray in the flesh but that we pray in the Spirit.

We need to ensure that our prayers are subjected to the laws/commandments/statutes of G-d. Our prayers need to reflect a righteous/G-dly character. We should never mix anything into our prayers that G-d would see as inappropriate, impure or unclean ("strange fire" – Leviticus 10:1-3).

**Verse 4:** *"And the smoke of the incense with the prayers of the saints, by the hands of the angel, went up before G-d."*

Everything is happening "*before G-d*", "*before the throne*". This teaches us that everything that is happening (in regard to these trumpet judgments) has met with G-d's approval. In fact, G-d is the One who is ruling and who is bringing about His vengeance/judgment to bring about the desired response that He wants man to make (2 Corinthians 7:10, Acts 17:30-31).

**Verse 5:** *"And the angel took the firepan and placed upon it fire from the altar and he cast it upon the earth; and there were sounds, thundering's, lightening's and an earthquake."*

This is reminiscent of Exodus 19:16-20. At Mt Sinai, G-d was on the cusp of making a great change. These sounds drew the people's attention to that fact. These noises, repeated now in this verse in Revelation, remind us that G-d is on the cusp of bringing about a great change in this world – both to His people as well as to a change of rulership on earth. G-d's desire is to fill this world with His glory, with holiness.

**Verse 6:** *"And the seven angels which had in their hand the seven trumpets were about to sound them."*

**Note in regard to these trumpet and bowl judgments:** G-d is the source of them. These judgments come down to earth from heaven. They are not going to be able to be explained away by science – it will be very clear, to all, that these are supernatural events (they are NOT caused by wars, nuclear bombs etc). There are scholars who relegate Revelation to having already been fulfilled (ie in the past). However, these things have NEVER happened in the past. There is no historical precedent for them.

**Note in regard to the trumpet judgments:** An important characteristic to take note of in regard to these trumpet judgments is that they affect "one third". G-d's wrath is initially not poured out in its totality. The trumpet judgments refer to a partial measure of G-d's wrath – not His consuming wrath. The reason for this is that G-d is giving people time to repent. G-d's partial judgment (He "turns up the heat" slightly) is for the purpose of producing repentance. The bowl judgments show us what the FULL measure of G-d's wrath will look like. G-d's consuming wrath brings about utter destruction.

**A note in regard to G-d's judgment:** G-d's judgment is the MOST effective tool in leading the GREATEST number of people to repent and to turn to G-d. Throughout Israel's history we have seen that it was when G-d judged Israel that they were brought to repentance and underwent a spiritual change which was pleasing to G-d.

**Verse 7:** “The first angel sounded his trumpet and there came about hail and fire mixed with blood, and it was cast to the earth. And a third of the trees were burned up and all the green vegetation was burned.”

*Hail...fire...blood:* This will be the first time, in human history, that this has ever occurred. A *third of the trees* being burned up refers to a partial judgment. *All the green vegetation* (grass) disappeared.

**Verse 8:** “And the second angel sounded his trumpet and, behold, as the appearance of a great mountain, burning with fire, was cast into the midst of the sea. And a third of the sea turned to blood.”

In the history of mankind, this has NEVER happened. This cannot be explained away as ‘scientific’ or as something that humans “achieved”. People are going to understand that there is a G-d. He will be unmistakably manifesting Himself to people through these judgments.

**Verse 9:** “And a third of all the living creatures which were in the sea, died; and a third of the ships were destroyed.”

A *third* refers to a partial judgment. The seafood industry and transportation will take a catastrophic beating.

**Verse 10:** “The third angel sounded his trumpet and there fell from the heavens a large star, burning like a torch. And it fell upon a third of the rivers and upon the springs of water.”

The word used here for ‘star’ could also be translated ‘planet, meteor or comet’ (ie a celestial body). Fresh/Drinking water will be impacted by God’s wrath.

**Verse 11:** “And the name of the star was called ‘Wormwood’. And a third of the waters became wormwood and many of the sons of men died from the waters, for they had become bitter.”

*Wormwood* is a word that is associated with bitterness and death. Death is bitter to swallow. In each of these judgements the common denominator is death. Many people ask: ‘Is this G-d? The Holy and Loving G-d?’ YES! Because G-d loves righteousness. He is Holy and does not tolerate sin. He has atoned for it and redeemed for it, but these are people who are not responding to this atonement. They have ignored and neglected G-d’s provision. For this reason, G-d has to bring His judgment to this world in the hopes that men will turn from their sins and repent (2 Peter 3:9).

**Verse 12:** “And the fourth angel sounded his trumpet and a third of the sun was struck, and a third of the moon, and a third of the stars so that a third became dark. And in the day, a third of it would not shine and also a third at night.”

*A third....a third...a third:* Partial judgment.

**Note:** Israel (those who did not believe in Messiah Yeshua before the rapture took place) are going to be going through the outpouring of these judgments. However, they have been sealed (for protection) for this period of time. This is very reminiscent of what we saw in Egypt. When those plagues fell upon Egypt, the Jewish people (after the third plague) did not experience them (Exodus 8:22-23, Exodus 9:6, Exodus 9:26, Exodus 10:23, etc)

**Verse 13:** *"And I looked, and I heard a different angel that was flying in the highest heavens, calling in a loud voice: 'Woe, Woe, Woe to those who dwell upon the earth. For the rest of the sounds of the trumpets of the last three angels are ready to sound.'"*

This *angel* has a *different* purpose to the angels who are sounding the trumpets.

*Woe:* Alas! This is a word that demands a change. When a rider wants to get a horse to stop, because of danger ahead, he shouts "Whoa!" to the horse. That horse is trained to know that it needs to stop immediately – to make a change. This is the same kind of concept at play here. Alas, how awful it will be for those who do not repent at this point; how awful it will be for those who do not stop what they are doing and make a change.

*Those who dwell upon the earth:* In Revelation there are two groups of people – those who dwell in the heavens and those who dwell on the earth. This has NOTHING to do with their physical location but has everything to do with their perspective (For example: as believers, alive on the earth at this time, we are told that, in Messiah, we are seated in heavenly places – Ephesians 2:6. Right now, we would fit into the category of those who "dwell in the heavens" – ie those who submit and respond to the laws/truth of G-d). This angel is saying 'woe' to those who still have earthly mindsets.

## Chapter 9

**Verse 1:** *"And the fifth angel sounded his trumpet, and I saw a star falling from the heavens to the earth and it was given to him a key to the bottomless pit/abyss."*

This 'star' is a unique celestial being. It is not an inanimate object but is like another angel - possibly not an angel of G-d [(fallen) star – see Isaiah 14:12-15].

*Falling ...to the earth...the bottomless pit:* We see another transition here. Up to this point, things have been happening in the heavens and then having an effect upon this earth. This star also comes to the earth (from the heavens) but then it goes deeper...it goes into the abyss and then judgment comes up from the abyss (from hell) to affect earth.

**Verse 2:** *"And he opened up the abyss, and smoke arose from the abyss as the smoke from a great furnace. And the heavens and the sky turned dark from the smoke of the abyss."*

Beginning with the 4<sup>th</sup> trumpet, a darkness starts to descend on this world (Exodus 12:29 – G-d began the work of redemption at night. In the midst of the night, He struck down the firstborn of Egypt, at the darkest part of the night. Light shines the brightest in the midst of darkness). G-d is going to bring the effects of darkness, from the pit of hell, into this world so that there is a stark contrast between the world of darkness and the G-d who is light (John 8:12).

**Verse 3:** *"And from the smoke went forth locusts upon the earth, and it was given to them power - as the power of scorpions of the earth."*

What is happening here is not a natural occurrence. This is supernatural. No one will be able to mistake that what is happening is from G-d. People will have their perspectives enlarged to include thoughts of G-d. Some of them will even change their point of view and will repent at this point. These *locusts* will be very different to the locusts that come into our minds. They are from the pit of hell and love destruction and inflicting pain.

*Power:* Authority.

The sting of a *scorpion* is extremely painful. Not only is G-d showing the people what it will be like to live in darkness, He is also showing them (before it is too late for them to repent) what it will be like to live with extreme pain. If the people do not repent, darkness and pain will be their eternal condition.

**Verse 4:** *"And it was said unto them that they should not harm the grass of the earth, nor any green thing, or any tree, rather human beings; those who did not have the seal of G-d upon their foreheads."* (i.e. The 12 tribes of Israel)

Time has elapsed between the 1<sup>st</sup> trumpet (when all the green grass was burnt up – Revelation 8:7), and this 5<sup>th</sup> trumpet. The grass and vegetation have had time to regrow. Normally, locusts eat the grass and every bit of vegetation in sight. These locusts, however, are in no ways "normal".

*Harm...Human beings::* These locusts do not behave according to what is naturally expected from them. They are commanded to attack a specific (very large) group of human beings. The reason for this: To try to bring the nations to repentance.

*The seal of G-d on their foreheads:* In this verse, G-d affirms the uniqueness of the remnant of the children of Israel – those who were sealed (and preserved) to go through this time (see Revelation 7:1-8). G-d makes a distinction between this remnant of Israel and the nations (Exodus 8:22-23, Exodus 9:4, etc). Many people teach that, in the new covenant, there is no longer any significance about the land or people of Israel. This is an incorrect teaching. The gifts and call of G-d are irrevocable (Romans 11v:9). G-d is not going to forsake His people indefinitely.

In the 2nd half of Daniels 7th week (Daniel 9:27) there is an emphasis on the Jewish lifestyle – sacrifice, offering, temple. Yeshua said that He is not coming back, to establish His Kingdom, until the Jewish people are ready to meet their Messiah and say: ‘Blessed is He who comes in the name of the L-rd.’ (Matthew 23:37-39) G-d is calling His people to remember their covenant promises.

**Verse 5:** *“It was not allowed for them to kill them, but to torture them for five months. And their pain was as the pain of a man struck by a scorpion.”*

G-d's ways and thoughts are not our ways and thoughts (Isaiah 55:8-9). Any ability we have to know or to understand G-d can only be through revelation/the illumination of His Word. Left to ourselves, we will always misunderstand the truth, the ways or the purposes of G-d. What we are seeing here is the mercy and kindness of G-d toward mankind. G-d does not want a single person to perish (eternally), and so, in His grace, He is allowing people to experience torment (as an outcome of their rejection of G-d's grace, love and mercy) while they still have the ability to repent and turn from their wicked ways. G-d goes to great lengths to bring people to repentance (2 Peter 3:9). This is not G-d's full wrath, this is a picture of his partial judgment.

“Five’ is the Biblical number for being incomplete. These people are going to be suffering great pain, but it is incomplete – it is not in its full measure. There is something far worse than physical/earthly pain. Eternal pain and torment is FAR worse (Matthew 10:28).

**Verse 6:** *“And in those days men will seek death, but will not find it. And they will desire to die but death will flee from them.”*

In Biblical language, ‘seek’ is a word of great intensity. With all their hearts they will long for or beg for death. They do not seek a Saviour. They do not seek first the Kingdom of G-d and His righteousness (Matt 6:33). Their sole desire and longing, what they earnestly look for, is death. Their hearts are set on death. They do not comprehend that death is not an escape. Death ushers them into an eternity of darkness and pain (Matt 25:30, 46).

**Verse 7:** *“And the appearance of the locusts shall be as horses arrayed for battle, and upon their heads were crowns as of gold. And their faces were like the faces of men.”*

**Verse 8:** *"Their hair was like the hair of women, and their teeth the teeth of a lion."*

**Verse 9:** *"Their breastplates were as breastplates of iron; and the sound of their wings were as the sound of chariots, with many horses, running to battle."*

**Verse 10:** *"Their tails were as the tails of scorpions and stings were in their tails. And they had power to torture men for five months."*

These locusts are very unique in appearance and in behaviour (the imagery associated with them is that of warfare). They have never existed in the past. No scientist will be able to explain what is going on here. The only possible explanation at this point will be that this is an act of G-d (Initially the plagues could be explained and copied – see Exodus 7:11, 22; Exodus 8:7. From the third plague onwards, however, there was no mistaking that G-d was bringing the plagues about – Exodus 8:18-19).

**Verse 11:** *"And the angel of the abyss was king over them, and his name was Abaddon in Hebrew and Apollyon in Greek."*

These locusts are aliens from the pit of hell. Their purpose is to give people a taste (a foretaste/a foreshadowing) of what G-d's judgment/eternal damnation would be like. How are people going to respond? Will they repent, like some of the Egyptians did (Exodus 9:19-21)? Or will they harden their hearts even more? Signs and wonders/seeing the supernatural hand of G-d in situations did little to change the hearts or the minds of the people in Egypt. We cannot look to signs as wonders as a catalyst for change in the hearts of people. Only faith in the Word of G-d and revelation from Him can bring about a change. The Egyptians in Exodus 9:20 placed their faith in the Word of G-d, and because of it they, their servants and their livestock were spared.

This angel that rules over hell is not a typical angel. It may possibly be a fallen angel, as Abaddon or Apollyon means "Destroyer". This angel represents chaos and destruction (neither of which are G-dly).

**Verse 12:** *"One woe has passed. And behold there comes two more after the first."*

In Revelation 8:13 the angel said "woe, woe, woe" – three woes. This 5<sup>th</sup> trumpet only ushered in the 1<sup>st</sup> woe. Another two woes still need to be fulfilled. The first "woe" is really bad, but the woes to follow are even worse. G-d's punishment is increasing in intensity. G-d is trying to show the unrepentant people what eternal (death) will be like without a Saviour. True eternal life is only given to us in Messiah, when we are in a relationship with the Living G-d. Eternal Death means that we are separated eternally from G-d – the Light of the world, the Prince of Peace. These people sought death; not a saviour. They did not repent or call out to G-d to save them. Death is not an escape. It is a transition into either eternal life or eternal damnation. Yeshua went back to heaven to prepare a place for us, but He sent the Holy Spirit to counsel and lead us into all truth 51 (John 16:13). If people reject salvation they spend eternity in torment. They are foolish. Foolishness, Biblically, is when you know something, but you will not respond to it or put it into action.

**Verse 13:** *"And the sixth angel sounded his trumpet, and I heard a sound from the four horns of the golden altar which is before G-d."*

These words, 'before G-d', teach us that G-d is in control. G-d sets before everyone life and death. (Deuteronomy 30:15-20) His will is that we would choose life but, because we have a free will, we can reject His will. G-d responds to the choices that we make. If we choose to obey, and submit to Him, we are blessed. If we choose to rebel, we are cursed.

**Verse 14:** *"It said to the sixth angel who had the trumpet in his hand: 'Release those four angels who are tied at the great river. The Euphrates.'"*

*Four angels:* 'Four' is a number that implies worldwide implications.

The great *Euphrates* river is located in the Middle East. It originates in Turkey and then flows through Syria and Iraq before joining the Tigris River (which then empties into the Persian Gulf). The Middle East (the things that go on there) is key in the last days in helping us to glean prophetic truth. We will begin to understand the times (the prophetic calendar) by looking at what goes on in the Middle East – particularly Israel (Yeshua commanded His disciples to "watch the fig tree" – Luke 21:29-33. Hosea tells us that the "fig tree" is Israel – Hosea 9:10).

**Verse 15:** *"And the four angels were released. They were prepared for that hour, that day, that month and that year; to kill a third of humanity."*

Again, we see only a partial judgment of G-d – a third of mankind killed in one predetermined hour. G-d's partial judgments are made in an attempt to bring man to repentance. A very large amount of people die in a very short space of time. G-d ups the ante. He is the King of kings, and He does not tolerate sin. He would provide grace, mercy and forgiveness to these people, but they are not seeking this.

**Verse 16:** *"And the number of the army of horsemen was 200 million. I heard their number."*

We cannot think about this army in terms of our human intellect – trying to decide which country could spare two hundred million soldiers and then basing our reasoning on our own speculations. Making assumptions and forming our own (extra Biblical) opinions in regard to Bible prophecy is a dangerous practice. These soldiers may not even be human. These horsemen could be:

1. A demonic army
2. A coalition of armies from many nations
3. (Not necessarily) From one specific nation

"Who" this army is not important (if it were, the Bible would have clearly revealed to us who these soldiers are). The important thing to know is that this army is bringing about death (due to sin) - and G-d is allowing it to happen.

**Verse 17:** “I looked, and I saw the appearance of the horses and their riders: They had breastplates like fire (red), techellet (blue) and sulphur (yellow). The heads of the horses were like the heads of a lion. And it went forth from their mouths fire, smoke and sulphur.”

The colours mentioned here represent heavenly judgment coming upon this earth (nowhere does it say that these are the colours of a specific nation’s flag). *Fire, smoke and sulphur* (brimstone) represent hell – the condemnation and punishment of G-d. Over and over what we are seeing here is that G-d is moving to show that hell is a reality. The only way to escape hell is to accept His mercy and forgiveness through Messiah Yeshua (Yeshua is the way, the truth and the life; without Him is eternal death – John 14:6).

**Verse 18:** “By these three plagues a third of mankind was killed; by the fire and smoke and sulphur coming out of their mouths.”

Partial judgment

**Verse 19:** “For the power of the horses was in their mouths and in their tail. For their tails were similar to that of a serpent. And they had heads, and with them they destroyed.”

In both the Septuagint and in the Masoretic text, this word for ‘serpent’ is the same word as the one used in Genesis 3:1. There is a satanic aspect to these horses. By using the word ‘serpent’, we are reminded that this punishment/judgment is a consequence of the fall/rebellion of mankind (rebellion against the truth/Word of G-d). *Heads* have to do with intelligence. With their intelligence they bring about harm/destruction.

**Verse 20:** “And the rest of mankind, which were not killed with those plagues, nevertheless they did not repent from the works of their hands. To bow down to demons and idols of gold and silver and bronze and stone and wood. – which does not see, does not hear, and does not walk.”

*The rest of mankind who were not killed:* I.e. Two-thirds of humanity were still alive.

*Did not repent:* G-d sent these judgments to bring about repentance. Through them, He revealed Himself and He revealed to the people (in a very graphic and literal way) what the consequence of rejecting Him would be. The idols, that they continued to cling to, had no life or power in them. However, the people that remained alive refused to give them up. People continued to choose death rather than life. They wanted to rule their own lives. They did not want to submit to the rule and reign of Messiah.

**Verse 21:** “And they would not repent of their deeds; of murder, sorcery, sexual immorality or stealing.”

These people refused to respond to the truth of G-d. They clung to the lifestyles of their own choosing and refused to change. They did not want G-d to be the L-rd of their lives.

## Chapter 10

This chapter is unique in that it acts as a pause after the 6<sup>th</sup> trumpet (we also saw a pause after the 6<sup>th</sup> seal – Revelation 7).

**Verse 1:** *"I saw another mighty angel, coming down from the heavens. And he was clothed with a cloud, and upon his head was a rainbow. And his face was like the sun and his feet like pillars of fire."*

This is another unique angel ('mighty' alludes to strong or powerful). This angel comes with revelation (ie with the truth of Scripture). Revelation/insight helps us to make wise decisions. The *rainbow* on his head is a sign, a reminder, to G-d, and to man, of a covenant. This covenant was G-d's promise to never again destroy the world with water (Genesis 9:8-17). This covenant, however, did not include the destruction of the world with fire (2 Peter 3:10-13, Isaiah 66:15-16). Fire is for the purpose of refining/purifying. G-d wants to bring refinement and purity into His creation. (As new creations, this should already be manifested in our behaviour/deeds. 1 Corinthians 3:12-15)

**Verse 2:** *"And in his hand was a small book, which was opened; and he placed his right foot upon the sea and his left upon the land."*

A *book* alludes to revelation/truth. This angel wanted to reveal to John what was going to happen. Prophetically, the *sea* is seen as turbulent, ever-changing (Isaiah 5:30, Psalm 65:7). Prophetically, *land* is seen as that which is stable or consistent. This angel sets a foot in the turbulence as well as a foot on that which is stable. He brings these two things together. In Revelation 13:1 we read of a beast that rises up out of the sea (out of the chaos) and in Revelation 13:11 another beast comes up out of the land (out of stability). These two beasts are brought together and they work together.

**Verse 3:** *"And he cried out in a great voice, just as a lion roars, and when he cried out the seven thunders spoke with their voices."*

Biblical scholars say that these *thunders* are there to capture our attention. If we hear thunder, we know a storm is brewing. The heavens respond to the voice of this angel. After the 6<sup>th</sup> trumpet the people think that things cannot get any worse. In fact, the worst hasn't even begun.

**Verse 4:** *"And when the seven thunders spoke with their voices I desired to write it down, but I heard a voice from the heavens saying to me: 'Seal up what the seven thunders speak and do not write it down.'"*

This is very reminiscent of what Daniel was told in Daniel 8:26, 12:4-9. Daniel was very grieved and wanted to understand what the prophecy was about. G-d did not tell Daniel everything. He shared with him that there was going to be a victory but then commanded him to seal up the prophecy for it involved a time yet future. This verse alludes to the fact that what we are reading about here is related to the same things that Daniel saw.

**Verse 5:** *"And the angel, which I saw standing upon the sea and upon the land, raised his hands to the heavens."*

This *angel* adopts the posture for taking an oath. What G-d has promised will come about. The prophecies spoken of, throughout the Word, are about to all be fulfilled. G-d still displays a rainbow for us to see today, thousands of years after the fact. Every time we see its arch across the sky we can know, with assurance, that He sees it too and He is remembering His covenant (Genesis 9:16). In the same way, we can know, with assurance, that, G-d remembers His prophetic truth.

**Verse 6:** *"And he swore by the One who lives forever and ever; Who created the heavens and all which is in them, and the earth and all that is in them, and the sea and all which is in them, that there should not be any more time."*

What G-d has promised (all the prophetic truths revealed to us through His prophets) is about to be completely fulfilled. G-d remembers (hence the reminder of the rainbow – Revelation 10:1) ALL of the prophetic truth that He has spoken and now He is working to bring about complete prophetic fulfilment. G-d is going to move in such a way that He is going to show Israel that He remembers the covenant He made with them, and that He is faithful to complete it – to do what He has said (this happens in those last 3.5 years of Daniel's 70<sup>th</sup> week – see Daniel 12:7). Israel's greatest time of trouble (Jacob's trouble) will give rise to Israel's salvation (Romans 11:26-27). G-d keeps His covenant to Israel. He is going to bring about their redemption (the paradigm/pattern for this is found in the exodus from Egypt. First came hardship/judgment, then came redemption from Egypt).

**Verse 7:** *"But in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, in the time that he was ready to blow his trumpet, the secret of G-d will be complete- just as He proclaimed to His servants the prophets."*

*The secret of G-d:* The mystery of G-d is this: Israel will be redeemed, when they come to terms with the crucified Messiah. G-d's promises will be completely fulfilled, and His Kingdom will be established.

*As He proclaimed to His servants the prophets:* The prophets spoke of a future redemption of Israel. They spoke of G-d keeping covenant with Israel. They spoke of how Israel was going to be brought back to G-d (through Messiah Yeshua – Zechariah 12:10) before the Kingdom of G-d was established. To the Jewish people, WHO Messiah is remains a mystery. In this day, He will no longer be a mystery. He will be revealed to them. All of G-d's plans and purposes have been revealed to us through His prophets (Amos 3:7-8). If we want to be prepared for the last days, if we want to have insight and revelation into what G-d has promised will come, we need to study the prophetic Scriptures (Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, the minor prophets, etc). Prophecy lets us know what G-d is up to. It helps us to see things from His perspective.

**Verse 8:** *"And the voice, which I heard from the heavens, returned to speak with me saying: 'Go, and take the small book, which is open, which is in the hand of the angel standing upon the sea and the earth.'"*

**Verse 9:** *"I went to the angel and I spoke to him: 'Give to me this book.' And he said to me: 'Take and eat it. It will be bitter in your stomach, but in your mouth it will be sweet like honey.'"*

See Ezekiel 3:1-3,14. In Ezekiel, the sweetness is spoken of first and the bitterness follows. In this verse we see that the bitterness is emphasised. There is a change coming. It is going to come when things in the world seem to be looking up. People are saying 'peace and safety' but sudden destruction is on its way. People will think sweetness, but bitterness is being emphasized here. (1 Thessalonians 5:3)

**Verse 10:** *"I took this book, from the hand of the angel, and I ate it, And it became in my mouth that it was sweet like honey but, after I ate it, it filled my stomach with bitterness."*

What this book is trying to reveal to us is that the sweet things have passed and the bitterness is on the horizon. This should also remind us of what happened in the wilderness. The people were very thirsty, and they wanted water. The water that they did find was very bitter (see Exodus 15:22-27). The solution for bitterness was a tree (the cross). The rabbis and sages say that this tree was the tree of life. The bitterness of the death of Messiah, on the tree, turns into sweetness when we understand it and receive it. This is the hope that we have throughout this book.

**Verse 11:** *"And he said to me: 'You must return and prophesy again concerning peoples, nations, tongues and many kings."*

G-d, even at this point in the book of Revelation, wants to see people come to faith. He is still pursuing rebellious people (both Jew and Gentile) – wanting them to hear truth so that they can repent and "consume" the Word of G-d (Psalm 119:103, Jeremiah 15:16)

## Chapter 11

Wise people will be prophetically curious. (Hosea 4:6) No man knows the day or the hour of Messiah's return, but we can know the season of it. (Matthew 24:32-35).

The book of Daniel is key in understanding the last days. Daniel speaks about a period of weeks that have to be fulfilled for the Jewish people – “your people” refers to Daniel’s people, ie the Jews (Daniel 9:24-27. There are 70 weeks in total, which are split up into 7 weeks + 62 weeks + 1 week. This final one week (ie 7 years) is an extremely important period of time. It, in turn, is split up into 3.5 years + 3.5 years. Our study through the book of Revelation, up to this point (for the most part), has taken us through the first 3.5 years of this time period. After these first 3.5 years, in the “middle of the week” (Daniel 9:27), the “abomination of desolation” happens. This is when the antichrist goes into the Holy of holies, declares himself to be G-d and demands to be worshipped. We can know, therefore, without a doubt, that in that final 7 years, there is a functioning temple in Jerusalem. Shortly after this abomination, the rapture of the church occurs. The time of Jacob’s trouble then truly begins.

**Note:** The religion of the antichrist will NOT be Islam. Initially he is possibly going to ascribe to religious pluralism. This means that people can do whatever they want and worship whomever they want. He will initially try to unite all people around his leadership, and so part of his doctrine will be that all gods are good, all religion is good and salvation can be found in all of them. This is going to change though. He is going to reach a point where he eventually demands to be the only one who is worshipped – Daniel 11:30-39.

The book of Revelation is key for us in understanding the framework of the last days. In this chapter, the church has been raptured. However, even though we are not going to be here, it is important for us to understand what is going to happen, in that final 3.5 years, so that we can teach/warn people what the outcome of their rejection of Messiah Yeshua would be.

Revelation 11 deals with the 2nd half (last 3.5 years, 42 months, 1260 days) of Daniel’s week.

**Verse 1:** *“And it was given to me (John) a reed similar to a measuring rod, and the angel stood and he said to me: ‘Rise and measure the temple of G-d and the altar and those who are worshipping in it.’”*

Our modern-day equivalent of this word ‘reed’ would be a tape measure. *The temple of G-d* is not referring to the whole temple, but is referring to the Holy of holies – the section of the temple set apart for G-d. The primary bronze *altar* of burnt offering was located in the temple's outer courtyard, situated between the entrance and the Holy Place. A second, smaller *altar* of incense was positioned inside the Holy Place, a more sacred area within the temple. *Those who are worshipping in it* refers to Jewish people. Gentiles were not allowed into this section of the temple (Acts 21:26-30).

**Verse 2:** *"And the courtyard, which is outside the temple, do not measure it, for it is given to the Gentiles and they shall trample the holy city for 42 months."*

In Jerusalem there is going to be a division. A functioning temple, complete with the Holy Place and areas of worship where only Jewish people will be allowed to go, will be rebuilt. Outside of this area will be a place where the Gentiles/nations (unbelieving people who have no covenant relationship with G-d) will be allowed to worship.

G-d loves all people (Jew and Gentile) the same. But He can, and does, have different callings for different peoples. It is also important to note, at this point, that, in the words of Paul, not all who are descended from Israel belong to Israel. And not all are children of Abraham because they are his offspring (Romans 9:6-7). This means that it is not the children of the flesh who are the children of God, but the children of the promise (Jews and Gentiles who believe in Messiah Yeshua) are counted as offspring (Romans 9:8).

The Gentiles will *trample* on Jerusalem, through the leadership of the antichrist (who now has an utter and total contempt for the children of Israel, as they do not receive him as their Messiah). Jerusalem, *the holy city*, is going to be attacked by the nations.

In this final 42 months (3.5 years, 1260 days) Jerusalem is under attack (for 3.5 years AFTER the abomination of desolation and the rapture of the church - see also Revelation 13:5-8).

**Verse 3:** *"And I (G-d) will appoint my two witnesses, and they shall prophesy 1260 days dressed in sackcloth."*

*One thousand two hundred and sixty days:* 42 months. 3.5 years. At the same time that the antichrist is causing havoc in Jerusalem (for 3.5 years), G-d appoints two witnesses to be alive and prophesying in Jerusalem. *Sackcloth* is a garment that is related to repentance. Throughout Scripture, prophecy is primarily given for the purpose of producing repentance. Revelation 19:10 tells us that the testimony of Yeshua is the spirit of prophecy. This means that prophecy should produce the character and attributes of Messiah Yeshua in our lives. If we neglect prophecy, we are not going to grow or mature spiritually (ie we will not give proper testimony).

**Verse 4:** *"For these are the two olive trees, and the two menorahs, standing before the G-d of the world."*

References to these two witnesses are found in Zechariah 4. So often in the book of Revelation, John uses OT prophecy to help us to understand NT truth. John, inspired by the Holy Spirit, gives us a New Testament perspective on something already known in the Old Testament. The *olive trees* produce olive oil which can be used for anointing but can also be used to give light. The *menorahs* (lampstands) are also for the purpose of light. G-d's Word is a lamp to our feet and a light to our paths (Psalm 119:105). Repentance is only a reality when the anointed Word of G-d is revealed to us. These two witnesses (two olive trees, two lampstands) prophesy. That is, they speak the anointed Word of G-d. This is for the purpose of leading people to repentance (hence, wearing sackcloth) throughout this time of trouble.

**Verse 5:** “*For if any man wants to do harm to them, fire will go forth from their mouth and devour their enemies. For this is the way that those who seek their harm will surely die.*”

These witnesses are given power, as they speak a message of repentance and as they prophesy in Jerusalem. People, from the nations, will rise up against them because they don't want to hear this message. Those who don't believe, in what the Scripture reveals, are setting themselves up for the judgement of G-d.

**Verse 6:** “*And to them was given power to close up the heavens, that it should not rain in the days of their prophesy. And they ruled over the water to turn it into blood, and upon the earth to strike it with every type of plague as they desired.*”

There is a great debate as to who these two witnesses could be. We are not told in Revelation who they are and so we cannot emphatically state who they are. However, G-d has given us some interesting characteristics in regard to these (men). Malachi 4:4-6 speaks of the law of Moses. In this same passage, G-d promises to send Elijah before the great and dreadful day of the L-rd. In regard to Elijah see also Luke 1:17, Matthew 11:14, John 1:19-23 (Isaiah 40:3). At the Mount of Transfiguration, Moses and Elijah came down to speak to Yeshua (Matthew 17:1-8). Elijah, was one of two men (Enoch being the other man) who did not (?yet) face death.

*Power to close up the heavens* refers to an absence of rain (ie: no rain for 3.5 years – in the Bible, rain is synonymous with blessing): The structure for understanding the book of Revelation is the Hebrew Bible (ie the Old Testament). Elijah, in 1 Kings 17:1, prophetically proclaimed a time of no rain. Luke 4:25 gives us the timeframe for this drought – 3 years and 6 months or 1260 days. James 5:17-18 confirms this timeframe. These Scriptures are a good indication that Elijah might be one of these witnesses. However, this is not confirmed in Revelation, and so we cannot dogmatically state that one of them is he.

*They ruled over the water to turn it into blood:* Our OT framework for understanding this is Moses (Exodus 7:14-21). Again, we cannot emphatically state or teach that the second witness is Moses. It may be Moses, but it could also be someone else who does the things that Moses did (John the Baptist, although he stated that he was NOT Elijah, came ‘in the spirit and power of Elijah’ – Luke 1:17. This second witness may come ‘in the spirit and power of Moses’).

Up to this time, only the partial wrath of G-d has fallen – not His consuming/full wrath. Rain is synonymous with blessing. Water being turned to blood was part of the plagues in Egypt. Judgement. G-d is not blessing this time.

**Verse 7:** *"And after they finished their testimony the beast will rise up from the abyss and make with them war, and overpower them and will kill them."*

*After they finished their testimony:* It will take them 3.5 years to finish prophesying (calling people to repentance) – 1260 days.

Why does G-d allow His faithful witnesses to die? To teach us that death is not our end. If we die in obedience, and in serving G-d, we have a hope; the Kingdom. The resurrection speaks of the reality of the Kingdom. (Messiah rose first, as the first fruits; but we are also going to have a resurrection experience as part of the harvest – 1 Corinthians 15:20-23) Resurrection is a victory. It is Kingdom power/authority. Death is not our end. It is a transition. Death is simply preparation for resurrection.

**Verse 8:** *"And their dead bodies were in the street of that great city, the one that is called Spiritually Sodom and Egypt, where there also our L-rd was crucified."*

The Bible tells us when things are symbolic or figurative ('*called Spiritually*'). It is a dangerous practice to read things and say that they are symbolic when in fact they should be taken literally. Many people see the book of Revelation as a purely symbolic book. They do not think that any of the things spoken of in Revelation will literally take place. Those who read Revelation from a purely symbolic point of view will be unprepared when these things literally begin to happen on the earth.

Neither *Sodom* nor *Egypt* were good places. Sodom is infamous for its sexual immorality – particularly homosexuality. Egypt is synonymous with the world (the desires of the flesh).

*Where...our L-rd was crucified:* This lets us know that we are talking about Jerusalem. The bodies of these witnesses will be lying in the streets of Jerusalem. Spiritually, Jerusalem, at this time, is named "Sodom" and "Egypt" by G-d. This means that it has become a city (ruled by the antichrist in these 3.5 years) that is an affront to G-d.

**Verse 9:** *"And many from the peoples, and from the families, and from the languages, and from the nations they will see their dead bodies for 3 and a half days; and they will not let their dead bodies be put into the graves."*

Denying burial to a dead person brings shame to their body. The world is going to have total and utter contempt for these two witnesses who bore truth to the testimony of G-d. This shows us how far this world will be from God.

**Verse 10:** *"And the dwellers of the earth will rejoice over them; they will be glad; they will send gifts to one another because these two prophets tormented them that dwelt upon the earth."*

*The dwellers of the earth* has nothing to do with physical location, but everything to do with perspective. These are the ones who cling to their earthly/fleshy mindset.

*Send gifts to one another:* Biblically, the giving of gifts is associated with the Jewish holiday of Purim (Esther 9:18-19). Purim is a holiday that celebrates the victory of G-d's people triumphing over their enemies. Here, the world is rejoicing because they think that they have had defeated G-d's people. These two prophets *tormented* those who dwell upon the earth by giving them the truth of G-d - by sharing with them the necessity of repenting for the purpose of finding G-d's forgiveness. The world is far removed from the things of G-d. The gospel message is a torment to the people of this world.

**Verse 11:** *"And it came about after 3 and a half days that the spirit of life, from G-d, shall enter into them. And they stood upon their feet and great fear fell upon all those who saw them."*

The latter half of Daniel's 70th week is three and a half years. The witnesses are dead for three and a half days. These witnesses will preach (primarily to Israel) a message of repentance. Repentance gives birth to life. In those final three and a half years, G-d is going to be working to bring *life* into Israel. The terminology used here is very similar to how G-d breathed His breath of life into Adam (Genesis 2:7). G-d also breathed life into the dry bones, and they began to live (Ezekiel 37:5-14).

The people still alive on the earth have lived through 6 of the trumpet judgments of G-d. They have seen 1/3<sup>rd</sup> of mankind killed. Yet these judgments had not brought about a change – these people had refused to repent from the works of their hands and worship G-d. After hearing the message of repentance (for 3.5 years) and then seeing a resurrection happening before their very eyes, the hearts of these people have undergone a change. A *great fear fell* on those who saw the witnesses resurrected.

**Verse 12:** *"And they heard a great voice from heavens speaking unto them, saying: 'Come up here,' And they went up in a cloud towards the heavens and their enemies saw them."*

These witnesses did what G-d had called them to do. Through their testimony, the Spirit of G-d breathed into them life that conquered death.

**Verse 13:** *"At that hour there was a great earthquake. One tenth of the city (Jerusalem) fell and 7000 people were killed in the earthquake. And the rest were seized by fear and they gave glory to the G-d of heaven."*

An *earthquake* shakes the earth. It captures attention and causes a change in people. Resurrection, like an earthquake, impacts/shakes up/changes the lives of people.

The number, seven thousand, from an Old Testament perspective, is the number of a remnant (see 1 Kings 19:18). '7', Biblically, is the number of perfection. '1000' is the number of completion. Not only does repentance bring life, but it also imparts holiness. Repentance establishes a connection between us and a holy G-d.

At long last, in this verse, we see a proper response! The people give glory to the G-d of heaven! G-d has created us to give glory to Him. Give glory to G-d no matter what your circumstances are! Yeshua promised that Israel would only see Him again after they gave Him a proper response (Matthew 23:37-39). It is only at the second coming of Yeshua that the establishment of His Kingdom on earth is ushered in (see Revelation 11:15).

**Verse 14:** *"The second woe has passed; and behold the third woe is coming soon."*

This *third woe* is related to the 7<sup>th</sup> trumpet. Biblically, the number '3' is a number related to revelation/to the revealing of something.

**Verse 15:** *"And the seventh angel sounded his trumpet, and there came about great voices in the heavens, and they said: 'Behold, the kingdom of the world has become the Kingdom of our L-rd and His Messiah, and He will rule forever and ever."*

After resurrection, we see a proclamation of the Kingdom. The testimony from those two witnesses was very important. They simply spoke prophetic truth and, in so doing, brought about G-d's rulership.

**Note:** As believers we will not be here to see all these latter things taking place, but they are important for us to know about, as they teach us about the character of G-d. It gives us a Biblical glimpse of the Almighty G-d who is going to rule over His creation.

The time is coming when G-d is going to rule and reign over ALL of His creation, in its entirety. However, right now, He is able to rule and reign over our lives. Are we submitted to Him and allowing Him to? It is only when the eternal G-d is ruling over our lives that we can have access to all of His blessings. These blessings enable us to be wise stewards of the things of G-d. They enable us to change – so that His attributes and character become ours (1 Corinthians 11:1).

**Verse 16:** *"And the twenty-four elders, the ones who sit before G-d on their thrones, fell upon their face and they worshipped G-d."*

These elders have their own thrones. Yet we never seem to see them on them. Every time we are introduced to these elders, they are getting off their thrones and are falling down to worship G-d (Revelation 4:10, Revelation 6:8, Revelation 7:11, etc). When G-d is the ruler of our lives, we will be quick to worship Him. Every movement of G-d, every activity, moves these elders to fall down and worship.

**Verse 17:** “And they said, ‘We give thanks to You, L-rd G-d of Hosts, the One who is and was. And You have put on great power and You will reign.’”

There is a change in this refrain. This foreshadows the return of Messiah to set up His Kingdom. Are we investing in His Kingdom or is most of our energy taken up by the kingdom we live in right now? Do we live for this one that is going to be utterly destroyed? We have the privilege of submitting to Him now.

In coming to earth as a man, Yeshua emptied Himself (Philippians 2:5-11). However, when He returns, He will represent the full power and judgment of Almighty G-d (Ephesians 1:22-23, 1 Corinthians 15:24-28, John 5:22-23).

**Verse 18:** “And the nations were angry; and Your wrath has come. And the time to judge the dead, and to give reward to your servants the prophets, and to the saints, and to the ones who fear Your name, both small and great, and to destroy the ones who destroyed the earth.”

*Nations* refers to those who have no covenantal relationship with G-d (ie those who have rejected Messiah Yeshua, the only One through whom they can be in covenant with G-d).

*Angry* could also be translated ‘enraged’. It is a word that speaks of an intense anger.

At Yeshua’s 1st coming He did not come to judge man (John 12:47) but He came that we might have salvation. When Yeshua returns the 2nd time He is coming to judge, because the Father has given all judgment to Him (John 5:22). He is going to represent the Holiness, authority and power of Almighty G-d. He is coming to bring His wages/outcomes that He has promised. (Romans 2:5-11) - to give man what he has earned. Those who have feared G-d will be rewarded. Those who have loved sin will be destroyed.

**Verse 19:** “And the Temple was opened in heaven, and the ark of His covenant was seen in His temple. And there came about lightening and sounds and thundering and an earthquake and great hail.”

The *Temple* refers to the Holy of holies (the place where the Ark of the Covenant was located). This ark housed the tablets that contained the 10 commandments, a jar of manna and Aaron’s staff that had budded. The lid of the ark is called “the mercy seat”/ “atonement cover”. This ark is a reminder of the judgment of G-d. The judgment of G-d needs to be thought of in two ways:

1. Condemnation. G-d condemns (declares guilty) those who have rejected Him.
2. Vindication – clearing His prophets and saints of any blame/guilt.

*Lightening and sounds and thundering....:* This type of language is very reminiscent of Mount Sinai (when G-d gave the 10 commandments to Moses and the children of Israel). When we think of Mt Sinai (Exodus 20) we need to think of two things:

- 1) Change – G-d wanted to bring miraculous and G-dly change to His people. This change would involve reflecting the character of G-d's Kingdom - His laws, statutes and commandments.
- 2) G-d wanted to reveal truth to the people. There is a relationship between truth and change. The law is going to go forth from Zion (Micah 4:2) Holiness and righteousness are seen in the statutes, laws and commandments of G-d.

Before this change can occur, i.e. before Messiah Yeshua sets up His millennial Kingdom, Israel has to get right with G-d.

## Chapter 12

Over and over in the Word of G-d, we see how important the people and the land of Israel are in G-d's prophetic purposes – that is, in the establishment of His Kingdom on earth.

Revelation 12-15 are kind of like a review – looking back, from a different vantage point (a heavenly perspective), on what we have already studied thus far - so that we can have a deeper and clearer understanding of what G-d is doing in those final days. In Revelation 12 we are given a proper understanding of the nation and the people of Israel. Israel played a very important role regarding Messiah's first coming. Likewise, Israel is going to play a very important role when Messiah returns.

**Verse 1:** *"A great sign appeared in the heavens: a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet and upon her head a crown with twelve stars."*

The imagery in this verse is very similar to the imagery spoken of in Joseph's dream in Genesis 37:9-11. Joseph is a typology of Messiah. This means that many things that happened in his life give us a perspective for understanding the person and the work of Messiah (Yeshua). In Joseph's dream, the sun, moon and stars were referring to Jacob (who had his name changed to 'Israel') and to his children – ie: the tribes of Israel, the Jewish people. This verse informs us that we are reading about Israel – the *twelve stars*, the 12 tribes of Israel.

This word 'sign' (symbol) lets us know that this is symbolic language. This portion of Scripture can be read figuratively and not literally. Symbolism is a literary device whereby characters, objects, actions, or ideas are associated with a deeper meaning beyond the literal sense.

**Verse 2:** *"And being with child, she cried out in her labour and her labour was difficult."*

Israel (through Mary, a young Jewish girl) gave birth to Messiah.

**Verse 3:** *"Another sign appeared in the heavens: and behold a great dragon, red like fire, and to him were seven heads, ten horns and on his heads seven crowns."*

This second image is one of an empire – a beast (Revelation 17:8). The *dragon* is symbolic language to refer to satan (Revelation 12:9).

We are going to learn that the *seven heads* speak of seven empires that all serve the purposes of satan (Revelation 17:9-11 - a 'mountain' speaks of a government/rule). These are seven, distinct, satanically inspired empires. Each empire is ruled by a king – hence seven crowns on the heads – Revelation 17:10.

The *ten horns* are 10 final kings (Revelation 17:12-14). These all rule and reign for a very short period of time, and they all pledge their allegiance and give their power to the antichrist (beast).

Crowns are synonymous with rule/kingdom. satan is opposed to the work and person of Messiah Yeshua. He stands against what G-d has promised to bring about.

**Verse 4:** *"And his tail carried from the heavens a third of the stars. He cast them to the ground. And the dragon stood before the woman who was giving birth, on account that he might swallow her child when she gave birth."*

These *stars of heaven* possibly relate to angels (Revelation 1:20). Many conclude, from this verse, that one third of the angels (demons – fallen ‘stars’) rebelled against G-d and aligned themselves to satan and so fell to the earth with satan (Isaiah 14:12-15, Luke 10:18).

satan is opposed to the person and the work of Messiah Yeshua. satan stands against what G-d has promised to bring about (see Matthew 2:7-18).

**Verse 5:** *"And she gave birth to a Man Child, who in the future would rule over the nations with a rod of iron. And her child was taken to G-d and to His throne."*

There is a relationship between Israel (‘the woman’) and the Messiah (‘*Man Child*’). This term, *Man/male Child*, is very similar to what Hannah prayed to receive in 1 Samuel 1:11. G-d blessed Hannah with Samuel. Samuel is a typology of Messiah. The rabbis point out that Samuel was to bring about spiritual renewal among the children of Israel. Israel, however, rejected his leadership. In the same way, Messiah’s leadership was rejected when He came to earth. The rejection of Samuel, and Israel’s demand for a king, led to great disappointment for the children of Israel. In the same way, rejecting Messiah has also led to great disappointment for the people of Israel – 2000 years of exile, no temple, etc.

Yeshua is coming back to earth, a second time, in order to rule and reign over the nations. Ruling with a *rod of iron* is yet future.

*Her Child was taken to G-d and to His throne:* Acts 1:9-11, Daniel 7:13-14. This Child, who is Messiah, is going to rule from the throne of G-d. satan is against this/opposed to this purpose/plan of G-d.

**Verse 6:** *"The woman fled into the wilderness, where there had been prepared for her a place by G-d on account that He would sustain her there 1260 days."*

See Matthew 2:13. The dragon who wanted to devour the child was unsuccessful and so he began to pursue after, and persecute, the woman (Israel). See also Matthew 24:15-22. We know, prophetically, that in the last days Israel is going to flee into the wilderness, and she is going to be sustained (fed) there for 1260 days (3 years and 6 months). See 1 Kings 17:2-16 (James 5:17-18). These 144 000 of the house of Israel (a remnant, as seen in Revelation 7) are going to be taken into the wilderness in order that they might come to faith, out of desperation, because of the time of Jacobs trouble.

John used literary devices and techniques so that we would have a better ability to discern what G-d is revealing in this book. *1260 days* repeats itself in the Scripture.

It is always in regard to the latter half of Daniel's 70th week and is the time also referred to as 'The Time of Jacob's trouble'. (Daniel 12:1, 7, Jeremiah 30:7) At the end, G-d is going to allow the toughest most difficult time for the Jewish people (satanic persecution) – but this tribulation is going to bring them to dependence on G-d and cause them to act in faith. Sometimes faith comes out of desperation. G-d is going to move to deliver Israel, because she is key in bringing about the establishment of the Kingdom - Matthew 23:37-39.

**Verse 7:** *"And there came about a war in the heavens. Michael and his angels fought with the dragon, and the dragon fought with his angels."*

We have seen the physical implications for Israel in the last days – physically persecuted, physically having to flee into the wilderness, etc. However, at the same time as Israel's physical situation is playing out, so too is there a spiritual battle going on in the heavenlies.

**Verse 8:** *"But they did not prevail, and also their place was no longer found in the heavens."*

*They (satan and his angels) did not prevail.* This means that satan was not successful in this war. This foreshadows victory for G-d and victory for the people of G-d.

*Their place was no longer found in the heavens:* Job 1:6-7 and Job 2:1-7 seem to imply that satan could come before and go from the presence of G-d. This verse seems to imply that this will no longer be the case. satan will no longer be able to accuse the believers (day and night – Revelation 12:10).

**Verse 9:** *"And the great dragon, the serpent of old, who is called the accuser and satan, was cast down, the one who deceives the whole world. He was cast to the earth and his angels were cast down with him."*

satan has been a deceiver and an *accuser* right from the beginning of human existence (Genesis 3).

**Verse 10:** *"I heard a great voice in the heavens, and it said: 'Now has come the salvation of our G-d and the power of His kingdom and the authority of His Messiah. For the one who accused our brothers has been cast down, the one who accused them before our G-d day and night."*

**Verse 11:** *"For they overcame on account of the blood of the Lamb and on account of the word of their testimony. For they did not love their lives unto death."*

*Overcoming* relates to victory.

*The blood of the Lamb* adds a Passover/redemptive context to this verse. The only way that we can share in this victory, over satan and his demonic angels, is through redemption that comes by the blood of the Lamb.

Having a 'testimony' is a very important part of the salvation experience.

Our testimony does not save us, but, having been saved, by the GRACE of G-d, that salvation is going to have an outcome in our lives, providing us with power so that we can have a testimony and therefore able to walk in victory (ie to display and manifest the glory of G-d).

*Unto death...* their emphasis was not on themselves. Their thoughts were not based upon life in this world; they had a sure confidence in the age to come. (1 Corinthians 15:19, see also Hebrews 10:39). They were Kingdom-minded. Their hope/life's direction/passion was on the establishment of the Kingdom and their behaviour reflected this.

**Verse 12:** *"Shout on account of this O heavens, and the ones who dwell there. Woe to the dwellers of the earth and in the sea - for the accuser has come down unto you with great wrath, for he knows that his time is short."*

There are two types of people alive on earth today and in the last days – those who dwell in heaven (Kingdom-minded) and those who dwell on earth (worldly mindset). Where they “dwell” has nothing to do with their position or physical location, but it has everything to do with their mindset (their heart location/what they are committed to and passionate about).

The usual expression talks only about those who dwell in the heavens and those who dwell in the earth. This is the first time we see a change in this expression. When a word is added or taken away from a familiar expression, it is a literary device that is informing us that we are being taught something new. Prophetically, according to scholars, the (roaring) sea (billowing waves) speaks of instability or chaos (2 Samuel 22:5, Psalm 65:7, Jeremiah 5:22). The inhabitants of *the sea* refer to an unstable people (James 1:6-8). Unstable people do not have the strength, wisdom or insight whereby they are able to behave in a way that would cause them to live victorious lives.

Israel fleeing into the wilderness has to do with the last days (Matthew 24:16-22, Daniel 9:27). The devil knows he has a very limited time left for his final fling and he will make every minute count.

**Verse 13:** *"And it came about, when the dragon saw that he had been cast down to the earth, that he persecuted the woman who gave birth to the male child."*

‘The woman’ is Israel. She gave ‘birth’ to the Messiah (Yeshua is this *male child*). Yeshua was a Jew. G-d is not ‘done’ with Israel. He has not replaced her or washed His hands of her. Israel (the people and the land) is still very much part of G-d’s plans and purposes.

*(He persecuted):* Israel is being attacked by satan. Although satan does not obey Scripture, he knows Scriptural truth, but he rebels against it. satan understands prophetically how key Israel is in the Kingdom being established. He could not destroy Yeshua the first time Yeshua came to earth, but he will do everything in his power to try to not get Messiah to return a second time. satan understands that if Israel does not get right with G-d, Messiah (according to His own words – Matthew 23:39) will not return and G-d’s plans and purposes would not be fulfilled. satan therefore persecutes Israel, but he will not prevail. G-d will triumph and His will will be done!

**Verse 14:** “And it was given to the woman two great wings of an eagle to fly to the wilderness, to her place, where she will be sustained for a time, times and a half time, away from the serpent.”

‘Flying’, prophetically, speaks of that which is supernatural. Exodus 19:4 places these eagles wings within the context of redemption. Israel is about ready to experience redemption through the blood of Messiah Yeshua!

*Sustained.* Nourished. Provided for. Looked after.

*Time, times and half a time:* John uses the same terminology that Daniel did, so that we can understand what time period this verse is referring to i.e. The last three and a half years of Daniel’s 70th week. (Daniel 7:25, Daniel 9:27, Daniel 12:7) That is: 1 year + 2 years + 0.5 years = 3.5 years, 1260 days, 3 years and six months.

**Verse 15:** “And the serpent cast a river of water from his mouth after the woman, to sweep her away in the river.”

**Verse 16:** “And the land helped the woman, for the land opened up its mouth and swallowed the river which the dragon had sent from his mouth.”

G-d’s desire is that, in the last days, the children of Israel return to the land of Israel (Jeremiah 30:3). Those who are living in the land of Israel, at the time of the end, will be those who are able to flee into this wilderness place where they will be supernaturally protected and nourished for a period of time (see Matthew 24:16-22). A remnant of Israel will be preserved and prepared for the second coming of Messiah – alive to see the One ‘whom they pierced’ (Zechariah 12:10), so that they can call on the name of the L-rd Yeshua and be saved. Then they will be able to say, “Blessed is He (Yeshua) who comes in the name of the L-rd” (Matthew 23:39). After this, the Kingdom of G-d can be established on earth.

**Verse 17:** “And the dragon became angry with the woman, and he went and made war with the rest of her descendants. The ones who keep the commandments of G-d, and to them that have the testimony of Messiah Yeshua.”

For the most part, John writes the book of Revelation in chronological order. However, at times, John, inspired by the Holy Spirit, pauses, goes back, and shares with us a new perspective. He does this so that we will have a fuller, more complete understanding of what has already been taught. This seems to be what is happening here. satan hates Israel and has always persecuted her. However, here we see satan attacking believers. It is undeniable that we are talking about believers at the end of this verse. Believers (the church, the body of Messiah) are also those who walk in obedience to the purposes/plans/will of G-d and who manifest the testimony of Yeshua.

The believing community is tied to Israel. In Romans 11:16-24, Paul speaks of an olive tree that has natural branches (a remnant of the Jewish people – ie those “branches” that have not been “broken off”), and branches that have been grafted into that same tree (i.e. the believing Gentiles).

Paul, in Romans 9:6, tells us that “they are not all Israel who are of Israel”. This means that not every Jewish is going to be part of “Israel” (ie the family of G-d/the Kingdom people).

The Kingdom of G-d is going to be made up of a remnant of the natural descendants of Jacob (Jewish people) and a remnant of Gentiles who have believed in Messiah Yeshua as their Saviour and L-rd.

## Chapter 13

This chapter goes back and gives us a brief, but very clear, overview (a review) of what's going to happen in the last days. It gives us another perspective of what is going to happen between the Beast empire and the believing community (the church).

**Verse 1:** *"As I stood upon the seashore, I saw a beast coming up from the sea. And to it were seven heads and ten horns, and upon the horns ten crowns. And upon its heads were blasphemous names."*

John is receiving this vision from G-d. He stood on the seashore so that he was able to gaze upon the sea (this concept of the “sea” was introduced to us in Revelation 12:12). The sea is always moving. It is not consistent. What we can glean from this is “instability”.

In the last days, an empire (*beast*) is going to rise up because of instability in the world. The “heads”, that are linked to this beast empire, refer to seven, distinct, satanically inspired empires who all rule at certain times within history. These empires all serve the purposes of satan. These empires, which manifest themselves in different times, are:

1. Egypt
2. Assyria
3. Babylon
4. Medes and Persians
5. Greece
6. Rome
7. A final/seventh empire. This final empire, from Daniel's standpoint, is the most unique empire and the hardest one to understand. Daniel was carted into exile by the Babylonians. Four empires/beasts were prophesised to rise up after the time of Daniel (Daniel 7:3). From Daniel's perspective, the first beast refers to the Medes and Persians. The second beast refers to the Greek empire. The third beast refers to the Roman empire. The final/fourth beast refers to the final/seventh empire that will rise up. To Daniel, this was the most unique empire, difficult to understand and terrifying

– Daniel 7:7-28]

*Ten horns...ten crowns:* This refers to 10 FINAL kings (Revelation 17:12). These all rule and reign (together) for a very short period of time (during the final empire – which is the seventh empire, but also considered, for a VERY brief period of time, to be the eighth empire – Revelation 17:11). They all pledge their allegiance and give their power to the antichrist (beast).

*A blasphemous name:* This final kingdom (the antichrist kingdom) is going to be blasphemous by nature. This means that it is a kingdom that shows great disrespect, contempt, or a lack of reverence for G-d, for religion, or for anything considered sacred or holy. “Blasphemous” can describe profane language, irreverent behaviour, or actions and statements that are considered offensive to deeply held religious beliefs (Revelation 13:5, Daniel 7:8, 11, 25).

**Verse 2:** “*And the beast, which I saw, had an appearance like a leopard. Its feet were like the feet of a bear, and its mouth as a mouth of a lion. And the dragon gave to it its power, its throne and great authority.*”

This final beast (the one that rises up, in the end, due to instability) is a composite of the three beasts (empires) that Daniel saw in Daniel 7:4-6. This final (last) empire will have some elements in it that will be reminiscent of the Roman empire, some elements will resemble the Grecian empire and some of it will resemble parts of the Median/Persian empire. It is interesting to note that John reverses the order of these animals. Daniel was looking ahead to these empires (they were yet future from Daniel’s perspective); therefore he saw them as lion (Medes/Persians), bear (Greek) and leopard (Roman). John, on the other hand, was looking back over these empires – he was living during the time of the Roman empire (the leopard), so the Greek empire (the bear) and the Medes/Persian empire (the lion) were already past. John is writing about the very same thing that Daniel wrote about in his prophecy. John, however, is just writing from a different historical vantage point.

*The dragon, satan, gives his power, authority and rulership to the Antichrist. All of the seven empires have been antichrist and satanic in origin – however, the final empire, and its Antichrist leader, is going to manifest satan in an overwhelming way. satan tried to tempt Yeshua by offering Him power, authority and rulership (Matthew 4:8-10). Yeshua refused. The final world leader will take satan up on this offer. satan is going to manifest himself in the greatest way in the last days – even doing signs and wonders to deceive many (Revelation 13:13-15).*

**Verse 3:** “*I looked and behold one of its heads was wounded with a mortal wound. And the mortal wound which it had was healed. And all the earth was amazed, and it followed after the beast.*”

*A mortal wound* is fatal, ie the person cannot recover from this wound and WILL die. The 7th head (empire) is wounded and should die but, miraculously, lives – resurrection language is being used here (Resurrection reminds us of Yeshua). He will go into the Holy of holies and proclaim himself to be G-d (Who Messiah is).

This last empire is going to be a supernatural one. Because of supernatural power the world (those who do not see things from G-d’s perspective as they are not in a covenantal relationship with Him) is going to be deceived (Matthew 24:24). In the last days G-d is going to send strong delusion to those who have delighted in wickedness and refused to love truth (2 Thessalonians 2:9-12) Only those people who have a covenantal relationship with G-d, and who follow after truth, will not be deceived (Mark 13:22-23).

**Verse 4:** “*They are going to bow down to the dragon, which gave a government to the beast, and they worshipped the beast. And they said: ‘Who is like the beast, and who is able to war with it?’*”

In the last days, the worship of satan (and his leader – i.e. the Antichrist) will be chief among the world religions.

The supernatural power that satan displays in the last days will lead people to draw the wrong conclusion. They are led to believe that because something is supernatural (the miraculous healing of the beast) then it must be a “G-d -thing”. Those who are unaware of what the Scripture says and are unprepared for the last days are going to be easily deceived by the enemy. If we know the Scripture, and if we know in advance that this is what IS going to happen, then we are NOT going to be deceived when this comes about. Signs and wonders are like road signs. They point to someone, and that someone may not always be G-d. We need to be aware of this.

*Who is able to war with it?:* See Daniel 8:7-12. This Antichrist figure will be so great (supernatural power, authority and rulership are given to him), and his army will be so vast, that the world will be helpless to fight/wage war against him. In the eyes of the world, he will appear unconquerable. However, what we as believers need to remember through this time is that we have the L-rd of lords and the King of kings on our side. Our struggle is not against flesh and blood. We do not need to be overwhelmed by this end time satanic display of power, authority and rulership. As those who are IN Messiah, we have access to spiritual weapons, which in turn are able to put out, extinguish and destroy the fiery darts of satan (Ephesians 6:11-18). Those who are anointed with the truth and the power of G-d will be able to stand victoriously in this evil day (Ephesians 6:13). Even if we are consumed physically, this is not considered our defeat (Yeshua was physically consumed – He died – but His death was His preparation for resurrection, for victory!).

**Verse 5:** *“And it was given to him a great mouth to speak blasphemies. And authority was given to him to make war for 42 months”*

Daniels 70th week is made up of a seven-year period. (Daniel 9:27) These seven years are split in half – each half 3.5 years, 42 months or 1260 days.

**Verse 6:** *“And he opened up his mouth to blaspheme against G-d. To blaspheme His name, and His tabernacle, and the ones dwelling in heaven.*

The Antichrist blasphemes G-d’s reputation and character. He blasphemes the worship of G-d. He blasphemes those who are committed to the Kingdom of G-d (believers. This is not speaking about a physical/current position but about a perspective – Ephesians 2:6). What G-d sees as good this empire will see as evil. What G-d sees as evil this empire will see as good.

**Verse 7:** *“And it was given to him to make war with the saints and to overcome them. And it was given to him to rule over all the families of the earth, over every language and over every people”*

This verse is SO important in having a right understanding of Revelation. The Antichrist is allowed/given authority to war against the believers – the followers of Messiah Yeshua – and he is allowed to defeat them – ie allowed to put them to death (Luke 21:16-19). Even if our physical lives are taken from us, this is not counted as defeat. Flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of G-d (1 Corinthians 15:50). We should not be people who are consumed with the well-being of our flesh.

Instead, we should be those who are concerned with the well-being of our souls. Our physical bodies may be overcome (ie die), but satan, if we are IN Messiah, cannot touch our spiritual future.

*This final empire will rule as a one world government (rule over all the families of the earth, over every language and over every people).*

**Verse 8:** *"And all who dwell upon the earth they are going to worship the beast, all whose names are not written in the book of life, which is of the Lamb, that was slain from before the foundations of the earth."*

*All who dwell upon the earth* refers to those who have a worldly/earthly mindset. This is referring to those who have not “set their hearts on things above” but have their hearts set on “things below” (Colossians 3:2). Those who “dwell on the earth” are those who have pledged their allegiance to the things of this world.

Those whose *names are not been written in the Book of Life of the Lamb* are those who do not have a personal relationship with this sacrificial Lamb – Messiah Yeshua. Those who have been redeemed by the blood of the Lamb are those who are supposed to have the mind of Messiah (1 Corinthians 2:16) – those who have their minds set on things above. If we are living in the end times, and if we do indeed have the mind of Messiah, we are going to recognise the deceitful methodology of the Antichrist and we will NOT bow down to worship him.

**Verse 9:** *"All who have an ear, let him hear."*

This is a phrase that was repeated at the end of each of the letters to each of the seven congregations in Asia Minor (chapter 2 and 3). This is a literary device where John is communicating to us that he is talking, here, to the believing community (i.e. the church).

**Verse 10:** *"All who lead into captivity will go into captivity. All who kill with the sword, with the sword he shall be killed. With this is the patience (endurance) and the faith of the saints."*

In the last days, unbelieving Israel is going to flee into the wilderness (Matthew 24:16). G-d is going to sustain the Jews there in order to bring them to faith. To flee is not G-d’s message to the church (Matthew 24:9). We, as believers, are called to stand strong (Luke 21:19). Believers are called to endure, not to flee. At the end, before the rapture, many in the church are going to go into captivity. Many in the church are going to be martyred (“killed with the sword”) – see also Revelation 6:9-11.

A *saint* is one who is sanctified and set apart for a purpose. We need to be willing to die for our faith. (Matthew 24:9-14 – Believers are going to be persecuted because of the name of Messiah). We need to be people who stand firm/strong in our faith – no matter what, we have been called to endure hard times (Matthew 10:28)

**Verse 11:** *"I looked, and another beast was coming up from the land. He had two horns like the horns of a lamb, but it speaks as a dragon."*

After a time of great instability/chaos in the earth (wars, famines, financial/economic ruin, etc), people are going to be desperate. The governments, at that time, will not have the answers. Suddenly, what appears to be a stable new government is going to rise up ("another beast"). In the short term it seems to do what is good – stabilising the people and the economy, etc. However, the Antichrist is going to rise up, and be manifested (as a leader), from within the ranks of this government. The character of the Antichrist is going to characterise this empire. The Antichrist appears to be innocent and harmless (like a *lamb*), but the words that he speaks will not be the words of G-d, but will be the words of the *dragon*, satan.

**Verse 12:** *"And he is going to exercise all the authority of the first beast that was before it. And it brings the earth, and those who dwell upon it, to worship the first beast whose mortal blow was healed."*

The Antichrist will take a leadership position over this 7<sup>th</sup> and final empire (which, for a brief period of time, will be called the 8<sup>th</sup> empire). The *mortal blow* is referring to an empire that the world thought was totally destroyed (the *first beast*), but it is going to manifest itself again. This empire was one that was disastrous, wicked and one that the world did not want. The world is going to stand amazed as it revives itself and they will feel helpless against it. It has supernatural power and so the world will follow after it, submit to it and worship it.

If we live to the end of this age, there will be no sitting on the fence. Everyone worships someone. We are either going to worship the Lamb of G-d, or we are going to worship the false lamb (the Antichrist). There is no position in between. (False) Worship is key to this empire.

**Verse 13:** *"And to this beast it was given to him to do great signs, even for fire to come down from the heavens towards the earth, before the eyes of all the people."*

G-d allows strong delusion, in the end, for those who refuse to believe in Him (2 Thessalonians 2:11). Satan (the father of lies), through the Antichrist, is going to do counterfeit presentations of supernatural thing in order to draw people away from G-d and to himself. satan's works are going to confirm his unrighteousness. G-d's works are going to confirm His righteousness.

**Verse 14:** *"He is going to deceive those who dwell upon the earth by means of these signs, which were given to it to do before the beast. And it says to the ones who dwell upon the earth to make an image to the beast who was struck with the blow of the sword but lives".*

The Antichrist demands a response from the people. Biblically, it is forbidden for us to make idols (Exodus 20:4-6). Making an image is a pledge of loyalty. There will only be two ways to live – loyal to Messiah or forced to be loyal to the Antichrist, the false Messiah. Loyalty to the Antichrist will lead to a transgression of the basic things in the laws of G-d.

*(Wounded) Struck...but lives:* This alludes to resurrection – going from death to life.

**Verse 15:** *"And it was given to him to put life into this image, that it might live and that it might speak. And he shall make all who will not worship the image of the beast to be killed."*

We are either going to follow the commandments of the Antichrist and be idol worshippers, or we are going to follow the commandments of Messiah Yeshua. These are the only two “options” that we have. The issue here is worship. Who are we going to choose to worship and bow down to? Initially the Antichrist empire will have a very pluralistic attitude towards worship. Every man will be able to worship whomever he wants to worship. But soon after the Antichrist comes into power, he will outlaw all other forms of worship and demand to be solely worshipped. Many of those who refuse to worship the Antichrist will be put to death.

**Verse 16:** *"And it shall cause all of them, both small and great, rich and poor, free and slave, to take the mark on their right hand or on their forehead."*

satan always does the exact opposite of what G-d wants. The hand and the forehead were reserved by G-d for a very special purpose (Exodus 13:16). The placement of the tefillin (phylacteries) on the arm and forehead served as a physical symbol of the commandment to bind G-d's law to one's heart and mind (Deuteronomy 11:18-23), thus integrating faith into both actions (the arm/hand has to do with work) and thoughts (the forehead has to do with the mind/thought processes). satan desires to hijack the hand and the forehead (which are reserved for G-d) and he commands that his mark should be placed there instead. satan wants people to think of, and do, his will.

**Verse 17:** *"For no man will be able to buy or to sell, only the one upon him is the mark of the beast, or its number, or the number of its name."*

Those who are extremely wealthy will not be able to access their financial resources unless they take the mark/name/number of the beast on their arm or forehead. Their wealth will not help them in this day if they disobey this commandment of the Antichrist. There is coming a time when the true believers have to completely depend on G-d for ALL things. G-d is trustworthy and is able to sustain us through this time.

**Verse 18:** *"Here is the mind that is wise: to him who there is understanding. Let him calculate the number of the beast. For the number is 666."*

When these things begin to happen, at the end, those who have wisdom will be able to discern the significance of this number and who it points to (as it points to a man).

## Chapter 14

After the revealing of the Antichrist, the Church Age will end with the Rapture (2 Thessalonians 2:1-5) We see, in this chapter, a review of the Rapture (v1-5), information about G-d's wrath (v6-13) and the 2nd Coming of Yeshua (v14-20).

**In chapter 7 we viewed the 144 000 sealed tribes as relating to the people of Israel** in a general sense. These are the Jewish people who are alive on earth throughout the final seven-year period. The seal of G-d, placed on their foreheads, preserves them through this time. The emphasis in chapter 7 is on the seal. There was no mention of the Lamb or Mt Zion in relation to this 144 000. These ones, in Revelation 7, are called "the servants of our G-d" and are specifically spoken of as being (a remnant) from the tribes of Israel – Isaiah 10:20-22 – who are going to be preserved for the Kingdom of G-d.

Two new songs are mentioned in this book: The song of Moses (who is also called "the servant of G-d") and the song of the Lamb (Messiah Yeshua) – Revelation 15:3. It is possible that these are a hermeneutical clue that can help us to understand and interpret things correctly. If the 144 000 spoke of in Revelation 7 are a remnant from the tribes of Israel (hence the use of the "servants of G-d", linked to Moses – a Jewish man – in Revelation 15:3), it is also possible that the 144 000 mentioned here (Revelation 14) are a different group of people – a remnant (predominantly from the nations) according to the election of grace (Romans 11:5-6) – i.e this 144 000 refers to those who have believed in Messiah Yeshua – the Lamb. These are the ones who "sing the song of the Lamb". It is possible that this number [12 x 12 x 1000 – the 12 tribes (Israel) x 12 disciples (believers) x 1000, which is the number of completion – i.e. the full number, see Revelation 6:11, Romans 11:25-26) represents a **remnant** of the people/children of G-d (Jew and Gentile) and not an actual 144 000 people.

**In Chapter 14** the focus is on the 144 000 who are called "First fruits to G-d and the Lamb" (i.e. **This 144 000 speaks, collectively, of the Church who is going to be raptured** - Jews and Gentiles who have received the Gospel, prior to the Rapture). The emphasis on this 144 000 is the Lamb (Yeshua) and Mt Zion. This 144 000 should not be thought of as the First Fruits of the House of Israel.

**Verse 1:** *"I looked and behold a Lamb, standing upon Mt. Zion. And with Him were 144 000 carrying His name, and the name of His Father, written upon their foreheads."*

The word used here for 'Lamb' speaks of a specific lamb – the Passover Lamb; the lamb that alludes to the redemption of G-d's people.

*One hundred and forty-four thousand:* This number is used in two different places in order to teach us a very important truth. In Revelation 7:1-8 the people were sealed but there is no mention of Messiah or of Mount Zion. John seems to be referring, in this verse, to a different group of people (these ones who are "with Him" – with Messiah Yeshua). See comments made above. The final (True) Israel is made up of two groups of people: those who have come to faith in Messiah Yeshua (the fullness of the Gentiles) and the remnant of the Jewish people who are brought to faith in Messiah in the last days (see Romans 11:26-27).

**Verse 2:** “And I heard a voice from the heavens, as a voice of many waters and like the voice of a great thunder. And I heard the sound of those holding a harp and they were playing their harps.”

‘Many waters’ represent a great multitude of people who are from many nations, tribes and tongues (Revelation 17:15). Hermeneutically, this aids in suggesting to us that these are a different set of people to the 144 000 mentioned in Revelation 7. Those in Revelation 7 are specifically people from the tribe of Israel. This clue seems to suggest that these 144 000 seem to be (a remnant) of people from the nations (the people of G-d who believe in, confess and worship Messiah Yeshua as their L-rd and Saviour). These people are raising their voices to G-d; they are worshipping Him with their instruments. The context of this passage is worship.

**Verse 3:** “And they sung a new song before the throne, and before the four creatures, and before the elders. And no man was able to learn the song except the 144 000, for they were redeemed from the earth.”

Most scholars understand this *new song* as relating to the Gospel. It is only through redemption that we are able to worship G-d in the new way...in spirit and in truth (John 4:23-24).

*New* is related to the Kingdom – A new heaven, a new earth, a new song, etc (Isaiah 43:18-19). What we can glean from this is that the song, that they are singing, is a Kingdom song. *Before the throne* speaks of submissiveness. They acknowledge and submit to G-d’s rule. In this present age, this 144 000 (church) responded to G-d’s call of salvation and experienced redemption (גָּמְלָה)

These people were the only ones who could learn this song (it was unique to them). They were those who had responded to G-d’s call of salvation in this age (while they were still alive upon the earth) and they had responded in obedience to G-d’s authority and rule while still living on the earth.

**Verse 4:** “These were not defiled (גָּמְלָה) with women, but they are virgins and they walk after the Lamb wherever He should go. For these are the ones who were redeemed from the midst of man, the first fruits to G-d and to the Lamb.”

There is a play on words between redemption in verse 3 and defiled in verse 4. The Hebrew word for redemption and the Hebrew word for defilement are written very similarly. It shows us how close truth and error are. Turning a little bit one way leads to redemption, turning a little bit the other way leads to defilement.

When the prophets spoke about defilement they were speaking of idolatry. (e.g. In Hosea, the adultery of his wife was a picture of Israel’s idolatry before G-d). When it speaks of the purity of this 144 000 it simply means that they did not commit spiritual fornication/adultery i.e. idolatry. It does not necessarily mean that these are virginal men. In other words, these 144 000 worshipped G-d rightly. They did not fall into an idolatrous lifestyle.

Virgins also speak of faithfulness. *First fruits* has to do with resurrection (1 Corinthians 15:20). These people have had a resurrection experience – they identified with the Lamb who was slain. (2 Timothy 2:11, Romans 6:5-10 - This speaks of a body of believers/the Church.)

**Verse 5:** *"And there was no deceit found in their mouth, for they are pure before the throne of G-d."*

As already mentioned, the 144 000, spoken of in Revelation 7, refer to an Old Testament people (Jewish people) that will come into the Kingdom. They are preserved from the wrath of God and are sealed for salvation, which is through Messiah Yeshua. Chapter 14 speaks of a New Testament people who have faith in the Lamb. They have been redeemed and submit to the authority of G-d's rule.

**Verse 6:** *"I looked and there was another angel flying in the heights of heaven. And it was given to him that he might proclaim the Everlasting Gospel to those who dwell upon the earth. To every nation, to every family to every language and every people."*

To proclaim the *Everlasting Gospel* was this angel's assignment. Why is this verse placed at this specific location in Revelation? In Revelation 13 we saw an empire rise out of chaos (the "sea") as well as the rise of the Antichrist empire (the beast from the earth). We read about the beast persecuting and killing those who did not worship him (i.e. believers) and who did not take his mark on their hands and foreheads. After those events, we read about the gospel being preached to all of those who dwell in the earth (Revelation 14). This chain of events parallels Matthew 24. In Matthew 24:3 we read about Yeshua answering His disciples' questions, in regard to the end times, while sitting on the Mount of Olives. This is a very strategic location. Yeshua is returning to the Mount of Olives when He comes again for His second coming (Zechariah 14:4). As Yeshua was sitting in this place, He began to answer their questions. Yeshua spoke to them about a time of chaos in the world (wars, famines, pestilence, earthquakes – Matthew 24:4-8). Yeshua then addressed the rise of false prophets, deception and martyrdom (Matthew 24:9-13). It is only AFTER all of these have happened that Yeshua spoke of the gospel of the Kingdom to be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations (Matthew 24:14). These two parallel passages seem to suggest that the gospel will only reach/be proclaimed in the outermost parts of the earth after a time of intense persecution and deception (of the church). Only after that time will the end come (the end of the church age, ie when the fullness of the Gentiles come in).

It is only when the Church age ("the time of the Gentiles") reaches its end/fullness, that the time of "Jacob's trouble" begins (see Daniel 12:1, Jeremiah 30:7).

*Every nation...family...language...and people* refers to all of humanity.

**Verse 7:** “And he said in a great voice: ‘Fear G-d and give glory to Him, for the time of His judgment has come. Worship the One who made the heavens, and the earth, and the sea and the springs of water.’”

After persecution, and the gospel being proclaimed to the ends of the earth, the church will be raptured. After the rapture has taken place, G-d’s wrath/judgment is going to fall on the people left on this earth. Those who have believed in Messiah Yeshua do not experience this wrath of G-d (1 Thessalonians 5:9).

Water, in the Scripture, is synonymous with life. G-d is the One who is the source of eternal life. He is the only One worthy to be worshipped.

**Verse 8:** “Another angel came after him, and said: ‘Fallen, fallen is Babylon, that great city, for she caused the nations to drink from the wine of the wrath of her fornication.’”

In the time of John (despite having occurred hundreds of years before the time of John), the Babylonian empire was viewed as an empire that had greatly oppressed the Jewish people. Babylon was a significant time in Israel's history. The first redemption took place out of Egypt, but another redemption took place from Babylon (where the people had lived in exile for 70 years – as seen at the end of Daniel's life). It was the Babylonians who had destroyed the first temple (the destruction of the second temple was due to the Roman empire and probably happened near the end of John's life). Babylon ‘falling’ is not good news for Babylon, but it is GREAT news for the people of G-d. It is the wrath/judgment of G-d that brings about the destruction of Babylon. The ‘wrath of her fornication’ is not talking about literal infidelity (adultery), but about spiritual infidelity (idolatry). Babylon is often referred to as an adulterous woman (a woman who leads the nations into idolatry/false worship). Idolatry brings about the jealousy/anger/vengeance of G-d

**Verse 9:** “And a third angel came after them, and he said in a great voice: ‘All who worship before the beast, and before the image, and all who have taken upon themselves the mark, upon their foreheads or upon their hands,’”

These ones who worship the beast, and who take his mark, are the ones who are going to experience the wrath of G-d. These ones give themselves over to improper worship – turning away from the truth of G-d to embrace a false doctrine. Regardless of our situations, in life, we need to remain faithful to worship G-d rightly.

**Verse 10:** “Also he shall drink the wine of the wrath of G-d, which is not diluted and is poured into the cup of His wrath. And he will be tormented with fire and with sulphur before the holy angels and before the Lamb.”

See Isaiah 66:23-24. The book of Revelation was given to us so that we would have a right understanding of Messiah Yeshua (Revelation 1:1). Yeshua is full of grace, mercy and love. He forgives those who believe in Him, those who confess and repent of their sins. However, Revelation reveals another aspect of Messiah Yeshua to us – a Lamb who, with wrath, judges those who reject His free gift of salvation/redemption (Revelation 6:16).

**Verse 11:** “And the smoke of their torment went up forever. They did not find rest, day or night, for the ones who worshipped the beast and the image, and who took the mark of his name. ”

False worship leads to eternal torment.

**Verse 12:** “With this is the patience/endurance/perseverance of the saints, the ones who keep the commandments of G-d and the faith of Yeshua.”

A human being can only ever be in one of two positions – either we worship G-d, or we worship that which is false. Those who choose to follow the systems of this world do not have to have lives characterised by patience. The world, and the lust of the flesh, feeds instant gratification (those in the world do what they do in order to feel good right now). On the contrary, the life of a believer is characterised by patience (Romans 8:25). We need to be a people who have hope – an expectation of a future in an eternal Kingdom. If we are a people who believe in the promises of G-d (His return and His Kingdom), then we are going to be a people who patiently preserve, a people who will not easily give in to the seduction (signs and wonders) of the Antichrist empire and system.

*Keep the commandments of G-d AND the faith of Yeshua:* Many Christians today believe that if they have faith in Messiah they can do away with the commandments. However, having faith in Messiah Yeshua causes us to submit to the commandments of G-d and delight in being obedient to Him. We are not saved by the commandments, however, having been saved, keeping the commandments are a fruit of salvation – they point to the fact that we are truly saved (the outcome of salvation is righteous behaviour). We have been saved to demonstrate the glory of G-d in our lives. The commandments of G-d are the parameters which teach us how to walk in the world in a worthy way. We are not worthy because of our deeds. We are worthy because of the grace of G-d. However, that grace of G-d teaches us to deny ungodliness and to live soberly and righteously in this present age.

**Verse 13:** “I heard a voice from the heavens speaking unto me: “Write, ‘Blessed are the ones who die in the L-rd (Messiah Yeshua) from now on’”. ‘Indeed’, says the Spirit, ‘For they will rest from their labours, and their deeds shall follow after them.’”

We need to take the gospel to all people so that they too can have the opportunity to die IN the L-rd and to be blessed (can also be translated ‘happy’). When we serve G-d, our faithfulness is going to follow after us into the next age, into life after death, i.e. into the Kingdom. We cannot take our possessions etc with us into the age to come, but we can take our works (those which are done IN Messiah).

**Verse 14:** “I looked, and behold a white cloud. And upon the white cloud sat One ‘like the Son of Man (Messiah Yeshua)’. Upon His head was a golden crown, and in His hand was a sharp sickle.”

This verse references the Second Coming of Messiah Yeshua (see also 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17). A *golden crown* speaks of authority and rulership.

**Verse 15:** “And another angel went forth from the Temple, And he cried with a great voice, to the One who sits upon the cloud, saying: ‘Send forth your sickle and harvest; for the time has come for you to harvest. For dry/ready is the harvest of the earth.’”

This is not talking about the temple which will be in Jerusalem. This is talking about the one in the heavens. The One who sits on the clouds is Messiah Yeshua.

**Verse 16:** “And the One who sits upon the cloud sent forth His sickle into the earth, and the earth was harvested.”

This is an image of Messiah taking His covenant people (believers) out of this world – our blessed hope/rapture – like a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats (Matthew 25:31-33). After the rapture of the saints, the judgment of the Lord falls on the earth.

**Verse 17:** “And another angel (of a different type) came forth from the Temple, which is in the heavens, and to him was given also a sharp sickle that was in his hand.”

**Verse 18:** “And another angel went forth from the altar. He had the power over fire, and he called in a great voice, to the one who in his hand had the sharp sickle, saying: ‘Send forth your sharp sickle and reap the vine of the earth. For ripe are their grapes.’”

An *altar* refers to sacrifice (death - the judgment of God for sin - takes place on an altar).

God, after the Flood, promised to never again destroy this world with water. God did NOT promise to never again destroy the earth. He simply promised that it would not happen with water. When God destroys the world, for the second time, it will be with fire (see also 2 Peter 3:10-12). Fire, Biblically, speaks of that which refines and purifies. A fire removes impurities. There is a relationship between fire and the wrath of God.

Wine (which is made from ‘grapes’) is related to joy in the Scripture, but it is also related to the wrath/judgment of God. God’s judgment (dealing with sin – all evil and wickedness in this world - in a radical way) leads to His people experiencing great joy. God’s judgment on His enemies results in vindication for His people.

**Verse 19:** “And the angel thrusted his sickle into the earth, and he gathered the cluster of the vine of the earth. And he cast them into the vat of the great winepress of the wrath of God.”

**Verse 20:** “And the winepress was trodden upon outside the city. And blood, from this winepress, went out until the bridle of horses, for 1600 stadiums.”

See Isaiah 63:1-6

The judgment of God takes place *outside the city* (Matthew 22:13, Luke 13:28, Revelation 22:15). The ‘city’ refers to Jerusalem. The battle of Armageddon takes place in Megiddo – a place outside of Jerusalem (Revelation 16:16). What we need to be aware of is that, particularly in the last days, there is a battle for Jerusalem (A long held belief is that “He who controls Jerusalem – the city where God has caused His name to dwell - controls the world”).

Jerusalem is called “The city of our G-d” (Psalm 48:1-2). The battle for Jerusalem is ultimately a battle in regard to worship. The Antichrist desires to control Jerusalem as he thinks that he, then, will be the one who is worshipped (Matthew 4:8-10).

1600 stadiums is about 180 miles

## Chapter 15

G-d, being holy, has to deal with sin. He does so in two ways – through redemption (eternal life) or through (eternal) death (Romans 6:22-23).

**Verse 1:** *"And I looked and saw another sign in the heavens, great and marvellous: seven angels carrying the seven final plagues, for in these is the end of the wrath of G-d."*

Why does G-d use these words, 'great' and 'marvellous' (which can also be translated 'wonderful') when talking about His judgment? It is after G-d's judgment is poured out that His Kingdom will be established. G-d's judgment brings about a glorious, a marvellous, a wonderful, outcome.

*Seven* is a number that speaks, Biblically, of being set apart for a purpose. It is a number that also has to do with holiness. These seven angels are going to pour out these final plagues so that G-d's holiness, His purposes, can be manifested.

The word 'plagues' reminds us of Egypt. G-d poured out plagues on Egypt (symbolic of the world) before He redeemed His people. There is a relationship between these seven final plagues and the plagues in Egypt – i.e. redemption, G-d releasing His people from bondage and taking them to the Promised Land. The 'end of G-d's wrath' is good news! (For we who believe, the wrath of G-d toward us was satisfied in Messiah Yeshua - Romans 5:9. For those who do NOT believe, the wrath of G-d is satisfied, or made complete, through judgment). It is important to note that this wrath is completed for this dispensation (the age we are living in now). We are going to see another outpouring of G-d's consuming judgment as the millennial Kingdom reaches its end (Revelation 20:9).

**Verse 2:** *"I saw a sea of glass mixed with fire and the ones who were victorious over the beast and its image and the number of his name, standing upon the sea of glass. They had the harps of G-d in their hands."*

The *sea* used here is very different to the sea that spoke of instability (Revelation 12:12) It is not a sea of water, but is *a sea of glass mixed with fire* (fire is related to how glass is produced). The fire brought about a sea of stability. The people who are standing on this sea of glass are victorious. They have overcome the instability and those things which gave rise to the Antichrist empire. The *harps* are synonymous with praising and worshipping G-d. These people are worshiping G-d because He has brought an end to instability (wickedness and evil) and because He helped them to overcome.

**Verse 3:** *"And they sang the song of Moses, the servant of G-d, and the song of the Lamb saying: 'Great are Your works and marvellous, L-rd G-d of hosts. For righteous and true are your ways, O King of the saints."*

In Revelation 14:3 we were told these ones who had harps sang a 'new song'. This verse gives us a little more information as to this 'new song'. Moses is associated with the commandments of G-d. Here the Bible is hinting to the fact that there is no conflict between the teachings of Moses and the teachings of Messiah – His work of salvation.

The commandments outline truth, holiness, righteous, the things which are pleasing to G-d. However, it is only through the work of Messiah (i.e. *the Lamb* – who is synonymous with redemption) that we can be put into a position whereby the truths/the commandments/the teachings of *Moses* can be realized in our lives. Malachi, in Malachi 4:4-6, warns us to remember the law of Moses and to get ready because redemption is near. John is not teaching something new when he pairs the commandments with redemption.

The word ‘*saints*’ should remind us of two Biblical truths. Firstly, a saint refers to one who has been made holy. Those who have been justified (through the blood of Messiah) are holy. Through justification we are declared holy before G-d. Another aspect of holiness is that it means to be set apart/called for a purpose. As the people of G-d we are supposed to live according to the purposes of G-d.

**Verse 4:** *“For who will not fear You O L-rd? And who will not give honour to Your name? For holy are You alone. All the nations shall come and worship You, for Your righteous judgements are revealed.”*

*Name* is synonymous with character. Scripture reflects the character of G-d. Orthodox rabbis say that the character of G-d is manifested in the commandments of G-d. If G-d became a man (which He did – the character of G-d is seen in the character of Messiah) how would He live? He would be obedient to the law (Matthew 5:17-20, 1 John 3:4-5, John 19:6, John 14:21, 2 Corinthians 5:21).

*All the nations shall come and worship You:* This does not mean that everyone is going to be saved. Every knee (saved and unsaved) will bow, and every tongue will confess that Yeshua is L-rd (Philippians 2:10-11). Unbelievers are going to respond to G-d. However, believing and confessing that He is King of kings and L-rd of lords after their death will have no merit for them.

**Verse 5:** *“After these things I looked, and behold the Temple, of the Tabernacle of the Testimony, in the heavens was opened up.”*

*The Tabernacle of the Testimony* is very reminiscent of the ark of the Covenant – which is also called ‘the ark of the Testimony’ (Exodus 25:16). The tabernacle that Moses was instructed to build was designed according to the Heavenly tabernacle (Exodus 25:40, Hebrews 8:5). The tabernacle in heaven is the authentic/genuine/real deal. The earthly tabernacle is the copy. Three things were placed into the ark of the Covenant: the ten commandments (the greatest two commandments being to love G-d and to love others - on which all 633 commandments hang, Matthew 22:36-40), Aaron’s budding staff and a jar of manna.

*Opened:* They became visible.

**Verse 6:** *"And they went out from the Temple the seven angels, the ones carrying the seven plagues. They were dressed in linen, pure and bright, and their chests were girded with golden bands."*

These are the final seven plagues (Revelation 15:1). They contain the full measure of G-d's wrath. There is a connection between G-d's wrath (His judgment) and His commandments. The basis for His judgment is the violation of His commandments. As believers, the righteous requirements of the law were fulfilled for us by Yeshua (Romans 8:2-4). However, an unbeliever, who has not accepted the gospel message, is going to be judged for every violation of the law of G-d.

*Dressed...girded:* They have been prepared to do the work that they are required to do. They have been sanctified (purified) for a purpose.

**Verse 7:** *"And one of the four creatures gave to the seven angels seven golden bowls, full of the wrath of G-d, who lives forever."*

One of the four living creatures (there are four in heaven who are continually praising G-d) gave each of the seven angels a golden bowl. Each bowl contained a full measure of G-d's wrath. At G-d's request, each angel poured their bowl of wrath upon the earth, releasing G-d's unique and supernatural judgments upon the earth. G-d is holy. This means that He HAS to judge sin. G-d is not hateful. He does not delight in the death of individuals. However, the people on earth are unwilling to repent and turn from their sin. G-d, therefore, has to deal with their sin.

*Lives forever:* G-d is eternal. This means that He transcends/is over everything (time, space, etc).

**Verse 8:** *"And The Sanctuary was filled with smoke from the Glory of G-d and His power. No man was able to enter into the Sanctuary until the seven plagues were finished, which are in the hands of the seven angels."*

In this passage there is an inherent relationship between G-d's judgment (His wrath) and His glory. G-d's wrath and His glory are not incompatible, as some people think. G-d's judgment, of that which is unholy, manifests His holiness/glory in this world. This is very reminiscent of 2 Chronicles 7:1-3. After G-d had consumed the burnt offering (the bull or the lamb that had had our sin placed upon it and so, therefore, seen as sinful in G-d's eyes), His glory fell.

*No man was able to enter into the Sanctuary:* 2 Chronicles 7:2. G-d alone did the work. No man could go into the first temple while G-d was consuming the sacrifice for sin and, at the same time, displaying His glory. No man did the work of redemption, save Messiah alone (We, all, have sinned. G-d's wrath should have fallen on us. However, like as onto a lamb, our sins were placed on Yeshua. He in turn had to face the wrath and judgment of G-d - Romans 5:9. Through His death on the cross, and subsequent resurrection, G-d the Father was glorified – John 13:31-32). So, too, in the last days. G-d, ALONE, will work out salvation for Himself – Isaiah 63:5.

He alone will pour out His wrath – on all that is left in this world, a burnt offering (every single aspect of sin is going to be consumed – only that which is in agreement with G-d's plans and purposes will remain) – and, as He does so, His glory (like it filled the temple) will fill this earth (Habakkuk 2:14). Nothing can stop this judgment from coming and from being poured out in its entirety. G-d is not going to change His mind.

## Chapter 16

Scripture tells us that all matters of judgment have been given, by the Father, to the Son (John 5:22). We need to understand that these bowl judgments (the full measure of G-d's wrath) are overseen by Messiah Himself.

Gentile, in the New Testament usage, is not referring to how we think of the word Gentile or non-Jew today. What it is referring to is one who has no (new) covenantal relationship with G-d – the covenant that is established by the gospel. Those who will be the recipients of these final plagues are individuals who have rejected the gospel (which was proclaimed to the ends of the earth BEFORE G-d's judgment came (Revelation 14:6-7).

**Verse 1:** *"I heard a great voice from the Sanctuary saying to the seven angels: 'Go and pour out your bowls of the wrath of G-d towards the earth.'"*

*The Sanctuary* refers to the temple in the heavens. This tells us that G-d is in control. We are still seeing the outcome of His righteous judgment based upon the truth of His commandments.

*Earth* refers to the whole world. Israel is going to go through this time of G-d's wrath, but they are sealed/protected through it (just like they were in Egypt – Exodus 9:4, 6, 26, etc). Israel is not sealed because they are better than other people. They are sealed because G-d has a plan to use them to draw others to Himself. In Egypt, many saw the distinction G-d made between His people and Pharaoh's people. Therefore, many people moved away from Pharaoh in order to join with G-d's covenant people (leading to a 'mixed multitude' – Jew and Gentile - leaving Egypt – Exodus 12:38).

**Verse 2:** *"And the first one went, and he poured out his bowl upon the earth. And there came about painful and loathsome boils upon those people, who had upon them the mark of the beast and who worshipped the image."*

The (Jewish) people who have been sealed with the mark of the living G-d (Revelation 7:2-3) are excluded from receiving these foul (painful) and loathsome sores (new covenant believers will not be on earth at this time – we would have already been raptured, as we do not partake of the wrath of G-d – 1 Thessalonians 5:9).

**Verse 3:** *"And the second one poured out his bowl upon the sea; and it became blood as the blood of a dead man. And all the living creatures in the sea died."*

There are two different types of blood in the Bible. There is blood that has life in it – a blood that redeems (i.e. Messiah's blood which cleanses everything it comes into contact with) – and there is blood that is dead (i.e. it is unclean and does not justify. This blood pollutes everything it comes into contact with).

**Verse 4:** “And the third one poured out his bowl upon the rivers and the springs of water; and they became blood.”

The message being conveyed here is that the source of life (depicted by water) is being removed from the people – their opportunity to repent is coming to an end.

**Verse 5:** “And I heard the angel of the water saying: ‘Righteous are You, O L-rd. The One who is and was, and the Holy One. For thus You have judged.’”

G-d is the One who is bringing about this judgment.

**Verse 6:** “For the blood of the saints and the prophets they have poured out. This blood you have caused them to drink. For Your retribution of their blood is now.”

There is a connection between believers and prophets (prophecy). Believers are those who should understand prophetic revelation/be prophetically literate – especially in regard to the last days (Daniel 12:3,10). If we are not a prophetically literate people, we will be unprepared for what G-d will do in the last days. If we are unprepared, we will be ineffective in fulfilling the purposes of G-d in an end time generation.

G-d is bringing about retribution. He is bringing forth His punishment upon those who persecuted and martyred His people.

**Verse 7:** “And I heard another voice from the altar saying: ‘Indeed, the L-rd G-d Of Hosts, True and Righteous are Your judgments.’”

G-d’s judgments are based upon the truth of G-d. That is, because of His righteousness He punishes sin. In Deuteronomy 30:15-20 the L-rd sets before His people life and death, blessing or curse. He then instructs the people to choose one or the other. The people in Revelation, those who “dwell on the earth”, are experiencing the outcome of having chosen death i.e. the outcome of the curse. The origin of the curse comes from out of the law. This does NOT mean that the law is no good. The law has two components – it can be used to bless, or it can be used to curse. It all depends on the response of the people. Do we approach the Word of G-d in faith, or do we approach it with a rebellious spirit?

**Verse 8:** “And the fourth angel poured out his bowl upon the sun; and it was given to the sun to scorch men with fire.”

‘Scorch’ is a word that shows great intensity. G-d ‘turns up the heat’, so to speak.

**Verse 9:** “And they blasphemed the name of G-d, who has power over these plagues. They did not repent to give Him glory.”

*They blasphemed the name of G-d:* The people do not respond to G-d’s judgments in the right way. Instead of repenting, these people (who are being burnt alive with heat) are cursing G-d and refusing to submit to Him. The people are unwilling to humble themselves.

They are unwilling to plead with G-d (who is the only One who has the authority over all of these plagues) for mercy.

**Verse 10:** *"And the fifth angel poured out his bowl upon the throne of the beast. His kingdom became dark, and they gnawed their tongues from the pain."*

According to Rabbinical tradition, the worst and most fearful plague was the plague of darkness. This darkness was unique in that it could be physically felt (see Exodus 10:21). This darkness was so intense that people could not even stand up – it was as if they were frozen in place (Exodus 10:23). Some say that the darkness was so thick that no sound could penetrate it. No one could hear anyone else – intense isolation.

*They gnawed their tongues because of the pain:* This darkness was unique in that it also caused the people to feel intense pain.

**Verse 11:** *"And they blasphemed the G-d of the heaven because of their pain and their boils, and they did not turn from their deeds."*

*They blasphemed the G-d of heaven:* Again the people have the wrong response. They continue to be unrepentant, clinging, instead, to their evil deeds. This tells us something about the nature of those who are going to encounter G-d's eternal judgment. G-d gives them a brief taste of hell, but they refuse to turn to Him to find eternal life. They prefer to cling to the deeds that will lead them into eternal hell and eternal torment.

**Verse 12:** *"And the sixth angel poured out his bowl upon the great river Euphrates. And its waters were dried up in order to make a straight path for the kings from the East."*

This river, the *Euphrates*, originates in the mountains of eastern Turkey and flows through Turkey, Syria and Iraq before joining the Tigris River (which in turn then flows into the Persian Gulf). In relation to Israel, this river flows in the east. Biblically we know that judgment is depicted as coming from the east.

**Note:** Up until this time, the focus of Revelation has been about G-d's judgment upon all the nations of the world. However, beginning with this plague, there is a shift in movement toward Jerusalem. The land of Israel is particularly important to G-d. He has sanctified this land and has caused His name to dwell there. His Kingdom is going to be established in Israel and He is going to rule and reign over the nations of the world, for 1000 years, from Jerusalem.

*The kings from the East:* These kings play a very important role at the end of this age. They are coming to wage war against Jerusalem (which is a city synonymous with the worship of the true G-d) as they want to destroy her. These kings desire to thwart and hinder the purposes of G-d. They do not want His Kingdom to be established and so believe that if they can destroy Jerusalem they will be successful in their unrighteous and ungodly purposes.

**Verse 13:** *"And I looked and behold, from the mouth of the dragon, from the mouth of the beast and from the mouth of the false prophet, went forth three unclean spirits like frogs."*

Satan (*the dragon*) is the one who is leading these kings. *Frogs* are considered to be unclean animals. According to Jewish tradition there is a relationship between frogs and demons.

**Verse 14:** *"For demonic spirits are they. They make signs which go forth to the kings of the earth, and world, in order to gather them up for the war of that great day of the L-rd G-d of Hosts."*

Demonic power/influence is always for the purpose of deception. These demons are going to lead the kings to believe that they can conquer Jerusalem. These kings truly believe that they are going to be victorious – able to thwart and hinder the purposes of G-d from taking place. These evil spirits lead the kings of the world to gather together, in one place, against Israel.

**Verse 15:** *"Behold I am coming as a thief. Blessed is he who watches and keeps his garments, so that he will not walk naked and people see his nakedness."*

Messiah is coming as a thief for those who are unprepared (for those who have not experienced redemption and who continue to live in darkness – i.e. they are devoid of prophetic truth, they have not responded to the revelation of G-d). Paul tells us in 1 Thessalonians 5:4 that this Day will not come as a thief for those who believe in Messiah.

Yeshua used this term, '*watches*', in the Garden of Gethsemane (Matthew 24:40-41), moments before He went to the cross to lay down His life. The disciples were vehement in their denial that they would not deny Yeshua. Yet, in Yeshua's final hour, they could not watch, and they all fell asleep. Because they could not watch, even for one hour, they were disgraceful in their response to Messiah. At that moment of truth, they fled, denying Messiah – why? Because they were not diligent to watch.

*Keeps his garments:* Garments, Biblically, are related to good deeds (Revelation 19:8). Those who are obedient, i.e. they keep the commandments (loving G-d and loving others), will never walk in nakedness or shame.

**Verse 16:** *"For He will gather them to the place, which in Hebrew is called Armageddon."*

If the book of Revelation had been written in Hebrew there would have been no need for John to have told us the Hebrew name for this place. Revelation, however, was written in Greek. Hence John clarifies for us the Hebrew name of this place.

*Armageddon:* Megiddo. This term refers to a mountain of destruction or perishing. It is at this place (which is in the valley of Jezreel, in the lower part of the Galilee) that G-d is going to punish those who want to thwart His purposes. It is at this place that the battle of Gog and Magog (the final battle) is going to be fought. Messiah is going to make a mighty proclamation to the nations of the world at this place. They are going to realise how mighty G-d is.

**Verse 17:** *"And the seventh angel poured out his bowl in the air. And a great voice went forth from the sanctuary in the heavens, from the throne. And he said, "It is done".*

G-d's judgment/wrath is being poured out in order to prepare the way for His throne – which is going to be set up in the holy city of Jerusalem. *It is done* is reminiscent of the words Yeshua spoke on the cross in John 19:30 – G-d's work and wrath reach completion with this seventh bowl judgment.

**Verse 18:** *"And it came about voices (sounds,) and thunders and lightening's, and there was a great earthquake which has not been like it from the time that man was on earth. The earthquake was very great."*

This verse is reminiscent of Mount Sinai in Exodus 20:18-21. The people failed the test at Mt Sinai. Their desire was to keep G-d at an arm's length. They did not desire to know and hear G-d for themselves, but they asked Moses to be the mediator between them and G-d. Israel, at Mt Sinai, did not respond correctly to G-d's manifestation of Himself. Israel, those who are alive at the end, are given another opportunity - like as to the one that ancient Israel faced at Mt Sinai. Israel, at this time, are not going to fail. They are going to respond to G-d in obedience and act in faith (Zechariah 12:10, Zechariah 13:1-2).

Every time an earthquake happens in the Bible it shows us that this has worldwide implications attached to it. This is a supernatural earthquake. It announces the coming of the Kingdom.

**Verse 19:** *"And the great city (Jerusalem) was divided into three parts. And all the cities of the nation's fell. Babylon the Great was remembered before G-d, to give her the cup of His wine of His wrath."*

*Three* is for the purpose of revelation or declaring something. Babylon and the evil empire, of the last days, are connected. This empire is often simply spoken of as Babylon. G-d is going to judge this empire.

**Verse 20:** *"And every island fled, and the mountains were not found."*

The terminology used in this verse tells us that G-d is going to bring change to this world. Creation is going to be irrevocably changed. There are two parts to redemption. Redemption, firstly, involves a payment (through means of the blood of Messiah). However, redemption does not stop once the payment has been made. The second aspect of redemption involves a change – becoming the new creation, the Kingdom creation.

**Verse 21:** *"And heavy hail, that was the weight of a talent, came down from the heavens upon mankind. And the men blasphemed G-d on account of the plague of hail, and they would not give glory. For exceedingly heavy was this plague."*

Many of these final *plagues* are reminiscent of the plagues in Egypt. These people are blaming G-d for their trouble, not realizing that these things are happening because of their own unrighteousness.

‘Babylon, Babylon has fallen’ was pronounced earlier (Revelation 14:8) – a wise person would have left Babylon at that point (like a wise person would leave a building that is on fire). Not only do we get ourselves ready for what is to come upon this world but, if we are wise and understand the call that we have been given (that of the ministry of reconciliation), we will be quick and ready to proclaim the everlasting gospel to those who are perishing.

*Men blasphemed G-d:* The people still did not humble themselves before G-d. Nor did they plead with Him for His mercy and forgiveness. The people blamed G-d. They had no idea that it was their unrighteousness, their sin, their impurity, their ungodliness that had brought about all these terrible plagues.

## Chapter 17

**Verse 1:** *"And one of the seven angels, carrying the seven bowls, came and spoke to me saying: 'Come, I will show you the judgment of the great harlot, who sits upon many waters.'"*

This angel was one of the angels who carried a bowl of G-d's wrath. *The great harlot* is not a specific woman. Prophetically speaking, harlotry relates to idolatry – religion that is not in line with the truths of Scripture. There is a connection between this harlot (religious system) and the end time empire ("beast" system). People initially embrace the laws/character/ways of this end time empire because it promotes gratification of the flesh and places man "in control" (everyone does, spiritually or religiously, what is right in their own eyes – Judges 21:25).

*Many waters* is a reference to a great multitude of people (Revelation 17:15). This Antichrist religious system is going to permeate the whole world.

**Verse 2:** *"The kings of the earth committed adultery with her, and those who dwell upon the earth became drunk from the wine of her fornication."*

*The kings of the earth* refer to the presidents and prime ministers. These world leaders took advantage of the religious system of the world ('committed adultery' - everyone doing right in their own eyes) and used it for their own purposes, to suit their own agendas and push forward their policies. Those who *dwell upon the earth* are those who are given over to a worldly way of thinking - those who follow the passion of their flesh.

*Became drunk:* Made to be out of control. Not thinking lucidly. Lacking restraint.

**Note:** This beast (final) empire is going to be characterised by idolatry ("harlotry").

**Verse 3:** *"And he led me by the Spirit into the wilderness. I looked, and behold a woman sitting upon a scarlet beast, full of blasphemous names, and to her was seven heads and ten horns."*

*Led me by the Spirit:* The Spirit teaches us (John 14:26). If G-d does not illuminate His words for us, we are not going to interpret them properly. If we do not interpret the Word of G-d correctly, we are not going to be able to faithfully implement it in our lives.

The wilderness is the place where people are absolutely dependent upon G-d. G-d led the children of Israel into the wilderness for the purpose of teaching them to depend on and trust in Him. It is also from the wilderness (where all superficial things are stripped away) that we are able to have a better and more uncluttered perspective of what is truly going on around us. *The woman* refers to a religious, idolatrous, system. One of the defining characteristics of the end time empire will be this religious system – initially religious pluralism but followed by exclusive worship of the beast and his image. A *scarlet beast* refers to an (end-time) empire. Many scholars say the colour 'scarlet' is related to sinfulness.

A name (Scripturally) does not only refer to an identity, it also refers to character. The character of this beast (this empire) is blasphemous. It is within the nature, and is the desire, of this empire to do that which is against the character of G-d (i.e. against the laws of G-d).

*Seven heads and ten horns:* See Revelation 17:9-10. This beast does not only manifest itself in the last days. There is nothing new about this beast. Throughout history, this beast has manifested itself. It was present in Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Medes and Persians, Greece and in Rome. In the end days it will also be present in the Antichrist empire.

**Verse 4:** *"The woman was clothed in purple and scarlet. She was decked out in gold, precious stones and pearls. In her hand was a golden cup full of abominations, and the filth of her fornications."*

*Purple* is a colour associated with royalty. This kingdom is going to present itself as royal. Some would understand it to mean that this is a supernatural kingdom (not of this world), as everyone needs to submit to it. A *golden cup* has to do with consumption. What we consume is what we become. This cup looks important. It looks valuable. However, this is a cup of deception. Outwardly this cup looks incredible, inwardly it is a tankard of fornication/filth/harlotry (idolatry - *Abomination* means 'in conflict with holiness'). This final religious system, in the eyes of man, looks desirable and precious. However, on closer inspection, this system is in conflict with holiness and with the will of G-d.

**Verse 5:** *"Upon her forehead is written a name: 'Mystery: Babylon the Great. Mother of Harlots and the Abominations of the Earth.'"*

*Babylon* is not referring to the city that was physically located in the Iraq of today. From a Biblical standpoint, Babylon should remind us of exile and of the consequences of exile (pain and suffering, an expression of judgment).

**Verse 6:** *"And I saw the woman: drunk from the blood of the saints and the blood of those who had the testimony of Yeshua. And I was amazed concerning the appearance, with great amazement."*

*Blood* has to do with death. The driving force behind this final empire is its insatiable desire for the blood of the saints (those who love and fear G-d and who walk in His character – i.e. holy). The Bible ties those who live holy and sanctified lives (*saints*), to those who conduct themselves, or behave, in the way that Yeshua did.

**Verse 7:** *"And the angel said to me: 'Why are you amazed? I will tell you the mystery of the woman and of the beast that carries her, who has seven heads and ten horns.'"*

This angel is going to give John a greater understanding of this beast. He conveys that this empire is related to the harlot, and to the seven heads and ten horns. This final empire is both deeply religious (steeped in idolatry/harlotry) as well as political.

**Verse 8:** “*The beast, which you saw, it was and is not and it shall be (in the future). It comes up from the abyss, but it is going to destruction. The ones who dwell upon the earth, those whose names are not written in the Book of Life, from before the foundation of the earth, they are going to be amazed when they see the beast which was and is not and shall come.*”

This beast (empire) has a habit of appearing in specific epochs of time and then disappearing (*was, and is not*). It is an empire which *comes up from the abyss*. This means that it is an empire which is satanically inspired. This empire is again going to reappear in the last days, but it is headed toward final *destruction*. G-d lets us know (i.e. gives us hope), ahead of time, that this empire is limited. It does not last indefinitely). In the end, this empire is going to rise to power, growing rapidly in wealth and in influence. Outwardly it is an empire that appears very successful. However, it is headed for destruction. Those who have an earthly (carnal) perspective are going to be amazed at this empire.

The only hope that we have, in being victorious over this beast, is if our names are written in the Lamb’s *Book of Life*. Life is synonymous with redemption. Redemption is the means by which we become a Kingdom people.

**Verse 9:** “*With this, the one who has wisdom will understand: the seven heads are seven hills which the woman sits upon.*”

We need to have wisdom. Wisdom gives us understanding - the ability to discern this evil empire. Biblically, a mountain (or ‘hill’) speaks of an empire, a governing authority. Although Rome is a city that sits on seven hills, Rome (the Vatican, etc) is not our port of call, our ‘go-to’, for interpreting this verse. If we interpret this verse to be speaking of Rome, then we are using the wrong lens and so will come away with an incorrect perspective (for example: Joseph was a type of saviour. Although many things in Joseph’s life resembled Messiah’s life, we cannot look at the life of Joseph and conclude that he was the Saviour – that would be an incorrect conclusion). This verse also tells us that there are ‘seven hills’. This refers to seven different empires (governments/kingdoms) i.e. seven different periods of time.

*Which the woman sits upon:* This ‘woman’ (religious system/idolatry) has influence in each of these empires.

**Verse 10:** “*They are seven kings (kingdoms). Five of these have fallen. One is, and the other has not yet come; and when he comes, he will stand for a while.*”

*Seven kings:* Seven seats of government.

*Five... have fallen, one is, and the other has not yet come:* John gives us a rule to help us to understand what he’s speaking about in reference to these kingdoms/empires. In John’s day, five of these empires (Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Medes and Persians, Greeks) had already come and gone (‘fallen’). The empire that ‘is’ (i.e was present in John’s time) was the Roman empire. The empire that had not yet come (in John’s day) forms part of the Antichrist empire. This final empire will be in power for a little while (*stand for a while*).

**Verse 11:** *"And the beast, which was and is not, he is the eighth. He is from the seven and he goes to destruction."*

The seventh empire rules for a short while and then it gives way to an eighth and final empire, an empire which the L-rd will rapidly bring to its end. It is after the demise of this eighth empire that the Kingdom of G-d is going to be established (Biblically, 8 is the number of new beginnings). There is a very close connection between the seventh and eighth empire. All these empires will have this in common: they all persecute and bring suffering to Israel, and they are all opposed to the plans and purposes of G-d.

*Goes to destruction:* This is the second time that this destruction is mentioned in this chapter (see Revelation 17:8). When things are repeated in the Scripture it is for the purpose of emphasis. John wants us to understand that as fearful and as powerful and as ungodly as this beast (empire) is, it is going to be destroyed. It will not stand.

**Verse 12:** *"The ten horns, which you saw, are ten kings who have not yet received a kingdom. For one hour they shall receive authority as kings, and they shall receive it with the beast."*

For a short period of time, at the end, ten kingdoms will come together to bolster the evil Antichrist empire. These ten kingdoms, together, make up this eighth evil empire.

**Verse 13:** *"These have one mind; and their power and their rule they shall give to the beast."*

These ten kingdoms are united. They rise up together and give their allegiance (their power and authority) to the Antichrist empire.

**Verse 14:** *"They will make war with the Lamb, but the Lamb will prevail against them; because He is the L-rd of lords and the King of kings – and with Him are those who are called, chosen and faithful."*

These ten kingdoms (which are satanically inspired) will be opposed to the plans and the purposes of G-d. The word used here for 'Lamb' refers specifically to the lamb used at Passover – the lamb associated with redemption. These people will not only be opposed to Messiah Yeshua, but they will also be opposed to redemption. There are two aspects of redemption. Redemption is related to a payment. The blood of a lamb was necessary to redeem the people from their sins. The second aspect of redemption is its outcome – those who have been purchased with the precious blood of Messiah Yeshua are transformed into a Kingdom people (they undergo a change). Those in the world hate this (John 15:18-19).

*He is L-rd of lords and King of kings:* The Lamb is G-d incarnate – G-d with us. He is the only One who will have the ability to defeat this final empire. 'With Him' - this is key! If we are going to be those who overcome, we need to be 'With Him' – i.e. IN Messiah.

*Called, chosen...faithful:* To be 'called' means to be invited. This is a word that demands a response. Those who are called (invited), and who then respond (Romans 10:9-13), are those who are going to be considered 'chosen' by G-d.

Those who are 'chosen' receive the Holy Spirit. With the help of the Holy Spirit, we are enabled to be faithful, to be people who exemplify the character of G-d.

**Verse 15:** *"And he (the angel) said to me: 'The waters that you have seen, which this harlot sits upon, they are peoples, multitudes, nations and tongues."*

These people are the peoples of the world. The religion of the antichrist, initially, is going to be a tolerance of multiple religions. But this is going to change. In the middle of the last seven years, the antichrist is going to go into the Holy of Holies, pronounce himself god and demand exclusive worship (Matthew 4:9-10).

**Verse 16:** *"The ten horns, which you saw, and the beast shall hate the harlot and make her desolate and naked. They shall eat her flesh and they shall burn her with fire."*

This verse alludes to those final ten kings making a break with the religious systems of the world. A time is going to come when these governments hate anything to do with religion. All religion and religious practices will become odious, offensive and hateful to them. The rulers in this beast empire will stamp out the religions currently present in this world. This does not mean that they will bring in a true religion. They are going to bring in a new religion – that of worshipping the Antichrist as G-d.

*Naked:* They are going to cause shame to all religious systems which do not ascribe to or participate in the new Antichrist religious system.

*Eat her flesh...burn her with fire:* The religious systems, currently present in this world, are all going to be severely persecuted.

**Verse 17:** *"For G-d gave into (allowed) their hearts to do His purpose, to be of one mind. To give their rule (authority) to the beast unto the fulfilment of the Words of G-d."*

This empire, being full of pride, is going to want to exalt itself. This empire is not going to submit to G-d, but is going to put itself first. G-d allows them to do this. G-d never causes anyone to do evil. He does not "put (evil) into their hearts". However, G-d allows them to continue in their sin and then He - who can use all things for good – uses their evil in such a way that His purposes are fulfilled.

*Unto the fulfilment of the Words of G-d:* G-d sets a limit on how long this evil empire can continue in its transgressions.

**Verse 18:** *"The woman which you saw she is that great city and she is mighty, and she ruled over the kingdoms of the earth."*

All the world, in the end, is going to go against G-d. Only those whose names are written in the Lamb's Book of Life (i.e. those who have received and responded to the gospel – Messiah Yeshua) are not going to go against G-d.

## Chapter 18

Although G-d is a G-d of love, mercy and grace, He is also a G-d of vengeance (judgment and wrath). We need to be wise - positioning ourselves in such a way that we will not be the recipients of His wrath (1 Thessalonians 5:9) but recipients of His good pleasure.

**Verse 1:** *"After these things I saw another angel coming down from the heavens. He had great authority, and the world was illuminated from his glory."*

*Coming down from heaven:* John is receiving heavenly revelation – i.e. he is receiving Kingdom revelation. This is a chapter that speaks of G-d's judgment. However, we are told, as we begin this chapter, that the whole world will be illuminated with G-d's glory (ie this glory does not belong to the angel - see Isaiah 42:8). The whole world being illuminated with G-d's glory is obviously a good thing. One of the ways that G-d displays His glory is through His judgment. It is only through judgment that the whole world will be full of G-d's glory.

**Verse 2:** *"And he called with great power, and a strong voice, saying: 'Fallen, fallen is Babylon the Great. She has become a habitation for devils, a prison for every unclean spirit and a cage for every unclean and repulsive bird."*

*Babylon* is synonymous with exile. G-d is bringing an end to exile – an end to any separation between Him and His people. Babylon became a cage for all things unclean, impure and connected to death. The *birds* spoken of here are scavengers – those that eat up dead things.

**Verse 3:** *"For from the wine of the wrath of her harlotry all the nations drank. And the kings of the earth fornicated with her, and the merchants of the earth became rich from the abundance of her delicacies."*

*Idolatry* (depicted by the words *harlotry* or *fornication*) is a false religion which is based on the desires of the flesh. Simply put, sinful desires and actions are elevated and applauded as they are done within a religious context. This type of "religion" (drinking of this "wine") brings about the wrath of G-d upon all nations (those who are not in a covenantal relationship with G-d).

*The kings of the earth fornicated with her:* The government leaders (those in leadership positions who have authority) bought into this false religious system. *The merchants*, which speak of the wealthy businessmen, etc used this system in order to create and generate wealth for themselves. These people all made their decisions based upon their fleshly desires. They are going to get the outcome of the flesh – death (Romans 6:23).

**Verse 4:** *"And I heard another voice from the heavens saying: "Come out from her, My people, lest you become partakers of her sins, lest you receive her plagues."*

In Hebrew, the word for 'come out' is also where we get the word 'exodus' from. It is only through redemption, by the blood of Messiah Yeshua our redeemer, that people are enabled to be set free from their sins, to 'come out' of Babylon. There is a connection between sin and plagues. When we live in sin the outcome is going to be the judgment of G-d.

*Sins...plagues:* This verse draws a connection between sin and plagues. Living in sin leads to G-d's judgment (His 'plagues').

**Verse 5:** *"For her sins have come up into the heavens and G-d remembered her iniquities."*

Every time something goes up to heaven (a cry, a prayer, wickedness, etc), G-d responds. G-d's 'remembering' always brings about His activity – G-d takes action in order to respond. G-d was silent in Exodus until He saw the faithfulness of the Hebrew midwives (Exodus 1:15-21) Then He remembered and began to move.

**Verse 6:** *"Visit upon her the retribution that she placed upon you (the people of G-d) and do to her double according to her works: in the cup which she has mixed, mix double to her."*

G-d is not a respecter of persons. This means He does not treat one person better than He does another. G-d paid Israel double for her sins (Isaiah 40:2). Similarly, G-d will pay the nations double for their sins (as seen in this verse). However, G-d also deals in double blessings for those who respond rightly to Him (Isaiah 61:7, Job 42:10).

**Verse 7:** *"She exalted herself and she lived luxuriously, and they shall give to her both pain and sorrow. For she said in her heart: 'I will sit as a queen, and there will not be to me any widow. Mourning I will not see.'*

Babylon is going to be enthroned as a *queen*. In Judaism, the Sabbath is called a 'queen' or 'bride'. Shabbat is related to the Kingdom - the queen looks toward The King. The Sabbath was not created for its own sake – it was created for us...Mark 2:27-28. Yeshua is L-rd of the Sabbath, the authority over it.

Here we have the opposite – this queen is not looking for the king. She has determined in her heart that she will not marry and so she will never become a widow and will not be under anyone's authority. She stands alone and does what she wants. She has a false belief – she thinks that there will be no end to her reign. Satan, too, thinks that he is going to triumph over G-d and that there will be no sorrow for him.

**Verse 8:** *"Therefore, in a moment, in one day, her plagues shall come to her: death, mourning, famine. And she shall be burnt with fire. For strong is the L-rd G-d, the One who judges her."*

*Her plagues:* G-d's judgment. G-d's judgment seems to be delayed, but it will suddenly come upon this world and, when it does, it will be swift and all consuming.

**Verse 9:** “*And the kings of the earth shall weep and lament her, who fornicated and lived luxuriously with her, when they shall see the smoke of her fire.”*

The fleshly desires of these kings (government officials, leaders, people in authority) were met through their allegiance with this worldly system. They all believed the lie that this system would never fail but would go on and on. The gratification of the flesh is always temporary. “Living for the moment” will come to a sudden end.

**Verse 10:** “*From a distance they will stand. Because of the terror of her torment they shall say: ‘Woe, Woe to you Babylon, the great city. The strong city. For in one hour came your judgment.’”*

John, inspired by the Holy Spirit, took phrases from the Old Testament and brought them into the book of Revelation so that we can have a better grasp of what he wants to say. The people at Mt Sinai also “stood at a distance” (Exodus 20:18). After the giving of the 10 commandments, G-d moved toward the people. Israel, however, were fearful and they stood far away because they were not prepared. They did not discern what G-d came to do, and they rebelled against it. It is not that the people (at Sinai and here in this verse) do not understand what is happening. They understand, but they are unprepared – they know that it is only a matter of time and judgment will be coming to them too. Judgment is coming and, when it comes, it is going to come quickly.

**Verse 11:** “*And the merchants of the earth weep and mourn for her, for now no man any longer can buy their merchandise.”*

No one (neither the world leaders, nor the merchants/businessmen) sees this coming – they are all caught unaware of G-d’s judgment. The terms used in this verse are terms that are associated with death (death is the outcome of sin - Romans 6:23).

**Verse 12:** “*Merchandise of gold, silver, precious stones, pearls and fine linen – purple, silk and scarlet – and all types of fragrant trees. And every vessel of ivory and every vessel of precious wood and vessels of copper, iron and marble.”*

This verse lists all the things held up as precious, valuable and desired by this world. These things will not survive G-d’s judgment. We cannot take all these ‘precious’ things with us. They are not going to be part of the Kingdom of G-d. All the things the world considers precious are, like wood, hay and stubble, going to be consumed in a moment (1 Corinthians 3:12-15). Righteous deeds, or those things done as an outcome of the Word of G-d (statutes, commandments and laws), are going to be refined by fire. These will be used to worship G-d.

**Verse 13:** “*cinnamon, spice, incense, myrrh, frankincense, wine, oil, fine flour, wheat, cattle and sheep, horses and chariots, and slaves, that is, human souls,”*

These worldly empires had lots of “stock”. However, these things, which generated great wealth, are going to be consumed/burnt with fire – 1 Corinthians 3:12-15

**Verse 14:** “and the desired fruit that the soul lusted for. And every good thing perish from you - and will no longer be found.”

**Verse 15:** “And the merchants, who became wealthy from her, stood at a distance because of the terror of her torture; and they wept and mourned.”

‘Stood at a distance’ speaks of a people who are unprepared and who did not discern the purposes, plans and ways of G-d. G-d’s judgment is not here today and gone tomorrow. His wrath is eternal (Matthew 25:41). All are going to be resurrected. Some to eternal life and some to everlasting shame (Daniel 12:2)

**Verse 16:** “And they said: ‘Woe, Woe is the great city who was covered with fine linen, purple and scarlet; and was decked out with gold, precious stone and pearls.’”

When G-d’s consuming judgement happens, it comes, and it passes; but the torment of that judgement is eternal.

**Verse 17:** “For in one hour was her great wealth destroyed. And every (ship’s) captain and every traveller and the sailors and the workers in the sea stood at a distance.”

A sea, Biblically, represents instability. We are called to build our lives on a firm foundation (Luke 6:47-49). These people who “live on the sea” (metaphorically) have no consistency or firm foundations in their lives. And so they crumble when things around them fall apart.

**Verse 18:** “And they cried when they saw the smoke of her fire saying: ‘Who among the cities is like her, this great city?’”

These people are not crying out in repentance. They are not seeking G-d’s mercy and forgiveness. They are neither lamenting their sin nor remorseful over how they have lived their lives. What they are crying about is the fact that G-d is judging the thing that they loved. They are crying because the righteousness and holiness of G-d is beginning to be manifested in this world. They are similar to Lot’s wife. The reason why she was punished is because, as she began to flee from Sodom, she looked back longingly, regretful that she was being forced to leave (Genesis 19:26). These people liked the instability of sin. They wanted to build upon their own foundations and not on the foundation of faithfulness.

**Verse 19:** “And they threw dust upon their foreheads and they yelled out, crying and lamenting, saying: ‘Woe, Woe is the great city wherein all who had ships in the sea became rich from her wealth, for in one hour she became desolate.’”

At a funeral, good words, a eulogy, are spoken about the dead person. These people are sad and full of sorrow. They are depressed because what they had lived for has come to an end.

**Verse 20:** “Shout concerning her O heavens. Rejoice holy apostles and the prophets. For G-d has judged and vindicated you from her.”

To shout over her means to rejoice. This is completely opposite to the attitude that the world is displaying in regard to this kingdom of the world.

There is a connection between the apostles and the prophets. The teachings of the apostles are understood in light of the revelation from the prophets. Both the writings of the prophets and the teachings of the apostles should be valued and taught within the congregations today. If we are not aware of the prophetic revelation of Scripture, we are not going to truly understand the words of the apostles.

There are two outcomes of G-d's judgement/wrath:

1. It consumes sin
2. It vindicates His children

The final tribulation will produce repentance in Israel. It will turn Israel back to a right relationship with G-d. Judgement and wrath are a way for G-d to communicate His love and His truth to His people.

**Note:** We can think of G-d's wrath in this way...if we send our child to school and then find out that she is being bullied on the playground we are full of wrath. If the headmaster does not step in and take charge of the bully, then we are angry with both the headmaster as well as with the bully (and we begin to view the headmaster as unjust or weak). However, a good headmaster will step in and remove the bully from the playground. When he does this, we rejoice.

**Verse 21:** “A mighty angel lifted up a great stone, like a millstone, and cast it into the midst of the sea saying: ‘Thus shall be cast down the violence of Babylon, the great city, she will not be found anymore.’”

*Mighty:* Could also be translated “great”.

Babylon will be cast into the sea of instability - that which does not reflect the peace of G-d. Babylon (exile, the world systems, etc – all those things which separate us from G-d) is coming to an end. Not even a trace of her will be left.

**Verse 22:** “The voice of those playing the harp, musicians, those playing the flute and those playing the trumpets shall not be heard any longer in her midst. Every craftsman will not be found in her again. The sound of a millstone should not be heard any more in her midst.”

Music, most of the time, reflects joy and gladness. This verse tells us that there will no longer be joy and gladness in Babylon. *No craftsman* alludes to the fact that no more creative activity, no more produce, will be found in Babylon again. Babylon will become empty and void. Millstones were used for grinding flour and making bread – which is synonymous with life. Basic sustenance will no longer exist in Babylon.

Everything that this empire stood for, and did, was in opposition to G-d. G-d's judgment ensured that they no longer had anything left to sustain it.

**Verse 23:** *"And the light of a candle shall not be lit in you again. The voice of the groom and the voice of the bride shall not be heard in you again. For your merchants they were the "honourable ones" of the earth, and by their sorcery all the nations were deceived."*

Light is synonymous with truth. If the light does not shine it indicates that there is no longer any truth in this place. *The voice of bridegroom and bride...not be heard* alludes to the fact that there is no future for this place. No longer will future generations be born.

*The nations were deceived*, led into error, because of trickery.

**Verse 24:** *"In her was found the blood of the prophets and the saints and all that were slain on the earth."*

These people not only pursued whatever they wanted to pursue (ie the desires of their flesh), but they also tried to stamp out revelation from G-d. They killed the prophets – those who spoke the very words of G-d – and they killed those who lived sanctified and holy lives.

Judgment is good. Judgment prepares the world for G-d's blessings. When G-d judges, sin is put away, and so are hardship, sorrow and pain.

## Chapter 19

The blessings of G-d come out of His judgment. It is His judgment that prepares us for His blessings.

**Verse 1:** *"After these things I heard a great voice, like the voice of a great multitude, in the heavens saying: 'Hallelujah! Salvation and glory and power to the L-rd our G-d."*

*After these things:* After G-d's judgment has been poured out. *A great multitude in the heavens, saying, 'Hallelujah... It is because of G-d's judgment and wrath that those in heaven (those with a heavenly perspective) are praising and extolling G-d.*

**Verse 2:** *"For true and righteous are His judgments. For He has judged the great harlot who corrupted the earth with her fornication, and has demanded from her hand the blood of His servants."*

Why are those with a heavenly perspective praising G-d for His judgment and wrath? Because His judgment is right and true. They manifest His glory, showing that He is the L-rd of lords.

Chemotherapy causes destruction of rapidly growing cancer cells. Despite its destruction of cells, it is considered 'good' as it aids in the healing process. In much the same way judgment can be viewed as causing destruction in order to bring about salvation. Judgment is a part of the healing process. G-d's judgment can be seen as vindication of His servants.

**Verse 3:** *"And again they said: 'Hallelujah.' And her smoke went up forever and ever."*

'Smoke' is a clear depiction of G-d's judgment. His judgment is not temporary. It is eternal and goes on forever and ever.

**Verse 4:** *"And the twenty-four elders and the four creatures fell upon their faces and they worshipped G-d, who sits upon the throne, and they said: 'Amen, Hallelujah.'"*

These elders (who have been chosen because they have learned to put truth into action - 1 Timothy 3:1-7) have thrones in heaven. They are in positions of prominence. They are highly respected, and G-d is well-pleased with them. However, every time we seem to see these elders, they are getting off their thrones and falling on their faces to worship G-d. These elders attribute all that they were able to do to G-d. He was the One who enabled them to act in the manner that they did. G-d is the One who sits upon the throne. The throne is a reference to judgment. These elders and four living creatures have seen all the judgments of G-d taking place (trumpets and bowls) and it has led to them praising and worshipping G-d.

*Amen* is a word that is related to truth. It is because of truth that G-d responded to judge. Judgment is rooted in the truth of G-d.

**Verse 5:** “A voice went forth from the throne and said: ‘Praise our G-d, all His servants, those who fear Him, both small and great.’”

Throughout this book our attention is constantly drawn back to the throne of G-d. Those who are going to be in the Kingdom are spoken of as servants of G-d. There is a connection between serving G-d and the fear of G-d. (Fear means to make G-d the priority of our lives.) When G-d is the priority in our lives, we live our lives in such a way as to serve Him. Judgment creates an environment whereby the worship of G-d can be maintained.

**Verse 6:** “And I heard the voice of a great multitude, like the sound of many waters, as the sound of strong thundering, and they said: ‘Hallelujah, for our G-d, the L-rd of Hosts, reigns.’”

When Messiah came the first time, He came as a Redeemer, the Lamb (the first aspect of redemption involves a PRICE to be paid) – John 12:47. What we need to realise, however, is that the Father has given all elements of judgment to His Son (John 5:22). When Messiah comes back, a second time, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, He is coming to judge the world – he is the L-rd of hosts, the L-rd over the heavenly armies. At the Red Sea, Israel’s enemies were judged (Exodus 15:1). The judgment inflicted upon the Egyptians (by the L-rd of hosts, the L-rd of the heavenly armies – see Exodus 15:3) resulted in the salvation of the Israelites.

**Verse 7:** “Be glad, let us rejoice and give to Him glory. For the marriage banquet of the Lamb has come, and His bride has made herself ready.”

By going back to the word ‘Lamb’, in this text, Scripture is reminding us of the price that was paid for our redemption. It is only through redemption that we will have any part in this *marriage banquet*. Marriage, Scripturally, is seen as a covenant. It is only through covenant (a legally binding agreement between two parties) that a marriage is legitimised. *The marriage of the Lamb* refers to the inauguration of the Kingdom of G-d.

*Made herself ready:* This means to be sanctified. The people at Mt Sinai had not prepared or readied themselves for what G-d was going to do. G-d wanted to move to bring about a marvellous change in their lives, but, because they were unprepared and did not desire G-dly change, they stood at a distance and asked for Moses to speak to G-d on their behalf. This bride, on the other hand, has realised that the outcome of salvation (the fruit that follows salvation) is to live holy lives – not holy in only the declarative sense but also holy in our thinking and in our behaviour (actions). See Leviticus 19:2, 1 Peter 1:13-16. Expressive holiness (ie holiness in action) is observed in the lives of those who live out G-d’s plans/purposes/call in their lives. Holy people are those who have understood the message of the gospel. They are those who have responded to the gospel, not as a means to allow them to continue in their sin, but so that they can be FREE of sin (Titus 2:11-12).

**Verse 8:** “It was given to her to dress in fine, pure and white linen. Her linen is the righteous deeds of the saints.”

Garments, Biblically, have to do with our deeds. If we do not have good deeds then we are, metaphorically speaking, naked (The harlot is made desolate and naked – Revelation 17:16). ‘Being naked’ conveys a sense of shame.

*Righteous deeds:* We do not do good deeds in order to earn salvation. Salvation is a free gift and is given to whoever calls on the name of the L-rd. However, good deeds are a fruit of salvation. Good deeds are the proof, they testify to the fact, that we are truly saved.

**Verse 9:** *"He said to me: 'Write, Blessed (happy) are the ones who are called (invited) to the wedding banquet of the Lamb'. And he said to me: 'These things are the true words of G-d.'"*

It is only through accepting the work of Messiah on the cross (the perfect Lamb of G-d) that we are able to partake of this marriage (covenantal) supper. This marriage supper marks the beginning of the inauguration of the Kingdom. The Kingdom is synonymous with blessing (Matthew 5:3-12). Everything that G-d has promised His people, in regard to His Kingdom, is true, factual – it will happen, just as G-d has said. What G-d says is accurate and it can be trusted.

**Verse 10:** *"I fell before his feet to worship him. He said to me: 'See that you do not do this. I am like you, a fellow servant like your brothers, which to them is the testimony of Yeshua. Worship G-d! For the testimony of Yeshua is the spirit of prophecy.'"*

John fell at the feet of the angel who was revealing this revelation to him. John linked the glory and holiness of the Kingdom to the one who was revealing it to him. The natural outcome for John was to worship. Worship is the correct response to the revelation and the holiness of the Kingdom. However, we need to make sure that the object of our worship is not man/angels/etc (hero worship of pastor, teacher, etc). Our worship should be solely directed toward G-d.

*The testimony of Yeshua:* Messiah's life is lived out through us who are IN Him. We are simply vessels who are called to house and manifest G-d's glory. It should never be the vessel that gets the glory. The glory all belongs to G-d. Those who have the testimony of Messiah are those who will worship G-d. Unless the Spirit of G-d is living in us, through the redemptive work of the cross, we cannot worship G-d in Spirit and in truth.

*The spirit of prophecy:* Those who have the testimony of Yeshua (ie believers – followers and servants of Messiah) should be prophetic literate people. We need to be people who understand prophetic truth (Haggai, Zechariah, Amos, etc) so that we can understand what G-d is up to in the last days, so that we can see things from His perspective, so that we can participate with Him.

**Verse 11:** *"I saw the heavens open up and, behold, a white horse. The one who sat upon it is called Faithful and True. In righteousness He judges and makes war."*

This is NOT the same white horse as the one spoken of in Revelation 6:2. The false/counterfeit (anti) 'messiah' (who brings death and destruction) rode the first mentioned white horse. The white horse spoken of here is ridden by the true Messiah – Messiah Yeshua – who is *Faithful and True*: These two words are uniquely related. Faithfulness is the manifestation of the truth. Messiah faithfully manifests truth through His identity and through His acts/deeds. Yeshua is full of grace, mercy and compassion.

However, when He returns the second time, He is not returning to redeem/save (this has already been done), He is returning to make war and bring G-d's judgment upon those who continue to reject Him. He is also returning to establish His Kingdom on earth.

**Verse 12:** *"His eyes were flames of fire, and upon His head were many crowns. He has a name written upon Him that no man is able to know except Himself."*

*Many crowns* signify that He is the King of kings. 'Name' is synonymous with character. Yeshua is G-d. We cannot truly know or understand G-d (Isaiah 55:8-9). Only G-d can truly know G-d (Isaiah 40:13-14, 1 Corinthians 2:11).

**Verse 13:** *"He is clothed in a garment dipped in blood, and His name is called the Word of G-d."*

*Blood* signifies redemption but also speaks of judgment (Isaiah 63:1-6) Scholars tell us that 'the Word of G-d' is synonymous with the mind/purpose of G-d. Yeshua (has come and) is coming to fulfil the mind, purpose and plan of G-d – i.e. to set up His Kingdom (ultimately the Kingdom is the place whereby G-d and man dwell together – Revelation 21:3-4).

**Verse 14:** *"And the armies of heaven went forth after Him, upon white horses, and they were dressed in fine, clean linen garments."*

Revelation 6:11, Revelation 19:7-8.

**Verse 15:** *"Out of His mouth went forth a sharp sword, to strike the nations. He will rule with a rod of iron and He will tread the winepress of the hot wrath of the G-d of the armies."*

*Nations* refers to those of any nationality, ethnic group etc. that does not have a covenantal relationship with G-d. Yeshua maintains the righteousness of G-d's character (found in the commandments of G-d). *Rod of iron* tells us that He will not tolerate sin. See Psalm 2:8-9. There is a major difference between the Millennial Kingdom (the Kingdom Yeshua will set up on earth for 1000 years) and the final state of the Kingdom – The New Jerusalem (Revelation 21:1-2). Yeshua will "rule with a rod of iron" in the Millennial Kingdom. This means that He will not tolerate any sin but will cause people to live righteously (Isaiah 2:2-4, Micah 4:1-8). Those who dwell in the Millennial Kingdom will be those who survived the Great Tribulation and who will then have children and grandchildren – filling up the earth again (Revelation 20:7-8, see also Isaiah 65:20-23). These people will not be in glorified bodies (unlike the believers, in glorified bodies, who were raptured before the wrath of G-d fell. These same believers will rule and reign with Messiah throughout this 1000year period of time – Revelation 20:4-6)

*He will tread the winepress:* Isaiah 63:1-6

**Verse 16:** “And upon His garment, and upon His thigh, was written a name: ‘The King of kings and the L-rd of lords.’”

Today when we “seal a deal” we shake hands with the person who we have made a promise to. This shaking of hands conveys trust, shows good faith, and symbolizes the sealing of an agreement. However, in Biblical times, people did not shake hands to seal the deal. Promises were made, and sealed, by placing a hand on the thigh of the other party (Genesis 24:2-9). Having this name written on Yeshua’s thigh depicts faithfulness – an authority and ability to carry through on His promises.

*King of kings and L-rd of lords* is a reference to rulership. Messiah is the ultimate authority.

**Verse 17:** “I saw one angel standing in the sun. He cried out in a great voice, and he said to every winged bird, which flies in the midst of the sky: ‘Come and be gathered together for the banquet of the great G-d.’”

*To stand in the sun* is impossible naturally. This reminds us that the Kingdom of G-d is supernatural. When David spoke to Goliath, he said that the birds were going to eat Goliath’s flesh (1 Samuel 17:45-46) – to have the birds eating human flesh is an image of shame. It is something which is repulsive. The birds are going to eat the carcasses of those who did not know redemption.

*The banquet of the great G-d:* At the end, Yeshua is not only coming as the bridegroom. He is coming to judge and make war. The birds eating carcasses (this ‘supper’) symbolises G-d’s victory over His enemies - those who rejected G-d’s offer of redemption.

**Verse 18:** “You shall eat the flesh of the kings, the flesh of captains, the flesh of mighty men and the flesh of horses and those whose sit upon them. The flesh of every free man and every slave. Both small and great.”

G-d is not a respecter of persons. No one – no matter how wealthy or poor – can escape this judgment, except through faith in Messiah Yeshua.

**Verse 19:** “I looked and the beast, and the kings of the earth and their armies, gathered to make war with the One who rides upon the horse and with His army.”

Why is this happening at such a late stage – after all the trumpet and bowl judgments have reached their conclusion? It has been made clear to man that he CANNOT triumph against G-d. Yet unredeemed man is eternally rebellious. He cannot be brought to submissiveness. That is why unredeemed man will face eternal judgment.

**Verse 20:** “And the beast was seized and the false prophet with it, who did signs before it, which deceived those who had the mark of the beast and who worshipped its image. They were cast alive, both of them, into the lake of fire that burns with sulphur.”

This does NOT mean that they were cast into the lake of fire alive and then they died. They were cast alive into this fire and they remained alive for eternity within it.

**Verse 21:** “And the rest of the ones, who remained, were killed with the sword that went out from the mouth of the One riding upon the horse. And every bird was satisfied with their flesh.”

*The ones who remained* refers to those who had followed the beast and the false prophet; all those who had worshipped the beast.

*The sword that went out from the mouth:* Matthew 10:34-39. Messiah did not come to bring peace in the sense that everything is fine and dandy, everyone just does whatever they please without experiencing any conflict. In fact, Messiah declares exactly the opposite. A sword divides something in two. It separates a group into two different and opposing camps. Messiah separates/divides the sheep from the goats, the tares from the wheat, etc. The gospel is a sword. It divides between those who will experience eternal life and those who will not. The gospel is either a source of life in people’s lives, or it is a source of judgment. Those who reject the gospel (the grace of G-d in their lives) invite the sword (the Word of G-d – Ephesians 6:17) to strike them and bring about eternal death (a death which is not physical but spiritual).

*Flesh:* A word which is synonymous with sin - the carnal nature. (The covenant of Circumcision depicts physically what should be our reality spiritually – the death of our flesh/carnal nature (Jeremiah 4:4, Romans 2:28-29). The gospel is like that sword of circumcision – either it is going to kill our carnal nature, or it is going to pierce and fatally wound those who refuse to allow their carnal nature to die. Some form of pain, whether temporal or eternal, is experienced either way.

**Note:** Revelation depicts two banquets: The marriage banquet of the Lamb or a banquet of dead flesh.

## Chapter 20

One of the things that Yeshua taught, over and over again, was the reality of the Kingdom. This Kingdom becomes a reality in stages. Yeshua taught the early believers that the Kingdom was within them (Luke 17:20-21). Initially the Kingdom is a spiritual reality that begins internally through a personal relationship with G-d through Messiah Yeshua. However, a time is coming, when this Kingdom will become a physical reality. Yeshua comes back to earth ('premillennial return'), for the second time, just prior to the establishment of His Kingdom on earth – the Millennial Kingdom. Yeshua, and His saints, are going to physically reign on this earth for a thousand years before the Kingdom goes into its final stage – a new heaven and earth, the New Jerusalem.

Who are present in this Millennial Kingdom?

On Day 1 of the Millennial Kingdom, every single person present will have confessed faith in Messiah Yeshua (every person who did not confess faith in Messiah became part of the banquet prepared for the birds). The believers present on Day 1 of the Millennial Kingdom will include:

1. Believers – Jew and Gentile – who came to faith in Messiah BEFORE the rapture and who were raptured after the abomination of desolation. Every believer, those who are alive at the time of the rapture as well as those who died in Messiah, will be raised up and receive a glorified body (Matthew 22:30 – we will not be given in marriage and no longer will we be able to procreate or have offspring). After the rapture, we will be in the heavens for a short period of time (partaking of the marriage supper of the Lamb as well as waiting for the wrath of G-d and the time of Jacob's trouble to reach their end) and then, when Messiah returns to earth, for His second coming, we will come back to earth with Him (Revelation 19:14) - to rule and reign (over the inhabitants of earth as well as over their offspring) together with Messiah.
2. Believers who come to faith AFTER the rapture; ie those who come to faith at the second coming of Messiah (Zechariah 12:7-10). These believers will be Jewish – those who were sealed to go through the time of G-d's wrath. There is no evidence in Scripture that these believers will receive a glorified body. On the contrary, Scripture seems to indicate that they will, once again, replenish the earth (Isaiah 65:20-23).
3. A remnant of gentiles who come to faith after the rapture, but before the inauguration of the Millennial Kingdom. Like the believers, in point 2, Scripture seems to indicate that they too will be able to produce a multitude of offspring (Zechariah 14:16-21)

**Note:** Children will be born to the Jewish and Gentile believers mentioned in point 2 and 3 above. These children will NOT be present on Day 1 of the Millennial Kingdom, but they will become the fourth (and largest) group of people who will inhabit this Millennial Kingdom. The children born into this Kingdom are not going to have satan to torment or deceive them, but they will live under the 'rod of iron' rule of Messiah (Psalm 2:9, Revelation 2:26-27, Revelation 12:5). Messiah is going to rule the nations according to the Word of G-d (ie according to the laws/commandments of G-d – Micah 4:1-5). During these one thousand years, this Kingdom will have a G-dly ruler and will be administered as a Kingdom of righteousness.

**Verse 1:** *"I looked, and an angel came down from the heavens. In his hand was the key to the bottomless pit (Abyss) and a great chain."*

At this point, Messiah has returned to earth and has defeated the beast, the false prophet, the harlot and those who were part of the beast's empire. The presence of this angel announces a new reality.

**Verse 2:** *"He seized the dragon, that serpent of old, the devil, or satan, and he bound him for a thousand years."*

Throughout the one-thousand-year millennial reign of Messiah, satan is bound. Those who relegate the Book of Revelation to simply symbolic, and who claim that we are already living in the millennial Kingdom, empty the Scripture of so much of its relevance. satan 'being bound' informs us that, for a 1000-year period of time, satan will have no influence on the inhabitants of the earth. The only influence that is going to be present in the millennial Kingdom is the influence of Messiah Yeshua and His Word which will go out to all the nations (Micah 4:2).

**Verse 3:** *"He cast him into the abyss, and closed him in. He put a seal upon him in order that he would not be able to deceive the nations until the thousand years ended. Afterwards he should be released for a short time."*

satan is a deceiver – the father of lies (John 8:44). One of the ways that satan deceives people is by calling into doubt everything that G-d has said (Genesis 3:1...did G-d really say....?). Doubt weakens people spiritually. Being spiritually weak is a dangerous position to be in, as it gives the enemy easier access to manipulate and control us.

*Afterwards:* After this 1000-year reign of Messiah and G-dly influence in the world.

*He should be released:* Not being able to wreak havoc among humans, satan being bound in the abyss seems like a good thing. So why does he have to be released? The fourth group spoken of, who are present in the Millennial Kingdom, have not had an opportunity to practice free will (a prerequisite for being created in the image of G-d – G-d having a free will – Genesis 1:26). Satan is released so that these ones (after living under G-dly rulership) will also have the freedom to choose Messiah and to do His will, of their own volition.

**Verse 4:** *"I looked, and I saw the thrones and those who sat upon them. Judgment was given into their hand. The souls of the ones who were beheaded, on account of the testimony of Yeshua and the Word of G-d, those who did not bow down to the beast and its image, and those who did not receive the mark upon their foreheads nor upon their hands, they shall rise and live. They shall rule with Messiah a thousand years."*

Those who embrace the Word of G-d are those who will have the testimony of Yeshua – they will live like Yeshua did. See also Revelation 2:26-27, Revelation 3:21

**Verse 5:** *"The rest of the dead did not rise to life until the end of the thousand years. For this is the first resurrection."*

Only those who are IN Messiah will be raised to life at the time of the rapture. The ones spoken of here, who remain dead at this time, will eventually be raised up from physical death, but they will never experience eternal life. They will be raised up in order to be judged and sent into eternal judgment, the "second" death (Revelation 20:6,12-15). Daniel warns us, in Daniel 12:2, that everyone is going to rise from the dead - some people are going to be raised to everlasting life (these are the ones who will rule and reign with Messiah for 1000 years) but also many people will be raised to everlasting shame and contempt. The (dead) people mentioned here are not going to be part of the millennial Kingdom.

*Did not rise to life until the end of the thousand years:* This is the second thing we are told is going to happen after the 1000-year reign of Messiah – satan is released, all the dead are raised from the dead (a second resurrection).

*The first resurrection:* see 1 Corinthians 15:20-26. The people who take part in the first resurrection are those who will take part in the millennial Kingdom.

**Verse 6:** *"Blessed is the man, and holy is he, who has his portion in the first resurrection. On these, the second death should not have any power. For they shall be priests to G-d and His Messiah, and they shall reign with Him a thousand years."*

Those who reign with Messiah are (in a specific sense) those who suffered because of the testimony of Messiah and who were put to death during the rule of the Antichrist (Revelation 20:4). In this verse it speaks more generally about those who will rule and reign.... i.e. those who received Messiah and who were faithful to Him before the rapture (those who took part in the "first resurrection"). These will also form part of those who rule and reign with Messiah throughout His 1000-year reign on earth.

**Verse 7:** *"And after the thousand years have finished, satan will be released from his prison."*

This portion of Scripture is one of the best texts that asserts the doctrine of free will.

**Verse 8:** *"He will go out to deceive the nations in the four corners of the earth – Gog and Magog- and to gather them for war. Their numbers shall be as the sand of the seashore."*

The *nations* refers to those individuals who were born during the millennial Kingdom. The people who are born in the millennial Kingdom will have a different experience to us as far as faith is concerned. In this dispensation we believe, by faith, in Messiah, who we cannot physically see (Hebrews 11:1). In the millennial Kingdom, the people will SEE Messiah as He will be ruling and reigning from Jerusalem. The way that people in the millennial Kingdom manifest their faith and trust in G-d (when they sin) is to again offer up sacrifices (see Zechariah 14:16-21, Isaiah 19:18-25, Isaiah 56:7-8, Jeremiah 33:15-18, Ezekiel 40-48). All the sacrifices performed in the Old Testament pointed forward to Messiah.

The sacrifices that the Patriarchs offered up, the people in the wilderness, the sacrifices made in the tabernacle and ultimately in Jerusalem all pointed forward and foreshadowed what Messiah was going to do at the cross (the all sufficient sacrifice which was made once and for all). We have lived in a dispensation of time (the “age of the Gentiles”) where we have not been expected to sacrifice animals but have been called to live our lives as living sacrifices (Romans 12:1-2) – the taking of communion (bread and wine) our memorial of remembrance of the body and blood of Messiah (His sacrifice). A time is coming, however, when sacrifices will again be made.

The sacrifices made in the millennial Kingdom will not atone for sin (as they did in the OT). Messiah has already atoned for sin, once and for all, by His death on the cross. However, these sacrifices will point backwards to the cross as a memorial and remembrance of what Messiah did on the cross. Sacrifices in this dispensation (the millennial Kingdom) will be done as an act of faith and obedience to G-d. We currently live in a world that is full of injustice and corruption. This will not be the case in the millennial Kingdom. Messiah will rule this Kingdom with justice and righteousness. Laws will be enforced promptly and fairly (He will rule with a “rod of iron”). For 1000 years the people who live in this dispensation have not had the opportunity to exercise their free will in regard to accepting or rejecting Messiah. Without free will there cannot be love, because love involves a choice and sacrifice.

*Gather them for war:* satan’s plan is to draw these ‘children’ to himself and cause them to turn against Yeshua and against the saints (against the righteous and just rule of Messiah). **Note:** The nations refer to those who have no covenantal relationship with G-d. Covenants are entered into through free will – we choose to enter into a covenant with another. These ones, that satan is deceiving, have not entered into a covenantal relationship with Messiah.

*Gog and Magog:* This battle will have already happened - just before the second coming of Messiah (Revelation 19:17-21, Ezekiel 38-39). So why did John use these names here? John is reminding us of what happened at Gog and Magog – G-d was victorious over His enemies!

*Their numbers shall be as the sand of the seashore:* MANY children have been born in this 1000 year period of time. What is surprising is that even though this great number of people have been living under the rule and reign of Messiah (in a Kingdom marked by righteousness, justice and the mercy of G-d) they are swayed to reject Messiah. Even growing up in a perfect environment, men’s hearts are inclined toward evil. If we do not bring ourselves under and submit to the grace of G-d (responding to His invitation), we have no hope, in and of ourselves, to be able to live in the way that G-d desires for us to live.

**Verse 9:** “*They went up on the breadth of the earth. They surrounded the camp of the saints, and the beloved city. And fire came down from G-d, from the heavens, and consumed them.*”

*The beloved city* is a reference to Jerusalem.

*Fire came down...and consumed them:* This is very clearly NOT the battle of Gog and Magog. This is not even a battle. G-d’s justice is served within a moment.

There is a relationship between judgment and the Kingdom of G-d. His judgment is again seen just prior to the final expression of His Kingdom (the New Heavens and the New Earth).

**Verse 10:** *"And satan, who deceived them, was cast into the lake of fire and sulphur, which there also is the beast and the false prophet. They shall be tormented day and night forever and ever."*

See Matthew 25:41. Hell was created for satan and for his angels. However, satan deceives people (humans) and they too join him and his angels in this lake of fire, to be tormented forever and ever (Isaiah 66:22-24).

**Verse 11:** *"I looked, and I saw a great white throne and the One who sat upon it. Before Him the heaven and earth fled away, and there was not found for them a place."*

Those people who were disobedient, throughout the ages, went to the place of faithlessness – Hades or hell. Because of their rejection of the gospel, these people did not come alive at the first resurrection (at the beginning of the 1000-year reign of Messiah). They did not take part in the millennial Kingdom. The great white throne judgement is for those who didn't take part in the first resurrection, and for those who rebelled at the end of the 1000-year reign of Messiah.

Again, a new reality is ushered in. There is no longer a place for heaven and earth.

**Verse 12:** *"I saw the dead, both small and great, standing before G-d, and books were opened. And another book was opened up, which is the Book of Life. And the dead were judged according to what was written in the books, according to their deeds."*

Throughout the ages those who have died (without faith) have gone to a place that the Bible calls 'Hades', 'Gehinnom' or 'hell' – a place of disobedience and faithlessness. At the rapture (the first resurrection) these people, in this place, were not resurrected. They now take part in this second resurrection (the people who were deceived by satan, after he was released, after 1000 years, also take part in this second resurrection). By using the word 'dead' the Bible seems to indicate that no believers will take part in this great white throne judgment.

Every thought, word and action is recorded in these books. G-d is a fair and just Judge. However, no one has perfect deeds – all have sinned and fall short of the glory of G-d. If we do not accept Messiah as our Saviour and L-rd, we are without hope.

**Verse 13:** *"The sea gave up its dead, and death and Sheol gave up their dead. And they were judged, every man, according to his deeds."*

**Verse 14:** *"Death and Sheol were cast into the lake of fire – this is the second death."*

The 'first death' is the death we die on earth – a physical death (Hebrews 9:27). 'The Judgment' is the second death – an eternal death (being cast into the lake of fire with satan, the beast and the false prophet).

**Verse 15:** *“Every man, whose name was not written in the Book of Life, is cast into the lake of fire.”*

To keep our names in the Book of Life:

1. Everyone knows that they are sinners. Our consciences help us to fall under conviction, especially when we are confronted with the Word of G-d. We need to confess that we are sinners (1 John 1:9)
2. We need to realize that we are unable to save ourselves. G-d is very willing to save us, but our sins have separated us from Him (Isaiah 59:2). The only way we can find salvation is through His grace, through His provision. The Lamb of redemption
3. A need to accept G-d’s provision (Romans 10:9). Everyone who has experienced the Blood of Messiah is a new creation. (a Kingdom creation – 2 Corinthians 5:17) As a new creation we live according to the standards of the Kingdom, by the enabling of the Holy Spirit (John 14:26).

Those who reject the gospel place on themselves eternal death. Fire is synonymous with the eternal judgment of G-d.

## Chapter 21

When we become believers, G-d begins to move in our lives in order to bring about change – a righteous, new creation (2 Corinthians 5:17). Likewise, physical creation, itself, is going to undergo a radical change. Creation too will become a ‘new creation’ – reflecting the will and purposes of G-d, His Kingdom. The Kingdom of G-d, on earth, comes about in two primary stages – the Millennial Kingdom (where Messiah will reign for 1000 years from the city of Jerusalem) which will then give way to the new heavens and the new earth – the New Jerusalem.

**Verse 1:** *“I saw a new heaven and a new earth. For the first heaven and the first earth have passed away. And the sea was no more.”*

*The first heaven...(has) passed away:* Currently, when we die, we go into this first heaven. However, this is NOT our final and eternal destination. A time is coming when the current heaven will no longer exist. In Matthew 5:17-20 Yeshua alludes to the fact that the Torah/law will be in effect right up until this point (the law will be the standard in the millennial Kingdom – Isaiah 2:2-5). In our day, as well as in the millennial Kingdom, the law of the L-rd is absolutely relevant. However, in the New Jerusalem this is going to change (see Jeremiah 31:33-34).

The *sea*, as we have seen, represents instability. In the New Jerusalem there will no longer be any instability. Everything will be perfectly founded, orchestrated and ordained according to the perfect will of G-d. In Judaic thinking the sea is associated with fear, the unknown. In the New Jerusalem there will no longer be any reason for fear because the Kingdom of G-d has come in its fullness.

**Verse 2:** *“I, John, saw the Holy City, the New Jerusalem, coming down from G-d from the heavens; prepared as a bride who is adorned for her husband.”*

The Kingdom of G-d, in its final and complete/perfect state, is called the *New Jerusalem* (Jerusalem comes from two Hebrew words that mean ‘to inherit’ and ‘peace’). Peace is what we experience when G-d’s will is fulfilled in our lives. In the final state of the Kingdom of G-d, the people of G-d are going to inherit the fulfilment of G-d’s will.

*New* is related to the Kingdom; it tells of a **new** reality – all things will become new. (Isaiah 42:9) James tells us that every good and perfect gift comes from above - and that is what the New Jerusalem is – a gift coming from G-d (James 1:17). Gifts cannot be earned or purchased. The New Jerusalem is a perfect gift that G-d provides for His people.

There is an inherent relationship between the New Jerusalem and the people of G-d (the *bride* of Messiah). Yeshua said that He was going away to prepare a place for us (John 14:2-3). The Kingdom has been prepared for us, and we have been prepared for G-d - prepared as *a bride who is adorned for her husband*.

**Verse 3:** *"I heard a great voice from the throne saying: 'Behold, the tabernacle of G-d is with man and He shall dwell in their midst. They should be for Him a people, and G-d will be with them as their G-d."*

The definition of redemption is this: **we are His people, and He is our G-d.** Sinful man can only dwell with a holy G-d through redemption. Immanuel...G-d with us. The goal of redemption is the ability to have a relationship (intimacy) with G-d. G-d is perfect and needs nothing. However, G-d desires to dwell among us. A holy and righteous G-d – who hates sin and has absolutely NO connection with it - can only dwell among us through redemption (the perfect blood of His Son, who purchased us for Himself and who has cleansed us from our sin – Hebrews 9:12).

**Verse 4:** *"And G-d shall wipe away every tear from their eyes. Death will be no more, and also mourning, cries and pain shall not be anymore. For the former things have passed."*

The outcome/end result of sin is death (Romans 6:23). No more death = no more sin. If there is no sin, there will be no death. Death causes sorrow. If there is no death there will no longer be any sorrow. Every negative thing we experience on earth (currently) will be done away with.

*The former things:* Referring to the things which are synonymous with this age, this world (in its current state).

**Verse 5:** *"And the One who sits upon the throne said: 'Behold, I make all things new.' And He said to me: 'Write these things, because they are true and faithful.'"*

G-d is going to bring about a new and different reality. With our minds, as they are right now, we cannot even begin to grasp what this new reality is going to be like – 1 Corinthians 2:9. The change that will take place will be righteous, holy and perfect.

**Verse 6:** *"He said to me: 'It is done. I am the Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and the End. For I will give to those who are thirsty a spring of water, living water, freely."*

*Alpha and Omega* are the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet. He is associating Himself with the Word of G-d in its entirety (from Genesis to Revelation – the beginning to the end).

Water satisfies thirst and sustains life. There will be eternal satisfaction in the Kingdom of G-d. (Isaiah 55:1, John 4:14). Messiah paid the price for us to spend eternity with Him. In no way can we pay for that which we truly need. We will never have anything of value to trade for it. However, we receive this eternal life because of the sufficiency of Messiah's payment on the cross, when He purchased us for Himself.

**Verse 7:** “*The one who overcomes will inherit all things. I will be to him G-d, and he shall be to Me for a son.*”

*The one who overcomes* was a phrase used extensively in Revelation 2 and 3, when G-d was speaking to the exiled churches. These seven churches were outside of the place where G-d wanted them to be, and G-d called them to overcome. ‘Overcoming’ is a process whereby we get to the place where G-d wills us to be – ie near to His throne, close to Him, under His rule. The use of these words is a hermeneutical clue that this verse is addressing believers.

Up to this point, G-d has said that we will be His people. Here the word ‘people’ changes to ‘son’. When a phrase is changed up it is a call for us to pay attention. Something is being emphasised. A son is a heir. A son inherits. A son shows a personal and close relationship (as opposed to ‘people’ who are kept at an arm’s length). In this dispensation we are often referred to as servants. And yes, sons are servants to their fathers. However, in the Kingdom of G-d we have a new status – not just servants, but sons. As sons, we are going to, with Messiah (the firstborn Son – Colossians 1:15), inherit all things (Romans 8:17).

**Verse 8:** “*But the faint of heart that do not believe, the repulsive ones, murderers, harlots, sorcerers, idolaters and all liars, their portion shall be in the lake which burns with fire and sulphur, which is the second death.*”

A lack of faith leads to fear/a lack of confidence/no assurance/unbelief. Those who are unbelieving do not embrace, by faith, all that G-d has said.

*The second death:* See Revelation 20:14. Those who act according to the ways mentioned in this verse are going to be cast into the lake that burns with fire for ever and ever. They are not going to have any portion in the inheritance of G-d. This means that they will not experience His blessings or goodness. They are not going to experience His Presence in their lives. For all of eternity they will suffer physically as well as emotionally. We suffer emotionally when the Presence of G-d feels (or is) absent in our lives. We are created to be in fellowship with G-d (Genesis 3:8). A severing of this relationship results in emotional trauma.

**Verse 9:** “*One of the seven angels who carried one of the seven bowls, full of the seven last plagues, spoke to me saying: ‘Come, I will show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb.’*”

*One of the seven angels:* This final state of the Kingdom (in its glory and perfection) is announced from a seemingly surprising source – one of the angels who carried a bowlful of G-d’s wrath. This teaches us a very important truth – G-d’s wrath/His judgment leads to repentance and holiness. There is a relationship between G-d’s wrath and the establishment of His Kingdom.

*The bride, the wife of the Lamb:* There is a connection/relationship between the people of G-d and the Kingdom of G-d.

**Verse 10:** “*He led me, in the Spirit, to a great and high mountain. He showed me the Great City, the Holy City of Jerusalem, coming down from the heavens, from G-d.*”

**Verse 11:** *"And it had the glory of G-d, and light shone as a very precious stone, as a clear jasper stone, like crystal."*

One of the chief characteristics of the Kingdom of G-d is the manifestation of the glory of G-d. We are called to be people who live in a way that manifests G-d's glory. If we are not manifesting the glory of G-d, then we are not living in His will and nor are we submitting to His truth (ie we are not allowing the Holy Spirit to work in our lives to bring about righteous change).

*A jasper stone:* These stones should not be unfamiliar to us...they have been spoken of before – specifically within the books of the law (Exodus 28:15-21).

**Verse 12:** *"To it there was a great and high wall with twelve gates. And upon the gates, twelve angels/messengers, and names were written upon them, which were the names of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel."*

Walls speak of security. In the New Jerusalem there will be NO reason to fear. This is a place where we will feel perfectly secure.

*Twelve gates...twelve angels (messengers)...twelve tribes:* We have already spoken about the fact that there is a connection between the people of G-d and the Kingdom of G-d. 'Twelve' is a number that should remind us of the tribes of Israel. It is also a number that reminds us of the twelve disciples. There is a connection between the tribes and the disciples.

**Verse 13:** *"Three gates were on the east, three gates were on the north, three gates were on the south and three gates were on the west."*

*Three* is a Biblical number that relates to revelation, the revealing of something. *East...north...south...west* are the coordinates used to depict the entire world. Israel was created to be a blessing to the whole world (Genesis 12:3).

**Verse 14:** *"The wall of the city had twelve foundations. And upon these twelve foundations were twelve names; for the twelve apostles of the Lamb."*

The foundation of Israel is the Apostles teaching. Until Israel accepts the teachings of the Apostles there will be no true safety and security in Israel. True security comes from faith in Messiah Yeshua – the One whom the Apostles taught about. The Apostles taught about redemption. It is only through redemption that we can be G-d's people, and He can be our G-d.

**Verse 15:** *"In the hand of the one speaking to me was a golden reed for measuring the city, its gates and its wall."*

**Verse 16:** “The city was laid out as a square, its length and its width. He measured the city with the measuring reed, it was 12 000 furlongs. Its length, its width and its height were equal.”

This city is laid out in the shape of a cube. It has equal length, breadth and height.

*Furlongs:* 5 furlongs = 1 kilometre. 1 Furlong = 1/8<sup>th</sup> of a mile.

**Verse 17:** “And he measured the wall and it was 144 cubits, this is the measuring of a man. Which is also the measuring of an angel.”

*One hundred and forty-four:* 12x12. The number 12 is repeated, therefore emphasised. A cubit is a unit of measurement.

*The measuring of a man...also the measuring of an angel:* There are two ways to understand this. Sometimes angels and men are used interchangeably (Hebrews 13:2). This could be referring to a man who is really an angel, or it can be referring to an angel who appears as a man. The other interpretation is that in the Kingdom of G-d the perspective of human beings and angels will be similar – both of us (created beings) will see things from a heavenly perspective.

**Verse 18:** “The construction of the walls were jasper stone; the city was fine gold, similar to pure glass.”

**Verse 19:** “The foundations of the wall of the city were adorned with every type of desirable stones: The first foundation was jasper, the second was sapphire, the third was **שְׁבִזָּה**, the fourth was emerald.”

**Verse 20:** “The fifth was diamond, the sixth was **חַמְרָה**, the seventh was **שִׁיבְעָה**, the eighth was **צָהָב**, the ninth was twelfth the and **יְשָׁהָר** was eleventh the, **תְּשִׁבְעָה** tenth the, **נְשִׁבְעָה** was ninth the, **שְׁבִזָּה** was tenth the,

These stones (We don't know with certainty what kind they were) were all on the breastplate of the high priest (Exodus 28:15-21). Each stone was connected to one of the twelve tribes of Israel. Israel is at the foundation of the plans, will and purpose of G-d. The foundations of the walls are the teachings of the apostles. The foundations (believers) support Israel (Like the centurion in Luke 7:4-5, we need to be concerned about the spiritual condition of Israel)

**Verse 21:** “The twelve gates, they were twelve pearls. Every gate was one pearl. The street of the city was fine gold. Like clear glass.”

See Matthew 13:45-46

**Verse 22:** *"I did not see a temple in it (the city) for the L-rd G-d of Hosts He and the Lamb are its temple."*

One of the key elements of the temple is the altar. There will be no sin, so there is no longer any need for sacrifice. Yeshua paid the price, fully, for all sin. In the New Jerusalem there is a state of eternal perfection. The temple is also the place where the Presence of G-d uniquely dwells. In the New Jerusalem He will be dwelling among us.

**Verse 23:** *"The city did not have any light of the sun, nor did the moon shine, for the glory of G-d illuminates it and the Lamb is its light."*

The glory of G-d, alone, will be the source of illumination in this New Jerusalem. *The Lamb is its light* – see John 8:12

**Verse 24:** *"And the nations that were saved will walk in its light. The kings of the earth will bring their glory and their splendour unto it."*

All glory and honour will be directed toward the New Jerusalem. Real greatness has nothing to do with achievements in this world. The nations and kings will want to use their lives for the exaltation of G-d and for His Kingdom.

**Verse 25:** *"The gates will not be closed in the day, for there will be no night there."*

These gates will be open 24/7. They will never be shut. There will be perfect security in this city.

**Verse 26:** *"And they would bring into it the glory of the nations, and their splendour."*

Repetition is used in the Biblical text to emphasise.

**Verse 27:** *"All who are unclean, do abomination and lie shall not enter into it, rather the ones written in the Lamb's Book of Life."*

The ONLY way that a person can enter into this New Jerusalem is if their name is written in the Lamb's Book of Life. Unless we have accepted the blood of the Lamb for our redemption we are not going to be in that glorious Kingdom

## Chapter 22

The Bible opens up with a garden (Genesis 2) – the Garden of Eden, also called the “Garden of G-d” (Ezekiel 28:13). The Bible closes out with a Garden – “The Garden of the L-rd” (Isaiah 51:3). G-d would come and go in the Garden of Eden. However, in the final garden, which is in the New Jerusalem, G-d is not going to come and go. He is forever and ever going to dwell with His people and walk amongst them. In this chapter, John, inspired by the Holy Spirit, shows us the connection between the Garden of Eden and the garden in the New Jerusalem - the Garden of G-d.

**Verse 1:** *“He showed me the river of living water, pure and clear as crystal, going forth from the throne of G-d and the Lamb”*

In the Garden of Eden there were four rivers (Genesis 2:10-14). In this garden there is only one river. This river of living water is a good thing. It satisfies. It gives life. The source of this river is from the very throne of G-d (from out of His rule). If we want life, if we want to be eternally satisfied, we need to submit ourselves to the rule and reign of G-d in our lives – today. It is only when we submit to G-d's authority in our lives that we are going to be the recipients of that which satisfies, of that which is a blessing in our lives. If we are living frustrated, joyless lives then we need to examine ourselves. Frustration and a lack of joy are the fruits of rebellion, a lack of submission/surrender to the L-rdship of G-d in our lives in this age.

*The throne of G-d and of the Lamb:* In this chapter there is a coming together of G-d the Father and G-d the Son (the Lamb). There has always been a perfect unity and Oneness between the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. This chapter, however, reemphasises that unity.

**Verse 2:** *“in the midst of the street of the city. On both sides of the river is the tree of life, making fruit twelve times- for each month it gives its fruit. And the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations.”*

This tree of life is supernatural. It is spoken of as one tree but is found on both sides of the river. The temple is missing in the New Jerusalem, but so too is the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil (Genesis 2:9).

The number ‘12’ reminds us of the tribes of Israel. In the Kingdom of G-d Israel is going to be fruitful – a blessing to the nations (Gen 12:3). Trees, in their perfect state, were made to yield fruit every month. This was G-d's design and will for the trees before the fall of man – He desired the trees to be fruitful every month (hence why Yeshua, who always wanted the perfect will of G-d to be done, cursed the fig tree for not bearing continual fruit – Matthew 21:18-22, Mark 11:12-14). G-d expects the same from His people today – fruitfulness, in and out of season – 2 Timothy 4:2.

*The leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations:* We are given glorified bodies at the rapture. The people who go into the Millennial Kingdom do NOT have glorified bodies and nor do their children receive glorified bodies. Adam was barred from the Garden of Eden so that he would not partake of the tree of life and “live forever” (Genesis 3:22-24).

The people who come out of the millennium will need to eat from the tree of life so that they can “live forever” (ie experience eternity). These people are given eternal access to the tree of life (unlike Adam).

**Verse 3:** *“There will no longer be any curse. The throne of G-d and the Lamb will be in it, and His servants will serve Him.”*

No more sin, no more death, no more curse! The throne of G-d has left the heavens and has come into this new reality - the New Jerusalem. We are going to worship/serve G-d – forever.

**Verse 4:** *“They shall see His face and His name will be upon their foreheads.”*

The priestly blessing asks the L-rd to make His face shine upon His people (Numbers 6:22-27). There is a relationship between seeing the face of G-d and being blessed. The angels of children always see the face of G-d (Matthew 18:10). The angels are blessed in order to do their work in guarding the children

*His Name* is synonymous with His character. *Forehead* has to do with thoughts. We are going to think according to the character of G-d. If we walk with G-d we are called to live according to His character. His character is seen in the life, the work and the words of Messiah Yeshua. He never violated the Torah or any of the commandments (1 Peter 2:21-24, 2 Corinthians 5:21)

**Verse 5:** *“There shall no longer be any night, nor will there be a need for the light of a candle or for the light of the sun. For the L-rd G-d He will shine upon them, and they shall rule forever and ever.”*

Night has to do with fear. Nothing will be unknown. A time is coming when we will know ourselves as we really are (this is an idiom that means we are going to have perfect knowledge; 1 John 3:2)

*The L-rd G-d will shine upon them:* G-d created light on day 1 of Creation (Genesis 1:3-5). This was a supernatural light. He only created the sun, moon and stars on the fourth day of creation (Genesis 1:14-19). In the New Jerusalem we are going to live in this supernatural light – there will no longer be any need for the sun and moon.

**Verse 6:** *“Then he said to me: ‘These things are true and faithful. For the L-rd, the G-d of the holy prophets, sent His angel in order to show His servants all which will be quickly.’”*

‘These things’ refers to everything that this book of Revelation has revealed to us. The significance of prophecy is emphasized in the next few verses. Revelation is difficult to understand if we do not know the prophets. G-d has revealed His plan and purposes (and heart) to us through the prophets – specifically the major and minor prophets of the Old Testament (Isaiah to Malachi). G-d’s message/plan/purposes have not changed in the New Testament. Biblical prophecy has been given to us to build our faith.

It has been given to us so that we do not need to fear when terrible things begin to happen, as we will be aware of these things as well as of the final, promised outcome/victory we are going to have in Messiah! We need to be a prophetically literate people. The only way we can become literate is through reading and studying the prophecies, which G-d calls here... "*faithful and true*".

*Servants of G-d realize their absolute need to understand the revelation of the prophets. This revelation teaches us about the Kingdom of G-d and how to prepare ourselves, and others, for it (Daniel 12:3). The prophets outline for us where Israel is spiritually, and what G-d is going to do in the last days to bring Israel to submissiveness to Him.*

**Verse 7:** "*Behold I am coming quickly. Blessed are those who keep the words of this book of prophecy.*"

This word 'shortly'/'quickly' is not referring to a timeframe (next month, next year, etc- John wrote this almost 2000 years ago). This is saying that when the things prophesied about in this book begin to happen, there will be no time to prepare ourselves (physically, mentally, spiritually) as things will happen very fast. We cannot prepare for every single thing we are going to face, but being a little prepared (as prepared as we can possibly be) for what is up ahead goes a lot further than not being prepared at all. If we wait until these things begin to happen, it will be too late, and we will be caught off guard (Matthew 24:36-44).

**Verse 8:** "*For I, John, I am the one who saw and heard. It came about when I heard and saw that I fell down at the feet of the angel, who had shown me these things, to worship him.*"

First John says he *saw and heard* and then he changes the word order to *heard and saw*. This is a Hebrew idiom. It means that he saw these things (this revelation) very clearly and he heard it very clearly - so as to leave no doubt in his mind whatsoever.

John fell at the feet of the angel who was revealing this revelation to him. John linked the glory and holiness of the Kingdom to the one who was revealing it to him. The natural outcome for John was to worship. Worship is the correct response to the revelation and the holiness of the Kingdom. However, we need to make sure that the object of our worship is not man/angels/etc (hero worship of pastor, teacher, etc). Our worship should be solely directed toward G-d.

**Verse 9:** "*But the angel said to me: 'See that you do not do this, for I am your fellow servant of your brethren the prophets. The one who keeps the words of this book worship G-d.*"

There is a connection between worship and prophecy. G-d created mankind to worship Him. Prophecy is a great tool to assist us in worshipping G-d (revelation leads to worship).

**Verse 10:** "*He said to me: 'Do not seal up the words of the prophecy of this book for the time is near.'*"

This is the exact opposite of what Daniel was told (Daniel 12:4,9). This is a very important hermeneutical clue for us.

What John is telling us is that what has been revealed in the book of Revelation is key to rightly interpreting the Book of Daniel. Through the book of Revelation, we can have a better and fuller understanding of the truth found in the Book of Daniel.

**Verse 11:** *"Let the unjust continue to be unjust, and the impure continue to be impure. And the righteous let him continue to be righteous, and the holy one let him continue to be holy."*

These are John's final concluding remarks to the people reading this book. He is challenging us as to what we are going to do with the words of this prophecy. We have a choice on how we are going to live – unjustly or righteously. Are our lives going to be impacted by Revelation or not?

There are only two paths that ALL human beings choose to walk on – either the path of unrighteous (which leads to injustice and uncleanness in the eyes of G-d) or the path of righteousness (which leads to holiness). We cannot walk in this latter path by means of our own flesh, ability or wisdom. It is only possible to walk on it through redemption that comes by faith in Messiah Yeshua). There is no road in between these two. If we are not on the one, then we ARE on the other.

**Verse 12:** *"Behold, I am coming quickly. And my reward is with me to pay/render to every man according to his deeds."*

Messiah Yeshua is coming back to judge. Judgment can be understood in two ways – condemnation or vindication. He will judge us based upon our works. Our salvation, and eternal life, is not dependant on our works. However, the fruit of salvation (the proof that we are truly saved) is good works. This verse is talking about whether our works are going to be acceptable to G-d or whether they are going to be rejected by Him. In eternity, will we have something to lay at G-d's feet? Are our lives going to be seen as praiseworthy? Or will what we have done be rejected by G-d and burnt up? (1 Corinthians 3:15).

**Verse 13:** *"For I am the Alpha and Omega, The First and the Last , the Beginning and the End".*

Yeshua is speaking here, and He reveals six characteristics about Himself. The number six relates to grace. EVERYTHING is about Messiah. He began everything, and He will bring it to an end, to completion.

**Verse 14:** *"Blessed (happy) are the ones who do His commandments, the ones who wash their garments. On account of this they should have the right to the tree of life, and they might come into the city by means of the gates."*

*Do His commandments:* What commandments are these? The commandments found in Scripture. The commandments of Yeshua are not different from the commandments found in the Old Testament. The commandments in the Old Testament reveal the expectations of G-d, and nothing has changed these expectations. There are not two different types of righteousness.

If anything, the commandments that Messiah laid down are even more restrictive than those found in the Old Testament (Matthew 5:28). There is no disconnect between the law of Messiah and the law of the Old Testament. They both reveal the same truth.

There is a relationship between the *tree of life* and the cross. It is only through Messiah's work on the cross that we find life. It is only through the work done on the cross that we can be washed clean.

The *gates* are connected to the twelve tribes of Israel (Revelation 21:12-13). Those who enter into the city do so by a gate that is connected to Israel (i.e. Messiah Yeshua – John 10:9). When Ruth entered into a covenant with Naomi (Ruth 1:16) she first made a connection with the people of G-d ("your people...your G-d"). There will be no antisemites in the Kingdom of G-d.

**Verse 15:** *"For outside of the city are the dogs, the sorcerers, the harlots, the murderers, the idolaters and all who love falsehood and do falsely."*

These ones do not enter through the gates. Those who enter into the Kingdom of G-d do so by entering into a gate that's connected to Israel. Those who reject G-d's plans and purposes, those who reject His people, are not allowed to enter into His Kingdom through the gates.

**Verse 16:** *"I, Yeshua, have sent My servant to testify to you (all) concerning these things before the congregations. I am the Root of David and the Offspring of David, also the bright Morning Star."*

Yeshua was the one who created David (He is the root) but He was also the offspring of David. (Psalm 110:1– David says to his L-rd... i.e. Messiah)

**Verse 17:** *"The Spirit and the Bride say: 'Come'. The one who hears, let him say: 'Come.' The one who is thirsty let him come, and the one who delights let him take from the water of life freely."*

There is a relationship between the Spirit and the church. Those who are part of the family of G-d are submitted to the Holy Spirit of G-d. The first Biblical truth about the Spirit of G-d is that He brought order into creation to the point that everything was declared "Good. Very good." (Genesis 1) It is through the Spirit of G-d that order is brought into our lives, so that G-d can look at us, see our deeds and be well pleased. Freely is connected to Isaiah 55:1. Redemption cost Yeshua His life, but we receive it freely.

Messiah is coming to repair the world. He is going to set things in order.

**Verse 18:** *"I testify to everyone that hears the words of prophecy of this book: if any man adds unto them, G-d will add to him the plagues written in this book."*

Understanding the revelation of G-d (through prophecy) is emphasised. It is through the prophets that we can understand the person and the work of Messiah, as well as what G-d is going to do in order to bring about His Kingdom.

There is a horrible outcome for those who tamper with the Word of G-d by adding things to it – the plagues of the trumpet and bowl judgments will be added to their lives.

**Verse 19:** *"If anyone takes away from the words of this book of prophecy, G-d will take away his portion from the tree of life and from the holy city, written in this book."*

Tampering with the Word of G-d, by leaving things out, also leads to serious consequences. The Word of G-d is holy. We cannot add or subtract from it. We have to simply receive it as it has been revealed to us (Matthew 11:25).

**Verse 20:** *"And the One who witnessed these things he says: 'I am coming quickly.' Amen. Come now L-rd Yeshua."*

John received the revelation from an angel, but this angel received everything as a testimony from Yeshua. Revelation 1:1 tells us that this book is a revelation of Messiah Yeshua.

Amen tells us to be faithful i.e. to act in truth

**Verse 21:** *"And the grace of our L-rd Messiah Yeshua be with you all. Amen."*

It is significant that the last thing that Messiah wants to leave the reader of this book with is *grace*. The foundation of the Kingdom of G-d is the grace of G-d. Those who are going to make it into the Kingdom of G-d will only do so through the grace of G-d. We cannot earn our way into it. We cannot get in by our wisdom, abilities or performance. Only those who are the recipients of the grace of the L-rd Messiah Yeshua (ie redemption) will receive entrance into the Kingdom of G-d.