

Reflections on the Book of Revelation

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Introduction

This study is not designed for close scrutiny. Others far more proficient in biblical scholarship have written wisely & helpfully on this Book. My own goal is quite measured. I wish to suggest that the biblical paradigm set forth within God's word is extremely up to date & recommends itself to every thoughtful Christian. It is my unhappy experience that very little EARNEST, SERIOUS MINDED and CAREFUL Christianity is to be found 'out there' within the contemporary 'evangelical' Church scene. Regrettably, so much contemporary pop culture & prevalent humanistic philosophy dominates the landscape that very few are able to discern properly the general lie of the land &, knowing the times, like the children of Issachar therefore, know what they ought to do, etc. (1Chron 12:32)

I'll 'lay my cards on the table' straight away and make clear in broad brush-stroke terms where I'm going. The following are almost axiomatic to my vision for the future well-being, indeed victory, of the Christian Church & the kingdom of God:

- Reformed Soteriology
- Covenant Theology
- Sola Scriptura
- Tota Scriptura
- Postmillennial Eschatology
- Theonomy & Christian Reconstruction as per the Cultural Mandate (Gen 1:27)
- Presuppositional Apologetics (Van Til, Bahnsen et al)

I want to analyse the Book of Revelation somewhat 'sweepingly' & as it presents itself to my own eyes & way of thinking. I hope to point out key trends & themes which collectively constitute the 'Big Picture' rather than getting bogged down in any of the detail. I've always tried to comprehend the big picture & use my comprehension of it to inform and constrain the way I manage the attendant detail. This approach is typically 'SYSTEMATIC'. It's the way we ought to approach the study of any subject. If you, my reader, are not familiar with the whole of Scripture may I urge you to spend necessary long hours reading and familiarising yourself with its content. There's no short cut to accomplishing this. I bitterly regret wasted years in which I've frittered away precious hours & days pursuing pleasure & various subordinate goals - most of which have been frankly glorifying only to myself, etc. May God be merciful to me & grant that the time of pilgrimage I have remaining be spent more profitably!

I'll not be definitive regarding my understanding of the true interpretation of the Book. I dare to suppose that there may actually be room for MORE THAN ONE PROPHETIC SIGNIFICATION. I am very much drawn by both the (partial) Preterist school of thought and the Historicist school of thought. I am most certainly POSTMILLENNIAL & reckon that orthodox Christianity for the greater part of two millennia has been just that!

Chapter 1

The blessing (v3) of God is promised for those who read, hear & keep God's Word. This blessing is characteristic of God who is our MAKER. As His CREATURE we are hard-wired to receive from Him His truth/blessing. The condition He lays down for us to do so is implied here – we must be EARNEST, not merely reading but HEARING. That requires great effort. Moreover, we must OBEY & HEED what God has to say. I have known a good many so called 'Christians' who simply don't like what God says & effectively justify themselves in rejecting it. Get down on your knees now & assure God that YOU are totally surrendered to His will & to His instruction. Otherwise read no further!

The immediate THEATRE of engagement was the seven Churches of Asia – real people in real places in God’s world – i.e. on earth!

Jesus is here recognised as NOW the RULER OF THE KINGS OF THE EARTH (v5). NB. It is the tendency of contemporary non-covenantal Christianity to deny Christ’s PRESENT KINGSHIP. Instead, the kingdom of Christ is effectively POSTPONED until after Christ’s return. We’ll return to this a lot!

Christians today are designated ‘KINGS & PRIESTS’ to God. Our purpose is here stipulated: to bring Christ GLORY through the advancement & exercise of HIS DOMINION in the earth! (6)

1v7,8: Behold, He is coming with clouds, and every eye will see Him, even they who pierced Him. And all the tribes of the earth will mourn because of Him. Even so, Amen. “I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End,” says the Lord, “who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty.”

I suspect that these verses are a brief SUMMARY of the rest of the Book. Everything is here in miniature! Christ is to unleash IN EARTH HISTORY a series of providential judgements the result of which will be (i) REALISATION among covenant breakers of their treason & (ii) the FULL establishment of Christ’s kingdom.

The vision of 1:9-20 reinforces this BIG PICTURE. Christ is LORD of time & eternity & is RULING in His Churches (7 lampstands/stars). As per Christ’s warnings to Israel of old (Deut 27-28) cursing or blessing will attend obedience/disobedience.

Chapters 2&3

The seven Churches are (i) commended, (ii) reprov'd & (iii) encouraged by Christ Himself in very clear terms! The table below summarises them:-

Commendations	Disapprobations	Reward/encouragement
Hatred of those who are evil	Formalism/loss of affection/heart love for God	Fruit of Tree of Life!
Testing of authenticity of Church leadership	Tolerance for Balaam’s doctrine – urging Balak to put a stumbling block in the Church > idolatry & sexual immorality	Crown of life
Hatred for Nocolaitans		Kept from 2 nd death
Perseverance under persecution FROM FALSE CHRISTIANS in Church!	Sufferance of ‘Jezebel’ – false prophecy inciting immorality & false worship	Power over nations! (Ps 2)
Rejection of COMPROMISED Church – which is SATANIC	Hypocrisy – nominalism, not really alive	Be watchful, strengthen the things that remain
Be willing to be in the minority – a visible remnant with undefiled garments	Luke warmness, blindness, spiritual complacency; rejection of true righteousness, lack of thorough repentance	Listen & hear!

Notes

- 2:2-3 Christ’s commendation for labouring for HIS NAME’s SAKE. The goal of redemption is just that. That Christ’s name be honoured & hallowed among men.
- 2:6 Whoever the Nicolaitans were, note that it was highly honourable to hate their deeds! We may likewise duly HATE the misdeeds of those subvert the true Gospel of the kingdom of Christ.
- 2:13 The obvious implication of this verse is that the VISIBLE expression of Christ’s Church is not to be conflated with its INVISIBLE counterpart.
- 2:14 Three errors are here highlighted: (i) Balaam subtly sabotaging the entrance of Israel into Canaan (ii) respect for idols & (iii) sexual immorality. These collectively comprise the Church’s shortcomings down through time. The conquest of Canaan represents the establishment of Christ’s kingdom in

the earth & the overthrow/displacement of pagan religion. Idolatry is committed when the saints of Christ wittingly or unwittingly respect various 'worldly' (pagan) authorities. Sexual immorality is the chief consequence & primary motivation of the flesh – a life given over to personal pleasure & fleshly gratification. Self-government is compromised, marriage and the family is undermined & the salvation of wider society is denied.

- 2:20 Jezebel AGAIN is indicted for promoting the same three sins! (i) false teaching undermining the rule of the legitimate king (ii) sexual immorality & (iii) idolatry.
- 2:26 The reference from Ps 2 is most pertinent.
- 3:10 The 'hour of trial' coming upon the whole earth aptly describes this present 'Church age' – the fullness of times during which Christ increasingly (i) judges the world for its rebellion in Adam & (ii) establishes His reign & rule in the earth! Thus we are all under Christ's probation (testing!)
- 3:11 Christians are called to promote Christ's dominion throughout the world. The crown here symbolises the Christian's realisation of those 'crown rights' of Christ. Some sadly, forfeit their crowns to false authorities, etc. How fitting then that in the consummation of the ages, Mt Zion - the universal kingdom of Christ - will be honoured with the names of those saints who refused to compromise this principle.
- 3:20 This most wonderful verse speaks not so much of being born again, etc. Rather, it draws attention again to the loss of conviction within the visible church of their dominion mandate. The key thing to notice is the reward – a seat alongside Christ on His throne! The imagery is clear. Christ overcame the world through suffering & obedience, so must the Christian. The chief motivation in all of this is Christ's kingly reign & the Christian's determination to have this truth realised within the world. 'Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven'. (Matt 6:10)

Summary

Whether the seven messages to the churches of Asia are to be comprehended *preteristically* (essentially fulfilled in 1st century) or else *historistically* (signifying the present 'Church age') is almost inconsequential. What we must glean is the idea that Christ is reigning & advancing the cause of His kingdom. The visible churches are to be the instrumentality by/through which Christ advances that goal. NB. At times, the actual visible church stands in the way & subverts that goal!!

Chapter 4

This chapter opens with the CULMINATION of Christ's messages to the 7 Churches. The vision – showing what must take place afterwards – comprises EASY SYMBOLISM. The GENERAL picture is one of CHRIST RULING IN HEAVEN. The 24 elders signify OT Israel (12 tribes) & NT Church (12 Apostles), i.e. one redeemed company of RULING saints. Judgements (lightning, thundering & voices) issued from the throne – the 24 elders perceived them!

The sea of glass is the population of the world now calm & sanctified. No more a restless sea, casting up mire!

The FOUR LIVING CREATURES are reminiscent of Isaiah's vision (Ch 6). Ezekiel (1:4-28; 10:1-22) identifies the same with the cherubim commissioned by God to safeguard the entrance to the paradise of Eden (Gen 3:24). Philip Mauro¹ opines that these FOUR LIVING CREATURES signify the purpose of God to REOPEN earth/Eden to gain access to the tree of life! "The cherubim stand as the sign of God's everlasting covenant concerning the earth & man, and as the pledge of its accomplishment."

The chapter concludes with a celebration / reaffirmation of the Creator/Creature distinction & its massive signification. The goal of redemption is to RECONSTRUCT the proper perspective on this!!

Chapter 5

This entire chapter sets forth a similar theme as that already stated: that Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God, central to God's ancient (eternal) decree has realised by His death & resurrection the possibility of fulfilment of God's ancient decree to Adam & Eve – to have dominion to the glory of God throughout the earth. Such is the plain meaning of the THREE SONGS! Man has been raised to his original perfection & made competent to rule & reign with (for) Christ as God's vicegerent throughout the earth. EVERY CREATURE including the ANGELS! - was now to recognise man's dominion in Christ. The SCROLL here is a little mysterious in its symbolic significance. It seems to represent the ETERNAL DECREE of God. Hence v3 reminds us of St Paul's Rm 11:

Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past finding out! "For who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has become His counsellor?" "Or who has first given to Him and it shall be repaid to him?" For of Him and through Him and to Him are all things, to whom be glory forever. Amen. (Rom 11:33-36)

The incense (= prayers) of the elders further confirm this identity. God condescends to fulfil His decree even as we His saints make prayers and supplications to Him, etc. Again Mauro agrees. His own reference is especially drawn from Ps 2:

"I will declare the decree: the Lord has said to Me, 'You are My Son, today I have begotten You. Ask of Me, and I will give You the nations for Your inheritance, (Ps 2:6-8)

Chapter 6

The Seals: these then are the UNFOLDING THROUGH TIME OF GOD'S JUDGEMENTS IN THE EARTH. We must recognise & accept the SOVEREIGNTY OF GOD in History. NOTHING HAPPENS BY CHANCE. All of history is the playing out of God's just rule & reign. As Daniel notes so plainly for us,

And at the end of the time I, Nebuchadnezzar, lifted my eyes to heaven, and my understanding returned to me; and I blessed the Most High and praised and honoured Him who lives forever: For His dominion is an everlasting dominion, and His kingdom is from generation to generation. All the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing; He does according to His will in the army of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth. No one can restrain His hand or say to Him, "What have You done?" At the same time my reason returned to me, and for the glory of my kingdom, my honour and splendour returned to me. My counsellors and nobles resorted to me, I was restored to my kingdom, and excellent majesty was added to me. Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise and extol and honour the King of heaven, all of whose works are truth, and His ways justice. And those who walk in pride He is able to put down. (Dan 4:34-37)

I make a decree that in every dominion of my kingdom men must tremble and fear before the God of Daniel. For He is the living God, and steadfast forever; His kingdom is the one which shall not be destroyed, and His dominion shall endure to the end. He delivers and rescues, and He works signs and wonders in heaven and on earth, who has delivered Daniel from the power of the lions. (Dan 6:26-27)

The First Seal – A White Horse

The conquering white horse speaks symbolically of Christ roving through the earth in the spirit of the Prince of Psalm 2. The kings of the earth – all humanistic authority - are His targets!

The Second Seal – Fiery Red Horse

This horse speaks of war / warfare. God has made full use of the very obvious instrument of WAR to exercise temporal judgement on His creatures. Our mutual animosity is readily utilised by God to exact divine judgement on 'the inhabitants of the earth'. The Book of Job warns against us making

a simplistic judgement as we attempt to 'join the dots'. But plainly armies are pawns in God's Hand. This is crystal clear throughout OT prophecy.

The Third Seal – Scarcity

The black horse & commercial scales speak symbolically of the ruthlessness of worldly commerce which God readily makes use of to further His purpose of judging the earth. NB. There is nothing intrinsically sinister with human trade. The oil & the wine are good & honourable merchandise. Rather it is the spirit of avarice, pride & covetousness that corrupts capitalistic enterprise. The attachment of a price for a commodity is an honourable procedure. But financial trouble may well be the result of God's finger of judgement.

The Fourth Seal – Death

Death by whatever means (sword, hunger, beasts of the earth) is the principal means whereby God wakes us up to reality. The attendant pain & suffering we experience are designed to function as God's megaphone (CS Lewis) alerting us to the very real danger that confronts us as we move daily closer to death. How few heed the warning; how few hear the cry; how many slip over the cliff top into eternity!

The Fifth Seal - Martyrdom

How comforting & sobering it is to be here REASSURED that when death occurs for the believer ON ACCOUNT OF PERSECUTION that too is decreed by God & therefore serviceable to His glorious goal of the subjugation of the kings of the earth. Truly, the blood of the saints is the seed of the Church. (Tertullian)

The Sixth Seal – Cosmic Disturbances

What we commonly refer to as 'natural disasters' must likewise be comprehended as harbingers of divine judgement. Earthquakes, regime changes, hurricanes, ominous happenings, etc all serve PROVIDENTIALLY to confront fallen, rebel humanity with his treasonous attempt to subvert God's rightful rule & reign in His universe. This was plainly the interpretation Jesus put upon (i) the death of the Galileans & (ii) the collapse of the Tower of Siloam (Lu 13:1-5)

Chapter 7

The Sealed of Israel are viewed here experiencing REPRIEVE before final judgement. Their sealing marks them out as 'belonging to the Lord'. The mark – on their foreheads – is a clear reference to the fact that they lived in accordance with God's Law. These 'sealed saints' represent the entire universal Church of Christ – 144,000 representing OT saints & an innumerable multitude representing the NT Church. Collectively, they give thanks to God in worship. They 'came out of the great tribulation' – i.e. were brought THROUGH or CONSUMED BY the season of God's universal judgement of mankind as per Heb 11:32-38.

And what more shall I say? For the time would fail me to tell of Gideon and Barak and Samson and Jephthah, also of David and Samuel and the prophets: who through faith subdued kingdoms, worked righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, became valiant in battle, turned to flight the armies of the aliens. Women received their dead raised to life again. Others were tortured, not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection. Still others had trial of mockings and scourgings, yes, and of chains and imprisonment. They were stoned, they were sawn in two, were tempted, were slain with the sword. They wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented of whom the world was not worthy. They wandered in deserts and mountains, in dens and caves of the earth.

The concluding vision is one of consummation. These saints of God from OT & NT have come through Great Tribulation to their final destination - unbroken fellowship with the Lamb.

Chapter 8

The opening of the seventh seal corresponds to the end of the previous vision. It is designated here a 'Prelude to the Seven Trumpets'. Mauro identifies the central Angel as Christ who offers with much incense (His own prayers) the prayers of the saints & takes fire from the altar to commence a succession of judgements on the earth. Each trumpet signals new/further temporal/earthly judgements.

The Historicist approach would want to attach particular HISTORICAL significance to each of these blasts. I'm a little hesitant to do so. My respect for Historicism persists but I find Mauro most convincing. However, while Mauro is ambivalent, my Postmillennialism is steadfast.

The OVERARCHING thing to notice is the intended purpose of these judgements – that the inhabitants of the earth might be woken up to acknowledge the 'crown rights' of Jesus Christ as Creator/Redeemer. WHY, WHY, WHY does this simple matter get overlooked?? Why is the Christian Church in general so hesitant to connect the dots in this OVERWHELMINGLY OBVIOUS SENSE!!??

Chapter 9

The 'fallen star' is plainly a reference to Satan. The bottomless pit = Hell – the final destination for all of God's enemies. NB. God Himself retains sovereign control over all of Satan's subversive activity – the key was given to himby God Himself!

The darkening of the sun corresponds to the growing apostasy of the Bride. The locusts & their poison represent the destructive nature (fruit) of heresy/false teaching.

Idolatry & Sexual Immorality

The Sixth Trumpet is symbolically significant no doubt. Whatever their specific identity, their purpose AGAIN is very clear: to provoke mankind to repentance! (see 9:20).

But the rest of mankind, who were not killed by these plagues, did not repent of the works of their hands, that they should not worship demons, and idols of gold, silver, brass, stone, and wood, which can neither see nor hear nor walk. And they did not repent of their murders or their sorceries or their sexual immorality or their thefts.

I wish to spend a little time unpacking the last two verses (20-21). I am convinced that we live in a time when ALL OF THESE SINS ARE WIDESPREAD! Let me try to explain. The number of the horsemen commissioned to go forth by divine decree is stated as 200,000,000. This is a VAST NUMBER! It's significance is simple: it's vast!! We are told here then of something seemingly UNIVERSAL in scope & manifestation. ONE THIRD of mankind was to DIE as a result of their plague/judgement. This fraction again signifies the WIDESPREAD CHARACTER of these sins. I reckon the key to their identity is given in the final TWO VERSES (see above). What are they?

(i) the WORSHIP OF DEMONS

The Bible is emphatic regarding God. He is our Creator. He is SOVEREIGN & has so constructed us, His creatures, that we are continuously aware of His superintendence of the universe. As His creatures, we owe Him the worship of our hearts. What we know of God is PLAIN – for God has made it plain, ever since the creation of the world at the dawn of time His invisible attributes have been clearly seen – perceived through what He has made (Rom 1:18-20). In Him, we live and move and have our being (Acts 17:28). Fear of Him is the beginning of wisdom, knowledge &

understanding (Prov 1:7). Being creatures made in HIS IMAGE we are confronted by Him in every conversation.

The SUBVERSION of this true worship – acknowledgement of God - is explicable in terms of ‘the worship of demons’. Ultimately, every manifestation of will-worship or false gods, etc, is traceable to DEMONIC influence in our psyche. Satan sought to displace the true worship of God with worship of himself. Those of us (humankind) that subscribe to ANY OTHER religious agenda than biblical Christianity are essentially caught up in this mal-practice.

(ii) IDOLATRY – worship of false gods (gold, silver, brass, stone & wood)

What then are these FALSE GODS we honour? What are they METAPHYSICALLY? If not literal wood, brass, silver, etc. What are they in contemporary life & society?

Answer: they are THOSE THINGS WHICH CONSTRAIN OUR thinking & our behaviour. They are the CONSCIOUS OR UNCONCIOUS AUTHORITIES to which we yield. Alas, most of us are so blind & hardened in our sin that we cannot recognise them for what they are. I am happy to help attach a bit more flesh on their bones. Are you, my reader, willing to have them exposed?? Calvin said famously that our hearts are IDOL FACTORIES. He evidently perceived the widespread prevalence of idolatry in contemporary Geneva. But where is it practiced & exemplified today?? The following present themselves as AUTHORITATIVE REFERENCE POINTS in our thinking. I will attempt to identify how each in turn manifests itself in PRACTICE.

(A) Christian TRADITION – we are not surprisingly loyal to a perceived traditional wisdom we have inherited along with our fellow saints. We tend to believe WHAT OTHERS GENERALLY BELIEVE and are relatively poor at doing what the noble BEREANS did routinely in Acts (17:11). These BELIEVERS EXAMINED THE SCRIPTURES DAILY TO SEE WHETHER THEY WERE BEING TAUGHT THE TRUTH!! How few there are who seem anxious to follow their example. How rare it is to converse with a fellow saint & find that they are competent to warrant their cherished beliefs on various proof-texts & passages, etc. The IDOLS we ‘kow-tow’ to in such instances are various LOCAL CHURCH AUTHORITIES (pastors, leaders, etc). ‘Papal authority’ is alive and well within contemporary Protestantism. Dissent from what is taught publicly from the pulpit is typically frowned upon as an expression of INSUBORDINATION or disrespect, etc. In reality, those indicting the true protestants are themselves forgetting the rallying cry of the Reformation – Sola Scriptura! Their IDOL = TRADITION. Hear these sobering words from Jesus’ own mouth:

“Why do you also transgress the commandment of God because of your tradition? For God commanded, saying, ‘Honour your father and your mother’; and, ‘He who curses father or mother, let him be put to death.’ But you say, ‘Whoever says to his father or mother, “Whatever profit you might have received from me is a gift to God” — then he need not honour his father or mother.’ Thus you have made the commandment of God of no effect by your tradition. Hypocrites! Well did Isaiah prophesy about you, saying: ‘These people draw near to Me with their mouth, And honour Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me. And in vain they worship Me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.’ ” [Matt 15:3-9]

(B) Personal AUTONOMY - Personalism (existentialism) is so widespread & systemic in contemporary culture that we hardly even notice it. Indeed we really cannot see the wood for the trees! EVERY VOICE AROUND US takes it for granted that we are to respect one another’s private judgement. This attitude has most certainly sneaked into contemporary Christian thought. Objective, propositional truth is a thing of the past – but it happens to be the only ‘Truth’ worth having. Jesus said, “You will know THE Truth” not YOUR Truth. The chief intellectual sin we commit is NOETIC SIN. We commit this sin when our thinking is unhinged - lacking in Scriptural warrant. LOUD AND STRONG is the lobby today within evangelicalism that decries propositional objective

truth – i.e. truth which like $2+2=4$ is universally & demonstrably true! Those most guilty of it RUN A MILE FROM FORMAL ENGAGEMENT WITH DISSENTING VOICES. They champion the right of the LOCAL, VISIBLE CHURCH to assert its own distinctive species of ‘Christian’ truth. They are the sole arbiters of what is ‘central, principal & weighty,’ etc. They denounce those who ‘rock the boat’ indicting their motive as seditious, unloving & generally disrespectful of LOCAL CHURCH AUTHORITY. Their IDOL = THEMSELVES! They represent (unwittingly no doubt!) a new ‘protestant papacy’.

(C) Political Correctness – Too many Christians capitulate readily to the cultural expectation put upon them by the Establishment (political, philosophical, etc). There exists another ‘Caesar’ who must be honoured IN THE PUBLIC SQUARE. Public ‘Truth’ ever TRUMPS private religious conviction. Woe betide that Christian who questions this facile assumption. The IDOL in this case = the STATE. Statism is the idolatry of 99% of contemporary Christians. They fail to believe & follow Christ’s affirmation given to us in the Great Commission: “ALL AUTHORITY IN HEAVEN & ON EARTH” has been given to Me, therefore GO, etc”. IDOLATORS of this hue tend to propose a sort of ‘TWO KINGDOMS’ notion of the world: (a) a SPIRITUAL kingdom of Christ which manifests itself ‘spiritually’ & results in folk being saved, regenerate, etc & coming to Church!! & (b) a worldly kingdom governed by NATURAL LAW more physical, material & political in nature. Christ/Christianity has nothing to do with such a realm except via Common Grace – it is ‘The World’. Our business, we are reassured concerns ‘heaven’ – beyond time & space. Such IDOLATRY = Pietism. It regards the scope of God’s kingdom as co-terminus with the sphere of the private (individual), family & Church.

(D) Pragmatism – this form of IDOLATRY disavows its Biblical scruples & in their place proposes a PRAGMATIC approach to all things. In reality, this is merely an extension of the privatisation approach to truth. Christian duty is abandoned & sacrificed on the altar of ‘What works’ and ‘what is practicable under the circumstances’. Doves of Christians I talk to commit this sin & reckon that fidelity to Christ might well be a source of trouble for the Christian Church. Well it might! But that didn’t stop centuries of martyrdom during the ten Roman emperors’ reigns through three centuries until Constantine!

(E) Postmodernism – these IDOLATORS, often longstanding evangelical Christians, effectively deny the doctrine of the PERSPICUITY of Scripture. They insist that the process of arriving at truth is INEVITABLY fraught with trouble. The prevalence of SO MANY variant voices & opinions is proof enough that ‘True Truth’ is unfathomable – beyond our grasp. Unwittingly, this ‘baseline’ conviction they hold on to tenaciously! It is axiomatic. Thus it is a sordid IDOL in their mind, polluting all of their thinking – disinclining them from the noble & honourable pursuit of truth.

In case anyone doubts the correspondence between ‘idolatry’ & ‘false ways of thinking’, etc., consider this excerpt from Psalm 81:8-15

“Hear, O My people, and I will admonish you! O Israel, if you will listen to Me! There shall be no foreign god among you; nor shall you worship any foreign god. I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt; open your mouth wide, and I will fill it. “But My people would not heed My voice, and Israel would have none of Me. So I gave them over to their own stubborn heart, to walk in their own counsels. “Oh, that My people would listen to Me, that Israel would walk in My ways! I would soon subdue their enemies, and turn My hand against their adversaries. The haters of the Lord would pretend submission to Him, but their fate would endure forever.

(iii) Murder

Notice that ‘murder’ is a CRIME not merely a sin! The contemporary evangelical Church has washed its hands of any responsibility for the commission of CRIME out there in the civil realm. It is content

to pontificate about SIN - identifying the chief & most pernicious sins as 'staying away from church on Sunday' or else criticising certain practices & doctrines within the local Church.

Does God/Bible have anything to say about CRIME? **All crime is sin but not all sin is crime.**

Contemporary Christianity tends to locate its business within the Church/family spheres. It has abandoned any sense of responsibility it once felt for CRIMES committed in the public realm. I venture to suggest that the Bible is FULL of condemnation for BOTH sin & crime. Moreover, like ourselves, God is more offended by CRIME than SIN – though both are abhorrent to Him. The Bible reckons CRIMINAL OFFENCES & CRIMINAL SANCTIONS = the WEIGHTIER matters of God's Law (Mat 23:23). Failure to tithe the mint & cumin was a private, personal matter between one man and his Maker. Truly are we guilty of 'STRAINING OUT THE GNATS (= sins) & swallowing whole camels when we magnify our concern over private sin over our proper outrage over public crime!

Nowhere is this more apparent than with respect to abortion. On learning about abortion (in mere broad brush-strokes) a child (aged about 10) told me that he had never heard his minister pray once about the silent holocaust taking place (130,000 per year in UK) day in day out. God is not unconcerned about this situation. In this text, we learn that He is pouring out providential judgement upon us (trumpets, vials, horses, etc) with a view to WAKING US UP to the wickedness which we persist in. That is the plain meaning & significance of this indictment we read of in these verses!!

(iv) Sorceries

Sorcery is committed when 'power is gained from the assistance or control of evil spirits especially for divining' (Merriam-Webster). Once again, because the vision of God's kingdom has been lost & replaced with 'spiritual postponement' where the blessings Jesus came to supply are reduced to our own personal comfort & welfare, contemporary Christians' 'PRAYERS' tend to be consume with petitions for one another's betterment & help. Bob Dylan famously decried the notion we carry around in our heads saying, "Do you ever think just what God requires? You think He's just an errand boy to satisfy your wandering desires!" He pertinently goes on to ask, "When you gonna wake up and strengthen the things that remain?"

The Holy Spirit of God has been reduced from that all powerful divine agency by which Christ is to subdue His earthly enemies (the kings of the earth) & establish His crown rights in fulfilment of the Great Commission. Instead, the Holy Spirit today functions as a mystical source of supplementary 'spiritual' power which 'believers' invoke to wield power & authority within their own mini-empires. True, vital prayer was taught to us by Jesus Himself. It centrally included these petitions:

* 'Hallowed be Thy Name' – i.e. Forgive us Lord for tolerating the cess-pool of entertainment served up to us by Hollywood/BBC which so often result in our children learning to cuss God's Names!

* Thy kingdom come – i.e. May Christ's lordship & dominion be recognised & celebrated in EVERY ASPECT OF HUMAN LIFE, not merely when we're at Church or getting others to come along to Church!

* Thy will be done ON EARTH AS IT IS IN HEAVEN – i.e. Teach us dear Lord the precepts of Your Law. Expound to us the Ten Commandments; teach us the true scope of their application in the Civil as well as the realms of Church & Family!

* Deliver us from evil – i.e. Raise up a new generation of preachers & Church leaders who will so fear Your Name that they will courageously call for (i) the overthrow of ALL false religion [e.g. Islam, Buddhism, pantheism, secularism, voodoo, paganism, etc] (ii) the regulative principle of worship [i.e. requiring God to be worshipped according to His own prescriptions] (iii) the CRIME of blasphemy to be re-established forbidding anyone from deprecating/trashing the honour & dignity of almighty God (iv) the reintroduction of the Sabbath as a national Day of Rest & opportunity for God's creatures to seek Him, etc; the vindication of 'Young Earth Creation' and its establishment as

national orthodoxy in place of 'Darwinism & Evolutionism' (v) the overthrow of all LAWLESS authority & the establishment of the UK constitutionally as a Christian Republic where ultimate authority rests in God & His Word (the Bible) instead of the democratic opinions of sinful mobs. (vi) the recognition that abortion = murder & the reintroduction of the death penalty for duly prosecuted capital crimes. (vii) the re-establishment of the traditional FAMILY (= female mother, male father & children) with large families being seen as a token of God's rich blessing; the outlawing of pornography, prostitution, trafficking, sodomy, bestiality, etc. (viii) the establishment of an honourable money supply (i.e. not fiat currency) & the dethronement of inflation as a necessary feature of national economics. (ix) the establishment of Scripture as the FINAL ARBITER OF ALL TRUTH – i.e. not merely religious truth, HENCE the establishment of Christian Education whether independently in separate homes or collectively in schools. (x) the outlawing of all forms of gambling & the encouragement of a debt-free way of living!

(v) Sexual Immorality

The primary purpose of 'marriage' was to provide for Adam's creaturely need for companionship. God also provided through marriage (i) a vehicle for procreation & thereby the subjugation of the earth with peoples descended from Adam & Eve & (ii) a picture of the covenantal relationship between Adam & God – the Church & Christ. So central & important are each of these elements within the marriage contract that God esteems violations &/or perversions of them gravely concerning.

It is no wonder that the history of the arts (literature, poetry, drama, film, etc) is littered with accounts of either the success or its frustration of wholesome, happy marriage union. There is NOTHING quite so beautiful & spiritually invigorating than the honourable pursuit of romantic love come to fruition in an honourable & happy marriage. Such a union is quite literally, FULL OF GLORY for those who have eyes to see & ears to hear.

Wherefore there is nothing more UGLY and affronting to God's glory than the abuse & casting off of those elements of God's Law contrived to retain its happiness & peace. Sexual immorality is the chief culprit. Given what I've just stated above, it follows that any corruption of that innocence & holiness which attends sexual intimacy as ordained by God arises from illicit desire deep in the heart of the covenant breaker. Subtly, the primary motivations appear to be these:

(i) the exaltation of the AUTONOMOUS SELF – implicitly the denial of any personal defect; the insistence that fulfilment here and now can (i.e. SHOULD) be achieved without recourse to any sort of 'enslavement' to anyone else. Rebel creatures proudly suppose that they are whole & complete without the need for a marriage partnership. Practical celibacy is the result. Sexual intimacy is deemed merely 'recreational' to service the transient need of the 'flesh'. EVERY INSINUATION of personal independency represents an assault on God's most cherished institution – MARRIAGE.

(ii) a DENIAL OF THE DOMINION MANDATE – to be fruitful & multiply & fill the earth, etc (Gen 1:28). Promiscuity out of marriage, infidelity within marriage & the practice of contraception (thereby limiting the number of children to be born). Every expression of concern regarding 'overpopulation' or the need to 'cull' our progeny amounts to indignant shaking of one's fist in God's face. *Children are an heritage from the Lord. Blessed is the man who has a quiver full!* (Ps 127).

(iii) the usurpation of God's holy covenant – Marriage is designed to present before our minds a graphic representation of how we're to be in covenant relationship with our God. It is not an end in itself; rather it is a signpost to the ultimate end/goal of our existence: union with Christ. Sexual immorality perverts this perspective by the introduction of sinful/carnal desire. Illicit passions represent SIN or rather UNHOLINESS. But God is utterly HOLY. Sexual immorality represents therefore ultimately an attack on the holiness of God himself. We are to 'be still & know that God is God' (i.e. holy). Sexual immorality subversively introduces that thought into our minds that God is

UNHOLY. Those who entertain immoral thought & who capitulate to (sexually) immoral practices are at war with God whose kingdom seeks to establish holiness throughout the world to the glory of God.

(vi) Theft

Without doubt, the greatest mischief committed by humanity today in GENERAL is theft. We go through life from the cradle to the grave with these brazen assumptions: -

- + it's my life
- + this is my body
- + I have a right to my own opinion
- + it's my land, I've a right to be here
- + this is MY time, etc, ETC,.

The true, BIBLICAL perspective is, 'The earth is the Lord's & the fullness thereof' (Ps 24); our bodies are 'temples for the Holy Spirit to take up residence; our bodies belong to the Lord – we are stewards accountable to God for every word we speak every second of time & every action we undertake. The air around us belongs to God. Every breath we take warrants thanks & gratitude to Him. The organisation of history is not haphazard. Nothing happens by chance. God is just!! The enormity of our disrespect is mind-boggling but alas, few perceive this TRUE PERSPECTIVE. Most are carried along with the mainstream, orthodox outlook represented by the bullet list above. God has condescended to disclose to us His mind & the true perspective in His Word – the Bible. Alas, most of us are TOO BUSY TO READ IT and far too slow of heart to really care to take seriously its pronouncements – even those who call themselves His followers!

Recall again, the context in which this indictment takes place - Revelation Ch 9. Once again, whatever the particular nature in history signified by the bottomless pit, the smoke, the locusts, the scorpions, the crowns of gold, the breastplates etc, etc. The APPLICATION IS PLAIN ENOUGH: "But the rest of mankind, who were not killed by these plagues, did not repent of the works of their hands," (v20).

I have sought to draw attention to the urgent need for us, God's creatures created for covenant relationship with our great Creator, to repent of our small-minded, secular, autonomous & therefore rebel way of thinking & living. We need to recognise the metaphysical reality of the earth & ourselves as God's Theatre in which He is in total sovereign control bringing ALL THINGS TO PASS according to the wisdom & perfection of His ancient decree. May the Lord open our eyes & soften our hard and stony hearts! AMEN.

Revelation Chapter 10

I have just spent three weeks away from this project suffering from flu. My mind has never been far from what I have written. It is February 2018. I follow with some interest at a distance the progress of USA's President Trump. I perceive his vocation under God as a sort of Cyrus figure by whose hand deep corruption in high office might yet be stymied in preparation for a more honourable 'Christian Republic' to be re-established in the New World. I'm daring to believe that from the ashes of globalist hegemony the whole world might be woken up to a more honourable & biblical nationalism in which 'the kingdoms of this world become the kingdoms of our God and of His Christ' (Rev 11:15). This may not occur in my life time. But we'll see!

This SHORT chapter is just 10 verses! It concludes the sounding of the seven angels which, we are told, would bring the 'Mystery of God' to its climactic conclusion. NB this mystery/conclusion was evidently the subject of much OT prophecy for John tells us so in v5.

The Mighty Angel depicted in the opening verses is plainly Jesus. His standing on the sea & land signifies AGAIN His formal dominion over all. All creation is here presented as being 'under His feet' (Ps 110). This was the goal

Then comes the end, when He delivers the kingdom to God the Father, when He puts an end to all rule and all authority and power. For He must reign till He has put all enemies under His feet. The last enemy that will be destroyed is death. For "He has put all things under His feet." But when He says "all things are put under Him," it is evident that He who put all things under Him is excepted. Now when all things are made subject to Him, then the Son Himself will also be subject to Him who put all things under Him, that God may be all in all. (1 Cor 15:24-28)

The identity of 'the Little Book' is arguably a little mysterious. I suggest it references the Bible. How apt therefore that the Mighty Angel (Christ) opens it up to John!

Once again there is a close association with Judgement & the little Book. John was required to eat the book. This intimates the saints of God reading & being nourished by the Word of God. But John's experience is laid bare. His immediate experience, tasting the Word of God in his mouth was delightful – it was 'sweet as honey' (Ps 19:10, 119:103). This is PRECISELY how true saints of Christ receive & experience the Word of Truth. They make it their daily provision (Deut 8:3, Matt 4:4) & allow it to constrain their outlook & worldview.

However, as they are subject to its counsel they discover, over the course of time, that its message is one of impending doom & judgement upon the world with an urgent & fervent call to repentance. That message, borne faithfully to all covenant breakers inevitably brings scorn, ridicule, persecution & fierce hostility. Too numerous are the Scripture verses that forewarn the faithful disciple of trouble & tribulation, etc. Here's a couple:

In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world. (Jn 16:33)

Remember the word that I said to you, 'A servant is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you. (Jn 15:20)

The prophecy of Jeremiah is an extensive articulation of (i) the faithfulness of Jeremiah calling ALL NATIONS to repent & (ii) the hostility & rejection of his message.

Thus, the Little Book is found in the stomach to leave John with a bitter taste for there, IN HIS INMOST BEING, it would require him to declare God's unpalatable truth to all of creation. For the chapter (Rev 10) concludes by telling us that the message was specifically formulated for '*many peoples, nations, tongues, and kings*'.

Revelation Chapter 11

We arrive at what feels simultaneously to me like the most exciting & the most mysterious chapter so far. Let me reiterate that I am anxious to avoid getting bogged down with the detail but am rather content to trace what lies more obviously on the surface. I may venture to interpret some of the symbolism but would do so cautiously & very much with the conviction that I may well be mistaken. Here goes!

The temple of God & those who worship there, etc (1) suggests the international visible Church. Mauro reckons the measurement & rejected outer court 'trodden under foot' speaks of the apostate (false) Church who come under God's temporal judgement for 42 months (= 42 x 30 days = 1260 days). FN Lee subscribes to the 'day/year principle of prophetic interpretation'. Which suggests that the timescale for this epoch is about one and a quarter millennia! The two witnesses & lampstands seem to represent the faithful remnant within the visible Church. The fire is the Word of God carried along in power by the Spirit

of God. Verse 6 suggests to me that much power & privilege is supplied to the true Church of Christ to invoke God's curse (or blessing!) through prayer upon her enemies.

Verse 7 suggests that we are to anticipate GREAT ADVERSITY against the Truth to the extent that the Truth itself shall seem overwhelmed and destroyed. Verse 8 implies that the overthrow/destruction of the Truth will be so extensive & so PUBLIC (in the street) that it will be universally mourned. Verse 8 hints strongly that this devastation will essentially occur WITHIN THE VISIBLE CHURCH! Jerusalem is here co-terminus with Sodom & Egypt! Verse 9 intimates that faithful saints (from peoples, tribes, tongues and nations) will resist the death/burial of God's Truth for a 'tribulation period' (= 3.5 days = 3.5 years = 1260 days, etc). All of this while the world (those who otherwise generally 'dwell on the earth') rejoice over the passing of God's Truth!

Verse 11. But God will RESURRECT His Truth from the ashes just like Lazarus, etc! This to me corresponds very much to a sweeping overview of the last 1000 years or with the Truth finding new manifestation during the Reformation & even latterly with the working out of the more comprehensive gospel of Theonomy & Christian Reconstruction – nothing novel, but rather as Dr Joe Boot describes it – the New Puritanism.

The resurrection of the two witnesses invoked great fear on those looking on – both within & outside the visible Church! (v11). Verses 12 & 13 taken together signify the powerful effect of this RESURGENCE OF TRUTH in the public square. The effect of Christianity's apologetical vindication would be nothing less than 'earth shaking' inducing the inhabitants of the earth to tremble & quake with much fear & foreboding. At last, the glory due to God's high name was to be realised & manifest within His creatures! All of this in fulfilment of the prophetic anticipation rehearsed by the Psalmist:

O Lord, our Lord, how excellent is Your name in all the earth, who have set Your glory above the heavens! Out of the mouth of babes and nursing infants You have ordained strength, because of Your enemies, that You may silence the enemy and the avenger. (Ps 8:1-2)

The death of 7000 people signifies DIVINE judgement the end (goal) of which was the inducement to repentance of those that remained. We have noticed this theme recurring lots throughout the Book!

The second woe is past & a third woe was to follow! The seventh (final) trumpet blown by the seventh (final) angel speaks plainly of the FINALITY in general of God's work of Redemption! This FINALITY finds definitive expression in verse 15 – the climactic verse of the whole of Scripture! This verse was used by Handel in His magnificent Hallelujah chorus. How very fitting indeed! Here is the clearest & plainest articulation of what it is we – the People of God – are to look forwards to in earth's future history! My personal hunch is that it will happen sometime in the next 100 years or so. Thereafter I anticipate a sustained period of earthly peace & prosperity under Christ's covenantal blessing during a period of time often referred to as 'the Millennium'. During that chapter of earth history, as here stated clearly, 'the kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever!' Why not? For this is precisely what Jesus taught us to anticipate & therefore pray for daily.

The twenty four elders signify the Church universal whose oversight & dominion UNDER CHRIST have led them to exercise TOTAL dominion (scientific, political, historical, etc, etc) throughout all metaphysical reality in the theatre of the created order. Their song (verses 17 – 18) is most apt & itself articulates the great victory of Christ:

"We give You thanks, O Lord God Almighty, the One who is and who was and who is to come, because You have taken Your great power and reigned. The nations were angry, and Your wrath has come, and the time of the dead, that they should be judged, and that You should reward Your servants the prophets and the saints, and those who fear Your name, small and great, and should destroy those who destroy the earth."

V17 – Christ over 2+ millennia has wielded great power PROVIDENTIALLY and has GRADUALLY subdued His enemies & put ALL THINGS UNDER HIS FEET (Ps 110 – the most quoted psalm in the NT).

V18 – the great Climax of the ages points to the final overthrow of ALL God’s enemies & the final vindication of all true saints – those who fear God’s Name as servants & prophets, etc. NB. the indictment of unbelief – i.e. those who ‘destroy the earth’. The earth itself is God’s creation (creature!). It is often personified throughout Scripture & cries out when innocent blood is spilled upon it & yearns for its Day of deliverance from the curse of God when ‘the sons of God are revealed & it itself is delivered from its bondage to decay (Rom 8:18-22).

Verse 19, the concluding verse of this chapter strongly endorses this understanding of the 11th chapter. The opening of the temple of God in heaven speaks of the unveiling of God’s mystery. The presence of the ark of His covenant speaks of God’s faithful fulfilment of His ancient promises AND of the manifestation of the righteousness of the His Law – the 10 commandments. The lightning, thundering, etc are all symbolic significations of God’s presence & His activity among His covenant people. This activity finds great expression in the providential judgements He pours out upon the earth under various guises.

Chapter 12

Chapters twelve and thirteen present to us (a) a sweeping summary of earth history [Ch 12] followed by (b) a summary of the period of time between Jesus’ two advents [Ch 13] – i.e. the last 2000 years or so. Chapter 12 is significantly easier to decipher than Ch 13. Here’s first then are what I reckon are relatively plain & clear in Ch 12:

- The woman = the ancient Hebrew Church. However, her continuance after the birth of the child intimates that she actually represents the universal Church, now comprising Jew & Gentile. Note that she was robed with the Sun & Moon & 12 stars intimating her cultural mandate (given to Adam in Gen 1:28) to exercise rule & dominion in the earth
- The child = Jesus. The arrival of Christ into the world occurred with considerable attendant upheaval for, ‘He came to His own, but His own did not receive Him’ (Jn 1:11)
- The great, fiery, red dragon = Satan. Personally unseen but animating various causes & individuals to oppose & frustrate Jesus’ mission. His heads, horns & diadems imply that authority would be exercised through various instrumental agencies over several epochs of time
- The drawing down of stars from heaven speaks plainly of the angelic apostasy alluded to by Isaiah (14:12-17). NB. We cannot know how numerous these legions of demons are. However, that we are told that 1/3 mutinied informs us that a significant percentage of God’s agency for good are now active in subverting God’s purposes & seeking to advance those of Satan, etc. Most obviously here is the allusion to the Herodian massacre of Bethlehem’s infant sons. Herod, the civil authority, was the principal instrument through which Satan wielded his sword.
- The comment by John concerning the prospect of the child to ‘rule the nations with a rod of iron’ references the Psalmist’s happy anticipation given to us throughout Ps 2. NB. This ‘big picture’ is suffocated in most contemporary evangelical Churches where the surrogate ‘big picture’ is of a Jesus come to forgive us for our personal sins & supply us with the psychological encouragement that when we die (or when Jesus finally returns) we will go to be with Him in heaven for ever. The catching up to heaven’s throne of the Child references Jesus’ Ascension – so aptly depicted in Ps 2!
- The fleeing of the woman into the wilderness suggests, I reckon, the patient time of waiting for the Church between the two advents. This epoch is dealt with in Ch 13. Suffice to notice that (i) the Church is KEPT throughout a period of tribulation (in a place prepared for her) & (ii) she would be nourished by God raising up gifted teachers, leaders & theologians, etc. This has plainly happened over the course of the last two millennia. Great service has been rendered to the Church by faithful teachers & theologians whose writings are now readily available & accessible (either cheaply or freely!) over the World Wide Web. There is no excuse today for remaining in ignorance. True sheep hear the voice of Christ in Augustine, Luther, Calvin, Jonathan Edwards, Van Til, to mention

but a drop in the ocean! Alas, many too many are content to hear & consider only what is served up weekly (& often weakly!) by the local minister who all too frequently has become unduly protective of his 'definitive' version of truth. This is NOT to denigrate the local Church but rather to point out what is blindingly obvious – the full spectrum of doctrinal idiosyncrasies (Baptist, Methodist, Presbyterian, Anglican, etc,) cannot collectively BE the truth of Scripture but rather corrupted approximations of it. Where is the ambition for an honourable push for unity (principled ecumenism) among the various factions? Why is it so painfully difficult to engage with mutual regard for one another as fellow saints but with this conviction: Truth is a UNIT & therefore disparate expressions of it cannot be tolerated!

And I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual people but as to carnal, as to babes in Christ. I fed you with milk and not with solid food; for until now you were not able to receive it, and even now you are still not able; for you are still carnal. For where there are envy, strife, and divisions among you, are you not carnal and behaving like mere men? For when one says, "I am of Paul," and another, "I am of Apollos," are you not carnal? (1Cor 3:1-4)

The period of time = 1260 days corresponds to the same period of 'time, times & half a time' = three and a half years in days. It could be understood literally but in its context in this book, full of symbolism, it seems prudent to comprehend it merely as a period of time of known duration to God & therefore part of His good purpose & pleasure for His children.

- Verses 7 – 9 allude plainly to Satan's banishment from heaven to prosecute great tribulation for the Church on the earth. Surely we have lived through centuries of such persecution & trouble! Happily, we are told that 'the dragon and his angels did not prevail' – wherefore we are given good confidence to hope, pray for & expect a Christian victory in the warfare we are called to participate in! Note that Satan's principal business appears to be 'the DECEPTION of the whole world'. Wherefore, learning to discern TRUTH from error is of the utmost importance!
- Verse 10 supplies us with further proof that Christian victory over Satan is to be expected THIS SIDE OF ETERNITY!

Chapter 13

This chapter introduces more difficult metaphors. I'll venture cautiously(!) to unpack some of them!

- The best commentaries identify these two beasts with various political powers down through time. Most credible, it seems to me, is something like the following.
- FIRST beast out of the sea = various empires/kingdoms since dawn of time: e.g. Mesopotamian (Nimrod?), Egyptian, Assyrian, Babylonian, Medo-persian, Greek (Alexandrian), Roman...
- Its TEN horns may correspond to the ten (or so) Roman emperors culminating with Constantine whose conversion to Christianity represented such a blow to subversive satanic activity (Rushdoony & Mauro)
- The healing of this death blow signifies the effective recovery of romish tyranny under the Papal emperor (the civic authority yielding to the cultic authority of the 'Holy Roman Empire', etc. At its zenith this beastly manifestation of satanic influence was so powerful that the generality of humanity was under its spell & thus inclined to say, "Who is like the beast, and who can fight against it?"
- The haughty & blasphemous mouth of this Papal antichrist ventured to adjust even the Ten Commandments (removing #2 & dividing 10 into 10a & 10b) and assumed the title: Vicar of Christ on Earth.
- The forty-two months signifies, as it generally does, season of trial & affliction for the people of God who were sorely persecuted by this Papal beast for centuries.
- But God is sovereign, hence verses 9-10! All proceeds in full accordance with the eternal decree, however dark it may seem.
- The SECOND beast is less easy to identify. Prof Francis Nigel Lee provides a compelling survey of these closing chapters of Revelation & their historical fulfilment in [this](#) lecture. Highly

recommended! Amazingly, Lee suggests what I have occasionally wondered – that there is room in our interpretation to allow for BOTH preterism & historicism!

- The source of the FIRST beast was the sea – signifying its origin in pagan politics; the source of the SECOND beast was the land – signifying its origin in Christian civilisation.
- With Lee, I would venture to identify this beast with the rise of secular humanism in general over the post reformation epoch. Here's why:
- Religious authority is synonymous with ultimate authority (Rushdoony). After the Renaissance/Reformation scientific enlightenment began to prevail. Accordingly, much phenomena that had been generally comprehended as compelling testimony of God's supernatural hand in creation/providence was to be explained in terms of materialism & naturalism with deism – the notion that God functioned as a sort of impersonal superintendent winding up the universe before stepping back & allowing it to run its 'natural course', etc.
- In due course, scientific progress may yet become so advanced that it may push for the generation of artificial intelligence (AI) – i.e. to make an image of the beast that was wounded.... [for man is made in God's image, so AI/robots made in image of man, etc.]
- Internet censorship & control is already powerfully controlling the hearts & minds of Satan's minions who are bewitched & deluded by its subliminal influence. Few I know have been awoken from the 'Matrix' having swallowed the red pill!
- John Bunyan's lovely epithet is pertinent to all sober-minded saints: 'There is a two-fold hedge that God makes around His people; there is a hedge of protection, to keep evil from them and a hedge of affliction to keep them from evil.
- The closing verses concerning the mark of the beast (666) suggest that this humanistic technocracy, of global proportions, will so prevail that life will become saturated by it. Orwellian in character, this antichristian trinity will so dominate all that we do & think it will function in much the same way as the Law of God was intended to when given to Moses. We must recall that God's people were to write that law on their doorposts & hands, etc and speak about it when rising up, sitting down, going out, etc (Deut 6ff)
- The number 6 = man (explicitly told here). 666 then is a simple numerical representation of humanistic autonomy – the subversion of God's authority & God's law with MAN's law & authority.

Chapter 14

- Again, this is a difficult chapter! The first five verses however are relatively simple to interpret. Plainly we are once more given here a sort of 'overview' of the great assize taking place in history. The Lamb is plainly Jesus. Mount Zion throughout Scripture represents the culmination of God's redemption. The hill of Jerusalem was ever significant of future glory – see Ps 87.
- 144000 represent $12 \times 12 \times 10^3$. i.e. the full number of the redeemed. What a comfort this is to us! We are then given THREE (at least) warnings lest we, being part of the visible Church, find ourselves yet not part of the invisible Church – the spiritual remnant within the Israel of God.
- The song of the redeemed was unable to be sung by those truly redeemed. Yet evidently, false sheep would try to do so! Subtle warning to us indeed!
- Once again, a solemn warning is sounded: that among those lined up to be part of the 'virgin bride' of Christ there are those who were alas defiled with women.
- Finally, the third badge of honour is supplied – that they 'followed the Lamb wherever He went'. How sad it is to explain the will of God & the ethical standards of God, etc to fellow Church-attenders only to find them unwilling to follow Christ when His teaching becomes uncomfortable or unacceptable to public taste/opinion. I fear the contemporary evangelical Church is awash with such timid sheep.

ANGELIC WORK & WITNESS (v6ff)

- The 'gospel' of v7 is a clear call to the inhabitants of earth to repent. This is the burden of all true evangels!

- V8 signals the inevitable doom & destruction of all antichristian opposition – the city of Man in contrast to the city of God. Bound up with this destruction is the overthrow of all UNBELIEF. We have seen (last chapter) that submission to humanism & Man's (autonomous) law (666 mark on hand/forehead, etc) marks those destined for judgement. And SERIOUS & GREAT will be their torment & sorrow, etc.
- V12 underscores the characteristic of true saints of the Lamb – they keep the (TEN) commandments of God and the faith of Jesus. It is stark & bewildering that so few evangelical Christians today know the first thing about God's commandments & how they're to be kept, etc. We who honour & exalt them must needs be patient!!
- V14ff the vision returns once more to that turning point in history – the ascension of Christ. The fields are now are white for harvest.
- The 1600 furlongs river of blood strongly intimates the scale & scope of God's judgement. It will be great for great is the deception & extensive is the blindness & wilful ignorance.

Chapter 15

- The imagery is, again, not straightforward to understand. But this much seems clear enough:
- First, that we have reached a climactic moment in the unfolding of time. A final phase of divine providential judgements are about to begin on the earth – where else??!
- The sea of glass represents rebel humanity now still (petrified!?) mingled with fire – indicating that they come under divine judgement being caught up in some of the wrath/plagues etc.
- The redeemed of the Lord – His true saints – are here depicted as CELEBRATING HIS DIVINE PEROGATIVE TO PROSECTUE JUDGEMENT & JUSTICE IN THE EARTH! How apt & pertinent is the Song of Moses!
- Alas, most Christians today almost wholly ignorant of this great work of God. Worse still they balk against it & decry God's right to execute judgement & justice in the earth. They are wholly consumed with concern about personal sin (not at all a bad thing!) to the exclusion of any consideration of God's big business of straightening out the work & bringing all cultures, kings & nations to servile obedience to Jesus Christ.
- The glorious prospect here is 'all nations coming to worship before God' – and thus, presumably, learning THROUGH FAMILIARITY WITH HIS LAW just how this holy activity ought to be undertaken properly.
- The closing verses (5-8) anticipate again – as did the opening verses – the impending prospect: God was about to shake the heavens (& the earth!) one final time in order to bring about the final overthrow of Satan's tyranny upon the earth. Christ's victory is about to be visibly manifested. Seven angels with seven golden bowls containing seven plagues are about to be unleashed on earth.
- Why is it then that we are surprised & astonished when bad things occur providentially to us who inhabit God's world? We are a world under divine judgement. We fully deserve His wrath on account of our wilful ignorance of His laws & His commandments, etc. How just & perfect are His ways & how improper it is for us to neglect to know & learn about His judgements! We ought rather to run to them & raise high our banners celebrating their integrity & virtue!

Chapter 16

- Seven bowls of God's wrath ON THE EARTH!! The language is almost certainly symbolic in keeping with the general character of the book.
- The timing seems to be after the rise of the second (land) beast for the wrath is directed towards those who bore his mark, etc (v2).
- The prevalence of blood strongly implies that death will characterise these various providential judgements.

- NB John utterly vindicates God's judgements in the Earth. We read, "Even so, Lord God Almighty, true and righteous are Your judgments." (v7)
- What was the consequence of these TERRIBLE (AWFUL) JUDGEMENTS?? Did they induce the people of Earth to repent?? Certainly not! We are reminded here of Luke's account of two disasters (one natural & one military/seditious) in Ch 13 of his gospel:

There were present at that season some who told Him about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. 2 And Jesus answered and said to them, "Do you suppose that these Galileans were worse sinners than all other Galileans, because they suffered such things? 3 I tell you, no; but unless you repent you will all likewise perish. 4 Or those eighteen on whom the tower in Siloam fell and killed them, do you think that they were worse sinners than all other men who dwelt in Jerusalem? 5 I tell you, no; but unless you repent you will all likewise perish."

Jesus explains the proper inference that we should make when faced with disasters. We must not join the dots in such a way as to attach particular blame to the various casualties. Rather we are to comprehend the event as a GENERAL summons to repent. Why? Because our natural MO (modus operandi) is to suppress the truth in unrighteousness. God employs providential trouble & disaster as a means of awakening us from our slumbers.

- Both the fourth & fifth bowls of judgements conclude with this sentiment & this warning. And yet we are very slow to read providence in such a way.
- Doubtless the unclean spirits – like frogs – speak of lies & faulty worldviews, etc.
- The false prophet is mentioned here – for the first time! Some equate the false prophet with the second beast. I'm cautious to be drawn.
- The great Battle of Armageddon is referenced in this chapter. The impression is given that the great concert of antichristian hegemony & politics reaches its climax as this chapter comes to a close.
- The final bowl serves to underscore this by introducing the 'shaking of the Earth UTTERLY'. Are we to anticipate widespread repentance & remorse, etc. Apparently not.
- Babylon is here depicted as receiving her final judgement. More in the next chapters!

Chapter 17 – The Scarlet Woman & the Scarlet Beast

This magnificent chapter opens up the final series visions concerning the future history of the earth. These visions must appear utterly mysterious & abstract to the simplistically minded pietists that dominate the contemporary evangelical scene. No wonder they are rarely or never addressed – except by relatively wacky dispensationalists, etc. Let us note:

- First, the great harlot represents a SPURIOUS Bride! God has used richly the metaphor of marriage & the preparation of His True Church as a pure, chaste bride, etc. Thus the key inference here for us to come to terms with is this: that there DOES or SHALL exist a MASSIVE DELUSION which will captivate the hearts & minds of vast multitudes of people!
- Being a harlot, we are to therefore understand SIMPLY BUT VERY CLEARLY that this delusion will bewitch the great majority via PSEUDO-SPIRITUALITY! The devil is wont to masquerade as an Angel of light. Alas, we are here told that he will succeed very much in prosecuting an INTERNATIONAL campaign convincing 'multitudes, nations & tongues' (v15).
- Understandably, mainstream commentaries identify the harlot with Roman Catholicism. Their ancient traditions span centuries, include the severe persecution of true saints/martyrs, dress predominantly in scarlet & purple, and of course make a pretentious claim to be the authentic heirs of St Peter, etc.
- That she is depicted here riding the Beast signifies that, foundationally, the ultimate commitment & motivation is satanic and not Christian.

Let us pick out a few other points for notice:

- First, the harlot is doomed (v1)
- Second, her influence & power is global/extensive (v1)
- Her intrigue & 'modus operandi' is/was POLITICAL (v2) – she collaborated with & conspired with 'the kings of the earth'.
- THROUGH their example & dominance, the masses (inhabitants of the earth) were led astray & conjoined with them in rebellion (v2)
- Blasphemy was the chief characteristic – i.e. failing to give recognition & honour to God as Creator & providential Sustainer of life (v3).
- The seven heads (v9) & ten horns (of the Beast) reference particular SUCCESSIVE manifestations of POLITICAL ANTOGONISM to the Kingdom of God. Daniel identifies FOUR of these for us (Babylon, Medo-Persian, Greek & Roman) with a primitive – and perhaps obscure – first.
- NB. The ANTI-CHRISTIAN character of this harlot (v6)!!! Our own alignment with POPULAR, MAINSTREAM Christianity ought to give us cause for concern prompting careful self-enquiry. Authentic Christian spirituality evidently finds itself typically harassed & persecuted by the POLITICALLY CORRECT mainstream! Perhaps this misalignment of 'professor with pretender' is part of St John's amazement (v6)!
- The temporary disappearance of the Beast (v8) I understand to signify the gradual decline of Romish imperial power over 3 centuries culminating in the 'conversion' of Constantine before the transference of power to the ecclesiastical Roman Papacy around the 6th century. Thereafter through hideous corruption, etc the Papacy began to hound & tyrannise the true Israel of God.
- Verse 8 - & the whole of Ch 18! – comforts us with the news of the Beast's final overthrow together with Babylon the Great.
- The short time of continuance of the sixth king corresponds, it would seem, to the gradual decline & abrogation of Papal power & influence in the world (v10).
- Verse 11 is INTRIGUING! I would understand this 'eighth king' to represent the more OVERT & TRANSPARENT expression of beastly power & influence in the world.
- The TEN kings referenced in verse 12 correspond to VARIOUS hostile ideologies (worldviews!) that present themselves COLLABORATIVELY together driven along by ANTI-CHRISTIAN influence & in alliance therefore with the Beast. They could be any or all of the following:- Humanism, Marxism, Globalism, Islam, Postmodernism, Materialism, Darwinism, Secularism, Existentialism, Nihilism, Hedonism, etc,...
- This interpretation would neatly explain the recent/present day rise of these various anti-Christian isms together with their general ANTIPATHY towards ANY FORM OF CHRISTIANITY WHATSOEVER – i.e. even the false & spurious manifestations of the same. (see v16,17)
- The final verse (18) references the City of Rome – the epicentre of religio-polical antagonism.

Chapter 18 – The Fall of Babylon the Great

The identity of the Great City of Babylon – here depicted for us – is not as easy to establish as we might imagine. The following points are noteworthy & probably significant:

- First, SHE is depicted as a self-important Queen (v7) i.e. a spurious bride of Christ, being a 'widow full of sorrow' (v7). She has a semblance of spirituality but is carnal & worldly (see especially v23). Rushdoony saw (& taught) helpfully that the whole of life IS RELIGIOUS – i.e. it is impossible to separate religious matters from neutral cultural affairs. Thus, all of politics is religious! Therefore, the false religion espoused & practiced among all humankind is essentially 'COVENANT BREAKING'. Babylon the Great here then corresponds to ALL ANTI-SCRIPTURAL RELIGION!
- This 'false' Church was/is, it appears, hugely successful... for all the kings & merchants of the world all the nations have drunk of the wine of the wrath of her fornication, the kings of the earth have

committed fornication with her, and the merchants of the earth have become rich through the abundance of her luxury.” (v3).

- Her Fall & final overthrow is SUDDEN! This is stressed (see v10; 17 & 19)
- That she contains SOME actual Christians (presumably seriously misled, etc!) is evident from v4. The authentic Christian believer is here commanded to ‘Come out of her’ (v4).
- The historic Romish Church quite naturally fulfils many of these characteristics but doesn’t comfortably fit with ALL of them.
- I suggest that the FALSE CHURCH signified here INCLUDES its manifestation in Romanism but more precisely corresponds to ‘Western, Christian, democratic culture’ which has undergone various transformations and has been allied with various ‘isms’ down through the centuries. I suggest that ‘ostensibly Christian culture’ through its lukewarm association with the gospel represents the most bewitching and therefore the most dangerous ideology of all.

Many individuals (& indeed whole nations) have been beguiled into believing that a superficial association with the Jesus of history justifies their ultimate worldview commitment. So very much of contemporary ‘Christianity’ is, like its African manifestation (according to long-term missionary testimony), a mile wide and yet only one inch deep!

What then demarcates AUTHENTIC Christianity from its SPURIOUS counterpart? This is a crucial question indeed and one with which we must wrestle with the utmost integrity. Let us try to tabulate & compare the distinctives of the two

Authentic Christianity	Spurious (pseudo) Christianity
Recognises the Lordship of Christ over all	Confesses the Lordship of Christ but denies it in various spheres & applications
Acknowledges the sovereignty of God in history	Confesses the ‘doctrine of divine sovereignty’ but denies it in practice – acts as though mankind is ultimate & history contingent upon capricious human choice
Recognises the fear of the Lord as the beginning of wisdom, knowledge & understanding	Treats human knowledge & wisdom as possible ‘univocally’
Acknowledges the Divine ethical standard – summarised in the Decalogue	Tends to suppress ethical certainty in favour of either antinomianism or what is loosely (vaguely) termed ‘Christian ethics’
Acknowledges God’s right to direct EVERY detail of the lives of His saints (e.g. regulative principle of public worship)	Confesses ‘Jesus is Lord’ but in practice lives very much as though His jurisdiction in the theatre of life is limited
Perceives that Holy Scripture is to inform EVERY aspect of life & civilisation (Matt 4:4)	Tends to treat Scripture as a ‘Spiritual guide to personal redemption’ relevant to Church/family only
Anticipates & lives in hope of Christian Victory in time & space yielding to Resurrection for eternity	Tends to be defeatist & pursues separation from the world (cosmos) which it believes to be doomed

- Doubtless more detail could be added to this summary. However, my own (perhaps atypical) experience within the Visible Christian community over nearly 40 years has prompted me to suppose that relatively few of the folk whom I have known who would identify as ‘Christian’ would be so ‘radical’ as to take seriously the Word of God in all its fulness & scope, etc. Alas, I have found myself persecuted & despised for pressing my fellow ‘saints’ to consider the full implications of Biblical Law & its heavenly blueprint for Christian civilisation throughout the earth.
- The striking thing to note from this passage is the swift demise & overthrow of Babylon (notice v21). We have noted already three verses alluding to its relatively speedy destruction. Considering

the depth & potency of the deception, it is remarkable to contemplate its swift passing. There is so much prevailing confusion in the realm of apologetics BUT that form of apologetics recommended by Cornelius Van Til seems, ostensibly, capable of toppling the various giants of humanistic hegemony. Time will tell!

- Armed with Van Til's antithetical mindset, the obvious take-away from this chapter is this: that satanically inspired opposition to God's righteous kingdom will IN DUE COURSE IN HISTORY come to an end. No more will God's most elevated creatures – humanity – be given over to sinful deception & subtle tyranny, etc. Rather, through the instrumentality of faithful gospel preaching, teaching & the subjection of every thought to Jesus Christ, etc, the world will be won & the crown rights of Jesus Christ will be publicly manifested & vindicated, etc. This present chapter provides us with a captivating commentary on the subversive nature of secular culture & all false systems of religion, etc. It tells us how sinful opposition to God manifests itself – via materialism, opulence & the pursuit of sensual pleasure (v 9-17 & 22).

Chapter 19 – Heaven Exults over Babylon

[NB. I return to this study after at least a year or so of leaving it on the 'back-burner'!]

Verses 1-8 These verses inaugurate the climactic closing chapters of redemptive history. The vision of St John as a whole is best comprehended as a series of visions each rehearsing the general judgement of God over the earth upon covenant breaking creatures while simultaneously anticipating the glorious victory of Christ over all His enemies. Therefore, it is unnecessary to conceive of these concluding chapters as somehow chronologically commencing in the distant future. The general picture we're presented with in Scripture is one of 'gradual, incremental victory. The previous chapter (18:17&21) seem to indicate that the final overthrow of Satanic deception will be sudden; but generally, throughout history, conquest occurs gradually. We might reasonably expect it to occur exponentially – very gradually at first with an increasing rate of progress.

The great harlot spoken of here represents 'false religion'. Alas, it is rife! We all either belong to the harlot or else we are part of the Bride of Christ. By the harlot we are told here that the earth has been corrupted 'with her fornication' (v2). She has steadfastly persecuted the true Bride of Christ (v2b). True saints relish the thought of the antithetical religious system, representing spiritual 'harlotry', at last be cast into Hell. They are passionate for God's truth. They actually fear God and live exclusively for His praise and glory.

The true Bride was granted to be arrayed in fine linen representing 'truly righteous actions' (v8). Notice that she 'made herself ready.' The sanctification of the Bride is ultimately a sovereign work of Christ BUT He makes use of secondary causes: preaching, reading, careful study, iron sharpening iron, etc.

Verses 9-16 The vision here is crystal clear! It is of a conquering Christ splendidly arrayed, crowned with many crowns – signalling His victory over the kings of the earth – closely followed by an army of warrior saints similarly transported on white horses. The great weapon He brandishes is the Word of God (Scripture!). With it He 'strikes the nations.' Tragically, great multitudes of pietistic Christians pursue a pseudo-faith which declines to become engaged in political offensives. Verse 15 makes it abundantly clear that Jesus' primary concern HERE AND NOW is with judgement – the judgement of those international political institutions for their reluctance to acknowledge His righteous rule & sovereign priority over them.

The Supper of the Lamb (v17-21)

Extensive and profound has been the deception prosecuted by Satan & his various allies. These have included: kings of the earth (political leaders and presidents), captains and mighty men (royalty, governments & state bureaucrats), all people, slave & free, small and great. These verses behove us to check most carefully our own soul allegiance. Multitudes are deceived & await everlasting judgement. Those exempt from this awful imminent judgement are explicitly covenant keepers – those who perceive the great warfare confronting them (v19) and who are actively engaged in it!

The beast represents secular humanistic, statist power; the false prophet represents the apostate Church. The 'signs worked in the presence of the beast' (v20) represent PERSUASIVE FORCE WORKING SYMPATHETICALLY WITH STATISM. Alas, the great majority of contemporary evangelicals are guilty of being turn-coats. They sing gustily each Sunday morning, 'Jesus is Lord', but effectively deny the same through the course of each week in their various professional vocations and civic responsibilities. When this is pointed out to them, they turn and walk away like living zombies. As Jesus instructed His disciples centuries ago, we must leave the dead to bury the dead (Matt8:22).

The mark of the beast (v20) is enigmatic. However, given what we have said concerning the beast's identification with POLITICAL STATISM I venture to suggest that what is being drawn to our attention here is the willingness of covenant creatures in general to acquiesce to statist power and control. Rushdoony made a compelling case for the reality of statism operating as an idol in the hearts and minds of nominal Christians. The Church today is all but silent in her confrontation of statist tyranny. But her specific calling under Christ is to call the nations of the world to Christian (biblical) discipleship (Matt 28:18). Such is her actual prophetic calling. Alas, for the most part she has become a 'false prophet'. God will be merciless with all who blithely follow on, particularly when they have been warned.

Chapter 20 – Two Millennia!

At last I feel cautiously optimistic that I have a good candidate suggestion for the interpretation of this chapter! The descending Angel (v1) is plainly Christ and his DESCENT signifies a return in historical perspective to His incarnation. The key in His hand is death (Rev 1:18). Christ conquered the grave & overcame Satan's plans, etc. Here we read again of Jesus having come to 'destroy the works of the Devil' (1Jn 3:8). The great chain speaks of Christ's success in defeating Satan in principle. That Satan is bound with a long (great) chain signifies that Satan is not totally absent throughout this period. I reckon this period of time is the present – from Christ's resurrection to His 2nd coming. The thousand years (v2) then indicate simply 'a long period of time' – but a designated and sovereignly allotted period. Satan's release towards the close of this FIRST 'millennium' (v3) intimates that there will be a SIGNIFICANT APOSTASY from the truth in the closing season of earth history.

v4 begins a subsidiary vision. The company of saints in view here represent the Church of Christ destined to 'reign with Christ for a thousand years' (v4). This SECOND 'millennium' corresponds to a yet future glorious period of earth history when the kingdom of God will be established throughout the whole earth & law & judgement will be undertaken in accordance with God's own laws – i.e. THEONOMICALLY!! That John then sees 'the souls of those who had been beheaded...' (v4) signifies that their corporate struggle down through time will at last yield fruit in a sustained period of Christian victory over all the earth. Verse 5 references this latter millennium during which 'the glorious things spoken of Zion' (Ps 87:3; Is 65:17-25; Is 2:1-4) will be fulfilled. Life during this SECOND (yet future) MILLENIUM corresponds to the FIRST RESURRECTION.

v7 MUST then be a return to the FIRST THOUSAND YEAR period. This makes sense because the subject matter is the same – the devil being released from his prison, etc. The great battle referenced here (Armageddon?) corresponds to the time-frame I reckon we're now in. The battles is that 'war of worldviews' which all consistent Christians who expound the Bible fairly get to understand. The camp of the saints & their beloved city (v9) represents the authentic (Theonomic) Christian Church. We can expect to witness a sudden & dramatic victory (by Christ) over all our enemies as this period of earth history draws to a close. But the struggle will be intense; it may well appear that we're being hit for six before Christ unleashes His knock-out blow. I've been reluctant to conceive of such an apostasy & loss of faith within the evangelical constituency until relatively recently. But it fits very well with what is here intimated. The distinction made between those who are truly saved (safe) and those who are only superficially linked to Christ turns on whether they received the 'mark of the beast' (v4). This mark is not too difficult to comprehend. It corresponds to the number 666 and was associated with hand & forehead. These are both places where the Law of God was to be fastened (Deut 6). Thus, the spurious Christians correspond to those who are antinomian – who reject in principle or practice the authority of God in their thinking. Where the authority of Christ (as King of kings & Lord of lords) is denied, there will be inevitable capitulation to the State – statist tyranny. Humanistic, statist totalitarianism is signified by 666. Both the beast (the godless humanistic State) & the false prophet (the apostate Church) are everlastingly condemned (v10).

Verse 11ff transport us in time and space to the Final Judgement. Please God write my name & all my family & friends' names in the Book of Life!!

Chapter 21 – The New Jerusalem

We have seen how misleading & unhelpful headings & sub-headings found in printed bibles can be. Verses 1-4 seem to be clearly post-resurrection! Verse 8 seems to confirm this – being post second death. The Great City (Holy Jerusalem) depicts the eternal state – heaven & earth fully united! The twelve gates bear the names of the 12 OT tribes & signify OT redemption fulfilled; the twelve foundations bear the names of the 12 NT Apostles & signify the NT Church. The angel with the measuring rod is reminiscent of Ezekiel (Ch 40-50). I have believed for several years that the closing chapters of Ezekiel were a depiction of the final (heavenly) state – post resurrection (second death). This passage seems very much to confirm that thought. The precious foundation stones represent the NT Church. The golden street of the city belies its glorious design, etc. Verses 22-27 reaffirm the EARTHLY location of post-resurrection existence. Nations & kings continue to make it their centre of attention!!

Chapter 22 – The Final Scene & Closing Exhortation

The opening scene here continues from the previous chapter – it is Ezekiel's vision of heaven! Notice

- The water of life, pure as crystal speaks of PERFECTION
- God's throne (His sovereignty) is its source
- God and the Lamb occupy the throne. This settles any lingering question regarding Jesus' deity.
- The 'street' signifies there will be collaborative, social existence
- There are three trees of life here – and only one in Genesis 1 – a mystical Trinity, three in one?!
- The twelve fruits are indicative of the twelve tribes/apostles whom God raised up and through whom blessing to all the world comes.
- Again, we read of the 'healing of the nations.' That something of nationhood persists is curious. If it does, then there is to be more continuity than discontinuity between the pre and post resurrection eras.

- Verse 3 tells us of the final lifting of God's curse (Gen 3:17-19). This inaugurates a stupendous metaphysical adjustment. Who can tell what it will entail!
- What sweeter work is there for us to undertake than 'service of God'? That will be our everlasting employment. In it, we shall accomplish more than we can dream or imagine.
- Seeing 'His face' signifies that we shall be aesthetically fulfilled. All present examples of beauty are faint reminders of the heavenly glory which will envelop us there.
- Our identity will be everlastingly settled – we shall bear His Name upon our foreheads! Remember, this is a vision; literalness ought to be avoided!
- Verse 5 tells us darkness will be banished. No lamp nor even sunshine is required! What light does God supply? The answer springs out of Van Til's favourite text:

'For with You is the fountain of life; in Your light we see life.' (Ps 36:9)

- Being now able to see all things clearly, Christ's saints will fulfil their original mandate as Adam received it – dominion throughout the earth!
- Verse 6 underscores the truthfulness of all God's words. This entire chapter stands as a sentinel over all that God has spoken.
- AS I write Doug Wilson has just published a commentary on the Book of Revelation. He says, in summary, the harlot represents the OT Church which, in a pact with Satan (the dragon) formed a pact with the roman beast (the godless state) to overthrow Christ's kingdom. She was rejected and replaced with the 'New Jerusalem' - the NT Church. I trust this motif corresponds to my own overarching paradigm.
- It follows that Christ came 'quickly/shortly' in AD 70 very with this same scheme in mind. Moreover, the entire history of Christendom over 2000 years follows a similar ebb and flow of power & influence with Christ's kingdom, slowly but surely, gaining the upper hand.
- Several times the reader is promised a blessing for 'keeping the words of this prophecy.' I increasingly understand why. The great majority of nominal Christians fail to see the big picture of what's going on around them. They imagine that fidelity to Christ = fidelity to the local assembly. But the key players in the redemptive struggle are revealed in this Book to be (i) the true Bride of Christ comprising faithful saints of all ages; the subversive tyranny of Satan's kingdom working through an apostate Church in league with a humanistic state. True Christians are encouraged by this Prophecy to wield the sword of the Spirit (Scripture) to fight on Christ's behalf.
- Verse 8 is enigmatic. What's its point? This perhaps: that even John himself stumbled and failed to comprehend what was going on. John's mistake was metaphysical in character. God alone is to be worshipped!
- Verses 10 & 11 imply two complementary truths: (a) that the true meaning and signification of Revelation is amenable to pure-hearted saints enquiring into it & (b) that we are not to work too hard at persuading 'unjust (self-righteous) persons' to switch their allegiance to Christ.
- Verse 14 vindicates a Theonomic approach to life. There is absolutely NO INCONSISTENCY between advocating for justification by the free grace of God and a devotion to God's Law. The opposite of 'law' is not grace; rather it is an attitude of 'lawlessness!' Alas, great swathes of Christians today are functionally antinomian. I'd be a rich man if I'd received £10 for every occasion I'd been told by a fellow traveller that we're now led by the Spirit & no longer under any obligation to keep the law!
- The descriptive characteristics of those 'outside of heaven' is intriguing. Dogs is reminiscent of 'gentiles' (Matt 7:6; 15:27); 'sorcery' is suggestive of a person's failure to reckon with duly constituted authority. It amounts to a rejection of Christ's authority and the exaltation of some subversive alternative. Theonomists are insistent that God's proper authority be recognised & respected in every sphere (Church, family & state); sexual immorality is likewise suggestive of spiritual adultery/waywardness committed when Christ the husband is shunned by His Bride – the Church; murder is the (unwarranted) taking away of another's life. They who oppose God's truth & His great salvation effectively do just this. How vital it is that we check & monitor our heart's motive, etc; idolaters are those who set their affections & or make their final authority something

other than God in Christ; finally, they who love a lie = those who reject the testimony of Holy Scripture.

- Verse 16 identifies the burden of John's vision(s) with 'the Churches'
- Verse 17 puts the ball squarely in the court of John's readership. Nothing prevents an individual from making progress in God's kingdom EXCEPT SIN! If we truly desire to know & follow the Truth, God will draw us into His fold. We merely need to feel the need/urge to respond to His overtures of grace & mercy in the gospel.

Steve Layfield – Summer 2019

ⁱ Philip Mauro – Things which must soon come to pass [GAM Publications]