

The Book of Revelation - Notes

Introduction

Goals

- Perform an inductive study of Revelation
- Learn proper methods of interpretation
- Consider valid applications for today

Introduction

- Author: John, the apostle
- Audience: The bond-servants of Jesus Christ
- Date: c.a. 95 A.D.
- Genre: apocalyptic prophecy, letter/narrative
- Outline
- Major Themes
- Principles of Interpretation

Genre

- Apocalyptic literature reveals hidden secrets through heavenly beings using esoteric symbols (e.g., Isaiah, Ezekiel, Zechariah, and Daniel)
- The focus of prophecy is revealing God's will for people rather than revealing the future
- Revelation is a prophetic letter and a story of the battle between good and evil

Outline

- Introduction (1:1-20)
- The Seven Churches (2:1-3:22)
- The Seven Seals (4:1-8:5)
- The Seven Trumpets (8:6-11:19)
- The Woman & Dragon (12:1-17)
- The Two Beasts (13:1-18)
- The Great Harvest (14:1-20)
- The Seven Bowls (15:1-16:21)
- Babylon & The Beast (17:1-19:5)
- The Millennium (19:6-20:15)
- The New Jerusalem (21:1-22:5)
- Conclusion (22:6-22:21)

Major Themes

- The sovereignty of God Almighty
 - The futility of Satan's rebellion
 - The need to repent and obey God
- Dr. Grant R. Osborne, Revelation Verse by Verse

Four methods of interpretation

- Historicist: Covers the first century to the 2nd Coming
- Preterist: Fulfilled during the Roman Empire
- Idealist: Symbolic depiction of spiritual warfare, not literal
- Futurist: Mainly describes future events, the 2nd Coming

- Historicist: Covers the first century to the 2nd Coming

Pros: Revelation begins with a letter to first century churches and ends with the Second Coming

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Cons: There is no way to connect the letter to the seven churches with Church history

- Preterist: Fulfilled during the Roman Empire

Pros: Revelation begins with a letter specifically addressed to seven churches in the first century

Cons: Revelation ends with the Second Coming, which has not yet happened

- Idealist: Symbolic depiction of spiritual warfare, not literal

Pros: This approach is more devotional & practical, rather than wasting time on wild speculation

Cons: The letter to the seven churches deals with real people, practical matters & historical events; Jesus told John about “the things which must soon take place” (Rev 1:1 NASB)

- Futurist: Mainly describes future events, the 2nd Coming

Pros: Revelation predicts global catastrophes and the Second Coming, which have not yet happened

Cons: The letter to seven churches appears to be symbolic; there were more than seven churches at the time, the number seven is highly symbolic, and the letter appears to progress to the end time

Conclusion

Each method is useful, but Futurist seems best. The letter to the seven churches has timeless truths for all ages, but it may also be sequential eras of Church history

Principles of Interpretation

Prediction addiction is a spiritual pathology where people set specific dates for certain events based on questionable interpretations of prophecy

The purpose of Revelation is to encourage Christians to remain faithful, not to give us a specific a time table for end time events

Principles of Interpretation

God gives understanding to those who obey Him

Ps 111:10 The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom; A good understanding have all those who do His commandments; His praise endures forever.

Dan 12:10 Many will be purged, purified and refined, but the wicked will act wickedly; and none of the wicked will understand, but those who have insight will understand.

Principles of Interpretation

Commentaries are a blessing and a curse; carefully separate the wheat from the chaff

Scripture is the best commentary on Scripture, so let the Bible interpret the Bible whenever possible

Revelation contains up to 700 allusions to the Old Testament; understanding the Old Testament is the key to interpreting Revelation correctly

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Principles of Interpretation

The Apocrypha and the Pseudepigrapha are not inspired, and they should not be used to interpret inspired Scripture

They only provide Jewish speculation from the intertestamental period about Old Testament prophecies and end time events

Principles of Interpretation

Daniel provides the five key time periods:

Dan 9:24 - 70 heptads to finish God's plan, one left

Dan 9:27 - 7 year covenant, broken in the middle

Dan 12:7 - 1260 days of Beast authority, tribulation

Dan 12:11 - 1290 days abomination of desolation

Dan 12:12 - 1335 days consummation blessing

Principles of Interpretation

Revelation uses literal & figurative language; visions are not always accurate descriptions of reality

Literal (adj) adhering to fact or the primary meaning of a term or expression (www.Merriam-Webster.com)

Figurative (adj) something that is not interpreted literally, but instead uses a symbol or a likeness (www.yourdictionary.com)

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"When the plain sense of Scripture makes common sense, seek no other sense; therefore, take every word at its primary, ordinary, usual, literal meaning unless the facts of the immediate context, studied in the light of related passages and axiomatic and fundamental truths, indicate clearly otherwise."

—Dr. David L. Cooper (1886-1965),
founder of The Biblical Research Society

The shorter and more famous version of this saying is: "When the plain sense of Scripture makes common sense, seek no other sense, lest it result in nonsense."

Principles of Interpretation

There are several detours in narrative of Revelation, visions that do not follow the sequential, chronological order of the rest of the book:

- Rev 7:1-17
- Rev 10:1 - 11:14
- Rev 12:1 - 14:20
- Rev 17-18

Chapter 1

Rev 1:1 The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him to show to His bond-servants, the things which must soon take place; and He sent and communicated it by His angel to His bond-servant John, 2 who testified to the word of God and to the testimony of Jesus Christ, even to all that he saw. 3 Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the words of the prophecy, and heed the things which are written in it; for the time is near.

1. This is the revelation (singular) of Jesus Christ

It is the Book of Revelation, not Revelations. It is a unified message from the Father, through Jesus Christ, to an angelic messenger, to the apostle John, and finally to God's servants (all Christians in all ages)

Amos 3:7 Surely the Lord GOD does nothing unless He reveals His secret counsel To His servants the prophets.

2. This concerned "things which must soon take place" (1:1)

The letter to the seven congregations (in Rev 2-3) addressed current problems and warned about impending judgment and tribulation; the other events were going to take much longer... This delay in fulfillment is typical of many Old Testament prophecies (e.g., Mal 3:1)

2Pet 3:8 But do not let this one fact escape your notice, beloved, that with the Lord one day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years like one day.

3. The Book of Revelation is Scripture

Rev 1:1-2 says "all that John saw" = the word of God = the testimony of Jesus Christ
God inspired the apostles to write and canonize the New Testament; they knew that they were writing authoritative Scripture (cf. Luke 10:7, 1Tim 5:18, 1Th 2:13, 2Pet 3:15-16). By 100 AD, most church leaders generally knew which books were genuine and authoritative, and they quoted from them extensively; they had an early canon by ~180 AD.

4. There is a blessing for those who read and heed (1:3)

This is the first of seven blessings within the Book of Revelation (14:13, 16:15, 19:9, 20:6-7, 22:14). God will judge everyone according to their deeds (Rev 20:12) because faith without works is dead (James 2:17). John urges his readers to act "for the time is near" (1:3). Life is unpredictable and short compared to eternity; everyone will eventually face Judgment Day, so now is the time to act.

Rev 1:4 John to the seven churches that are in Asia: Grace to you and peace, from Him who is and who was and who is to come, and from the seven Spirits who are before His throne, 5 and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth. To Him who loves us and released us from our sins by His blood— 6 and He has made us to be a kingdom, priests to His God and Father—to Him be the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen.

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1. God is eternal

The greeting “from Him who is and who was and who is to come” describes God’s eternity – present, past and future. The Holman Christian Standard Bible renders this more literally as “the One who is, who was, and who is coming.” Revelation 21-22 ends with the new Jerusalem coming down out of heaven and a voice saying, “Behold, the tabernacle of God is among men, and He will dwell among them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself will be among them...”

2. Jesus is “the firstborn of the dead” (1:5)

God raised a few people back to mortal, physical life prior to the resurrection of Jesus; they grew old and eventually died again, but Jesus is the first human being to be raised from the dead with an eternal, spiritual body making Him the firstborn of many brethren who will also become like Him (cf. Rom 8:29, 1Cor 15). A firstborn son was the head of the clan under a patriarch; Jesus is our elder brother, the clan leader of God’s people

3. Christians will be “a kingdom, priests to His God”

Christians will inherit an eternal kingdom (1Cor 15:50-53)

Dan 7:17 ‘These great beasts, which are four in number, are four kings who will arise from the earth. 18 ‘But the saints of the Highest One will receive the kingdom and possess the kingdom forever, for all ages to come.’

The job of a priest is to represent God to the people; the resurrected saints will rule over physical people during the Millennial kingdom of Jesus Christ (20:4)

Rev 1:7 BEHOLD, HE IS COMING WITH THE CLOUDS, and every eye will see Him, even those who pierced Him; and all the tribes of the earth will mourn over Him. So it is to be. Amen. 8 “I am the Alpha and the Omega,” says the Lord God, “who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty.”

1. His “coming with the clouds” is an OT allusion

Dan 7:13 “I kept looking in the night visions, And behold, with the clouds of heaven One like a Son of Man was coming, And He came up to the Ancient of Days And was presented before Him. 14 “And to Him was given dominion, Glory and a kingdom, That all the peoples, nations and men of every language Might serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion Which will not pass away; And His kingdom is one Which will not be destroyed.

Acts 1:9 And after He [Jesus] had said these things, He was lifted up while they were looking on, and a cloud received Him out of their sight. 10 And as they were gazing intently into the sky while He was going, behold, two men in white clothing stood beside them. 11 They also said, “Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into the sky? This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in just the same way as you have watched Him go into heaven.”

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2. The Second Coming will be personal, visible

Some claim that Jesus came secretly, invisibly in 1914, but John said that every eye will see Him

Luke 17:22 Then He said to the disciples, "The time is coming when you will long to see one of the days of the Son of Man, but you will not see it. 23 People will tell you, 'Look, there He is!' or 'Look, here He is!' Do not go out or chase after them. 24 For as the lightning flashes and lights up the sky from one end to the other, so will be the Son of Man in His day.

3. The Lord God is Alpha and the Omega

These are the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet

This means there is only one God, no other

Isa 44:6 Thus says the LORD, the King of Israel and his Redeemer, the LORD of hosts: 'I am the first and I am the last, And there is no God besides Me.'

This connection is important later...

Rev 1:9 I, John, your brother and fellow partaker in the tribulation and kingdom and perseverance which are in Jesus, was on the island called Patmos because of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus. 10 I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and I heard behind me a loud voice like the sound of a trumpet, 11 saying, "Write in a book what you see, and send it to the seven churches: to Ephesus and to Smyrna and to Pergamum and to Thyatira and to Sardis and to Philadelphia and to Laodicea."

1. John also suffered persecution

According to early church history, Emperor Domitian exiled John to the island of Patmos near the end of his reign. All Christians, even apostles, will suffer persecution

Jesus had said, "These things I have spoken to you, so that in Me you may have peace. In the world you have tribulation, but take courage; I have overcome the world" (John 16:33)

2. John was "in the Spirit on the Lord's day"

There are two possible interpretations:

- He saw the Day of the Lord by the Holy Spirit (16:14)
- He fell into a trance on the Sabbath day

The first option is grammatically possible, however, the opening chapters of Revelation dealt with the current state of the seven congregations in Asia Minor, not the Day of the Lord

Prophets would often fall into a trace when the Holy Spirit gave them a vision (cf. Num 24:4, Dan 8:18, Act 11:4-5)

The Sabbath is the only day that Scripture identifies as God's special day (e.g., Lev 23:1-3)

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Apostate Christians in Rome changed the Sabbath to Sunday around 135 AD and started calling Sunday “the Lord’s Day” after John wrote Revelation. It isn’t valid to use later sources to define John’s meaning.

3. John is told to write a “book” (papyrus scroll)

He is to send this message to seven specific congregations in Asia Minor, modern Turkey
The order of the seven congregations matches the route that a messenger would deliver the message; this is sequential, not random. Patmos is close to Ephesus, the first city on the list; tradition says John ministered in Ephesus after the fall of Jerusalem in 70 AD.

Rev 1:12 Then I turned to see the voice that was speaking with me. And having turned I saw seven golden lampstands; 13 and in the middle of the lampstands I saw one like a son of man, clothed in a robe reaching to the feet, and girded across His chest with a golden sash. 14 His head and His hair were white like white wool, like snow; and His eyes were like a flame of fire. 15 His feet were like burnished bronze, when it has been made to glow in a furnace, and His voice was like the sound of many waters. 16 In His right hand He held seven stars, and out of His mouth came a sharp two-edged sword; and His face was like the sun shining in its strength.

1. John saw a heavenly being with a human form

Dan 10:5 I lifted up my eyes, and behold, there was a certain man dressed in linen, with a belt of fine gold from Uphaz around his waist. 6 His body was like beryl, his face like the brilliance of lightning, his eyes like flaming torches, his arms and legs like the gleam of polished bronze, and his voice like the sound of a multitude.

Ezekiel saw a similar vision of God (cf. Ezek 1:26-28)

2. John also saw several symbols

- Seven golden lampstands
- Seven stars in His right hand
- A sword came out of His mouth

Rev 1:17 When I saw Him, I fell at His feet like a dead man. And He placed His right hand on me, saying, “Do not be afraid; I am the first and the last, 18 and the living One; and I was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of death and of Hades. 19 “Therefore write the things which you have seen, and the things which are, and the things which will take place after these things. 20 “As for the mystery of the seven stars which you saw in My right hand, and the seven golden lampstands: the seven stars are the angels of the seven churches, and the seven lampstands are the seven churches.

1. This heavenly being is the Lord God

He said, “I am the first and the last” (1:17)

Isa 44:6 Thus says the LORD, the King of Israel and his Redeemer, the LORD of hosts: 'I am the first and I am the last, And there is no God besides Me.'

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Rev 1:8 "I am the Alpha and the Omega," says the Lord God...

2. This heavenly being is also the glorified Jesus
He said, "I was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore" (1:18)

Jesus Christ was the God of the Old Testament, not the Father

John 6:46 Not that anyone has seen the Father, except the One who is from God; He has seen the Father.

John 1:18 No one has seen God at any time; the only begotten God who is in the bosom of the Father, He has explained Him.

Rev 1:12-18 confirms the doctrine of the Trinity

3. The seven stars are seven "angels"
Rev 1:20 "the seven stars are the angels of the seven churches"

Angel (Greek, *angelos*) = messenger, human or spirit.

In Revelation, a star usually symbolizes a spirit, but not always (cf. 12:1, Gen 37:9)

Gen 37:9 Now he [Joseph] had still another dream, and related it to his brothers, and said, "Lo, I have had still another dream; and behold, the sun and the moon and eleven stars were bowing down to me.

4. The seven lampstands are the seven congregations
Rev 1:20 "the seven lampstands are the seven churches"

Church (Greek, *ekklesia*) = an assembly, congregation.

The seven lampstands may or may not be part of a menorah

The term is not specific, so no one should be dogmatic, but it is a legitimate possibility

4. The seven lampstands are the seven congregations
Matt 5:14 You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden; 15 nor does anyone light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. 16 Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven.

Chapter 2

Rev 2:1 “To the angel of the church in Ephesus write: The One who holds the seven stars in His right hand, the One who walks among the seven golden lampstands, says this: 2 ‘I know your deeds and your toil and perseverance, and that you cannot tolerate evil men, and you put to the test those who call themselves apostles, and they are not, and you found them to be false; 3 and you have perseverance and have endured for My name’s sake, and have not grown weary.

Rev 2:4 ‘But I have this against you, that you have left your first love. 5 ‘Therefore remember from where you have fallen, and repent and do the deeds you did at first; or else I am coming to you and will remove your lampstand out of its place—unless you repent. 6 ‘Yet this you do have, that you hate the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate. 7 ‘He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes, I will grant to eat of the tree of life which is in the Paradise of God.’

1. The “angel” is a human messenger
John is told, “To the angel of the church in Ephesus write”

This same phrase appears in the next six messages

The term “angel” simply means a messenger

Jesus could easily give a message to a spiritual being without telling John to write it down, therefore, this message was more likely intended for a human being, who will read it to the congregation on behalf of Jesus and John

2. Jesus gave Ephesus a mixed review

Jesus commended Ephesus for their faithful service and dedication to the truth; they clearly loved God. He rebuked them for leaving their first love and threatened to remove their congregation from His presence (serious!). They had faithful hands and heads, but not hearts.

Evidently, they had stopped loving one another.

Jesus had predicted a loss of love in the last days

Matt 24:12 And because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold (NKJV).

By the late first century, John had to urge Christians in Asia Minor to love one another (cf. 1John 3:10-24, 4:7-21, 2John 5)

1John 3:10 By this the children of God are distinguished from the children of the devil: Anyone who does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor is anyone who does not love his brother.

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3. Ephesus hated the deeds of the Nicolaitans

“There has been much speculation concerning the identity of the Nicolaitans, but the Scriptures do not specify who they were. They apparently were a sect wrong in practice and in doctrine” Bible Knowledge Commentary, s.v. Rev 2:5-6.

Epistles from this period and this region strongly condemn the false doctrines and practices of Proto-Gnosticism (cf. Galatians, Ephesians, Colossians, 1Tim 6:20-21, 1John, 2John and Jude) This was an evil mixture of neo-Platonism and the Bible

4. The Holy Spirit concludes with an exhortation

Each message ends with the same exhortation: ‘He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches...’

While each congregation received a unique message intended specifically for them, everyone should pay attention to these seven messages (i.e., the lessons are universal, timeless).

The Father, Son and Holy Spirit communicated this revelation equally; this reflects a Trinitarian mindset

5. Everyone who overcomes receives a promise

John explained “...I am writing to you, young men, because you have overcome the evil one... and this is the victory that has overcome the world-- our faith” (1John 2:13, 5:4)

The first promise: “I will grant to eat of the tree of life which is in the Paradise of God” (2:7)

The tree of life symbolizes the gift of eternal life.

God drove Adam and Eve out of Eden lest they “take also from the tree of life, and eat, and live forever” (Gen 3:22)

Rev 2:8 “And to the angel of the church in Smyrna write: The first and the last, who was dead, and has come to life, says this: 9 ‘I know your tribulation and your poverty (but you are rich), and the blasphemy by those who say they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan. 10 ‘Do not fear what you are about to suffer. Behold, the devil is about to cast some of you into prison, so that you will be tested, and you will have tribulation for ten days. Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life. 11 ‘He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. He who overcomes will not be hurt by the second death.’

1. Jesus gave Smyrna a positive review

He commended Smyrna for their faithfulness, warned them of coming persecution and encouraged them to stay strong.

Although they were physically poor, they had treasure in heaven, so they were spiritually rich (Matt 6:19-21).

2. The synagogue of Satan persecuted Smyrna

Many in the first century were Jews in name only; they rejected Jesus and His message

Paul explained, "For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly, nor is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh. 29 But he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that which is of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter; and his praise is not from men, but from God" (Rom 2:28-29)

Jesus told the Pharisees, "You are of your father the devil, and you want to do the desires of your father..." (John 8:44).

He also said, "You serpents, you brood of vipers, how will you escape the sentence of hell?" (Matt 23:33).

Many synagogues split because of the gospel, and unbelieving Jews brought intense persecution on the church.

3. Those who overcome receive a second promise

The second promise: "He who overcomes will not be hurt by the second death" (2:11)

This refers to the destruction of the wicked in the lake of fire described in Revelation 20

Rev 2:12 "And to the angel of the church in Pergamum write: The One who has the sharp two-edged sword says this: 13 'I know where you dwell, where Satan's throne is; and you hold fast My name, and did not deny My faith even in the days of Antipas, My witness, My faithful one, who was killed among you, where Satan dwells. 14 'But I have a few things against you, because you have there some who hold the teaching of Balaam, who kept teaching Balak to put a stumbling block before the sons of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols and to commit acts of immorality.

Rev 2:15 'So you also have some who in the same way hold the teaching of the Nicolaitans. 16 'Therefore repent; or else I am coming to you quickly, and I will make war against them with the sword of My mouth. 17 'He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes, to him I will give some of the hidden manna, and I will give him a white stone, and a new name written on the stone which no one knows but he who receives it.'

1. Pergamum was an evil place

Jesus described Pergamum as Satan's throne, the place where Satan dwells

It was a major center for the worship of Athena, Asclepius, Dionysus, and Zeus

"Asclepius was a god of medicine in ancient Greek religion and mythology... The rod of Asclepius, a snake-entwined staff, remains a symbol of medicine today."

Wikipedia s.v. Asclepius

2. Jesus gave Pergamum a mixed review

Jesus commended them for faithfulness during persecution. But, He rebuked them for tolerating those “who eat things sacrificed to idols and commit acts of immorality.”

In the Roman world, cities had trade guilds that worshipped a patron deity (cf. Acts 19:21ff); Christians who refused to join this system might be unable to buy or sell in the market place.

There would have been a strong temptation to compromise or tolerate the evil culture around them.

3. Jesus doesn't tolerate sin

He sternly warned Pergamum to “repent; or else I am coming to you quickly, and I will make war against them with the sword of My mouth” (2:16). This sword symbolizes divine punishment (cf. Rev 19:15); the next message (to Thyatira) illustrates this power

4. Those who overcome receive a third promise

The third promise: “To him who overcomes, to him I will give some of the hidden manna, and I will give him a white stone, and a new name written on the stone which no one knows but he who receives it” (2:17). John described Jesus as the bread of life, the true manna that came down out of heaven (John 6). In the biblical world, naming someone or something is an assertion of lordship; God renamed Abram and Jacob to give them a new identity.

Rev 2:18 “And to the angel of the church in Thyatira write: The Son of God, who has eyes like a flame of fire, and His feet are like burnished bronze, says this: 19 ‘I know your deeds, and your love and faith and service and perseverance, and that your deeds of late are greater than at first. 20 ‘But I have this against you, that you tolerate the woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess, and she teaches and leads My bond-servants astray so that they commit acts of immorality and eat things sacrificed to idols. 21 ‘I gave her time to repent, and she does not want to repent of her immorality.

Rev 2:22 ‘Behold, I will throw her on a bed of sickness, and those who commit adultery with her into great tribulation, unless they repent of her deeds. 23 ‘And I will kill her children with pestilence, and all the churches will know that I am He who searches the minds and hearts; and I will give to each one of you according to your deeds. 24 ‘But I say to you, the rest who are in Thyatira, who do not hold this teaching, who have not known the deep things of Satan, as they call them—I place no other burden on you. 25 ‘Nevertheless what you have, hold fast until I come.

Rev 2:26 ‘He who overcomes, and he who keeps My deeds until the end, TO HIM I WILL GIVE AUTHORITY OVER THE NATIONS; 27 AND HE SHALL RULE THEM WITH A ROD OF IRON, AS THE VESSELS OF THE POTTER ARE BROKEN TO PIECES, as I also have received authority from My Father; 28 and I will give him the morning star. 29 ‘He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.’

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1. The phrase "Son of God" is a title of divinity

There are many places where the phrase "son of God" is NOT a title of divinity (e.g., Gen 6:2, Job 38:7, Ps 82:6, Luke 3:38), but there are a few, like this one, where it is (based on the context).

John 3:18 He who believes in Him is not judged; he who does not believe has been judged already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.

Matt 28:18 Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit

2. Jesus gave Thyatira a mixed review

He is aware of their deeds, love, faith, service & perseverance; He has been watching them (2:19). Ephesus tested false apostles, but Thyatira tolerated a false prophetess who taught them to commit acts of immorality and eat things sacrificed to idols.

God expects His people to test those who claim to have direct revelation from Him (cf. Deut 13, 18, Isa 8:20, 1John 4:1) and to expel those who fail to have: (1) holy character, (2) sound doctrine, and (3) authentication by miraculous signs

3. Jesus threatened to punish them

Because of her immorality and idolatry, He promised to throw her on a bed of sickness, and those who commit adultery with her into great tribulation, unless they repent; He would also kill her children (disciples?) with pestilence. Jesus never tolerates sin among His people

1Cor 11:27 Therefore whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner, shall be guilty of the body and the blood of the Lord... 30 For this reason many among you are weak and sick, and a number sleep (i.e., they died)

4. Those who overcome receive a fourth promise

The fourth promise: He who overcomes, and he who keeps My deeds until the end, TO HIM I WILL GIVE AUTHORITY OVER THE NATIONS; 27 AND HE SHALL RULE THEM WITH A ROD OF IRON, AS THE VESSELS OF THE POTTER ARE BROKEN TO PIECES (cf. Ps 2:9)

From the time of Adam & Eve, God has allowed humans to do as they please, but during the millennial kingdom, Jesus will not overlook any disobedience or rebellion

How do we exercise authority in the church or family today?

Chapter 3

Rev 3:1 To the angel of the church in Sardis write: He who has the seven Spirits of God and the seven stars, says this: 'I know your deeds, that you have a name that you are alive, but you are dead. 2 'Wake up, and strengthen the things that remain, which were about to die; for I have not found your deeds completed in the sight of My God. 3 'So remember what you have received and heard; and keep it, and repent. Therefore if you do not wake up, I will come like a thief, and you will not know at what hour I will come to you.

Rev 3:4 'But you have a few people in Sardis who have not soiled their garments; and they will walk with Me in white, for they are worthy. 5 'He who overcomes will thus be clothed in white garments; and I will not erase his name from the book of life, and I will confess his name before My Father and before His angels. 6 'He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.'

1. Jesus has the seven Spirits of God

There is only one Holy Spirit of God

Eph 4:4 There is one body and one Spirit, just as also you were called in one hope of your calling; 5 one Lord, one faith, one baptism, 6 one God and Father of all....

But, Jesus displays the seven attributes of the Holy Spirit

Isa 11:2 The Spirit of the LORD will rest on Him, The spirit of wisdom and understanding, The spirit of counsel and strength, The spirit of knowledge and the fear of the LORD.

2. Jesus gave Sardis a negative review

Sardis is alive in name only; they are comatose, terminal

They have forgotten what they heard, deeds are incomplete

Many have soiled garments, unrighteous deeds (cf. Rev 19:8)

They are in spiritual decline, but they can wake up

The remedy: remember, obey and repent

3. Those who overcome receive a fifth promise

The fifth promise: He who overcomes will thus be clothed in white garments; and I will not erase his name from the book of life, and I will confess his name before My Father and before His angels (3:5)

White garments represent the righteous deeds of Christians (19:8)

The one who doesn't overcome will have his name erased from the book of life; Christians can lose salvation (Heb 6:4-6)

Matt 10:33 But whoever denies Me before men, I will also deny him before My Father in heaven.

The Book of Revelation - Notes

Rev 3:7 “And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write: He who is holy, who is true, who has the key of David, who opens and no one will shut, and who shuts and no one opens, says this: 8 ‘I know your deeds. Behold, I have put before you an open door which no one can shut, because you have a little power, and have kept My word, and have not denied My name. 9 ‘Behold, I will cause those of the synagogue of Satan, who say that they are Jews and are not, but lie—I will make them come and bow down at your feet, and make them know that I have loved you.

Rev 3:10 ‘Because you have kept the word of My perseverance, I also will keep you from the hour of testing, that hour which is about to come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth. 11 ‘I am coming quickly; hold fast what you have, so that no one will take your crown. 12 ‘He who overcomes, I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God, and he will not go out from it anymore; and I will write on him the name of My God, and the name of the city of My God, the new Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven from My God, and My new name. 13 ‘He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.’

1. Jesus possesses the key of David

Jesus is a descendant of King David, heir to his throne

“The key of David” seems to refer to Isaiah 22:22, where the key of the house of David was given to Eliakim who then had access to all the wealth of the king.... The reference here, however, seems to be to spiritual treasures.

- Bible Knowledge Commentary, s.v. Revelation 3:7

A key unlocks a door; Jesus opens a door for Philadelphia because they have little power, can't do it themselves

2. Jesus gave Philadelphia a positive review

He knows their deeds; they are faithful, loyal

They have little power; He opens a door for them

He loves them; they have persevered

Because they are faithful, He will deliver them from “the hour of testing” that is coming on every habitation (global?)

This is similar to other promises (Ps 5:12, 34:19, 1Cor 10:13)

Is it possible to escape the Great Tribulation? Yes!

3. Those who overcome receive a sixth promise

The sixth promise: I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God, and I will write on him the name of My God, and the name of the city of My God, the new Jerusalem, and My new name.

The Book of Revelation - Notes

1Pet 2:5 you also, as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house for a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

Writing a name on someone or something denotes ownership or dedication, which corresponds with receiving the mark of the Beast (cf. Is 44:5; Rev 13:17; 14:1)

Rev 3:14 “To the angel of the church in Laodicea write: The Amen, the faithful and true Witness, the Beginning of the creation of God, says this: 15 ‘I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot; I wish that you were cold or hot. 16 ‘So because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of My mouth. 17 ‘Because you say, “I am rich, and have become wealthy, and have need of nothing,” and you do not know that you are wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked

Rev 3:18 I advise you to buy from Me gold refined by fire so that you may become rich, and white garments so that you may clothe yourself, and that the shame of your nakedness will not be revealed; and eye salve to anoint your eyes so that you may see. 19 ‘Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline; therefore be zealous and repent. 20 ‘Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and will dine with him, and he with Me. 21 ‘He who overcomes, I will grant to him to sit down with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne. 22 ‘He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.’”

1. Jesus is the archē of the creation of God

Rev 3:14 Καὶ τῷ ἀγγέλῳ τῆς ἐν Λαοδικείᾳ ἐκκλησίας γράψον·
Τάδε λέγει ὁ Ἀμήν, ὁ μάρτυς ὁ πιστὸς καὶ ἀληθινός, ἡ ἀρχὴ τῆς
κτίσεως τοῦ θεοῦ·

The Greek term archē is hard to translate:

- NIV: the ruler of God's creation
- HCSB: the Originator of God's creation

The Holy Spirit may have intended both meanings since Jesus created (John 1:3) and rules all things (cf. Rev 1:5, 3:14)

2. Jesus gave Laodicea a negative review

Laodicea was tepid, neither cold nor hot (i.e., worthless)

Jesus promised to spit them out (reject them)

Laodicea was self-satisfied and self-righteous

Jesus rebuked them and demanded zealous repentance

Gold refined by fire = faith refined by trial (1Pet 1:6-7)

White garments = righteous deeds of the saints (Rev 19:8)

Eye salve for spiritual blindness = repentance, faith (Eph 4:18)

The Book of Revelation - Notes

3. Those who overcome receive a seventh promise

The seventh promise: He who overcomes, I will grant to him to sit down with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne (3:21).

Jesus overcame the temptations of the world, the flesh and the Devil; He calls on His people to do likewise

Those who do will share His authority over the nations (cf. 2:26)

Most of these congregations were failures; salvation isn't guaranteed (Matt 7:13)

- Ephesus: Negative review, needed love
- Smyrna: Positive review
- Pergamum: Negative review, needed truth
- Thyatira: Negative review, needed faithfulness
- Sardis: Negative review, needed zeal
- Philadelphia: Positive review
- Laodicea: Negative review, needed repentance

Is there chronological sequence here?

- Ephesus: Jesus threatened to remove their lampstand (ended?)
- Smyrna: He urged them to be faithful unto death (died out?)
- Pergamum: He would wage war against them (ended?)
- Thyatira: They must hold on until He comes (very long wait?)
- Sardis: He will come upon them like a thief (long wait?)
- Philadelphia: He will come quickly, keep them from global tribulation
- Laodicea: He is knocking at the door, need gold refined in fire

Chapter 4

Rev 4:1 After these things I looked, and behold, a door standing open in heaven, and the first voice which I had heard, like the sound of a trumpet speaking with me, said, "Come up here, and I will show you what must take place after these things." 2 Immediately I was in the Spirit; and behold, a throne was standing in heaven, and One sitting on the throne. 3 And He who was sitting was like a jasper stone and a sardius in appearance; and there was a rainbow around the throne, like an emerald in appearance.

1. John now sees a completely new vision

Like other prophets, John saw a series of different visions over a period of time each with unique symbols and meanings.

The first vision addressed the state of the seven churches.

Here, John sees a depiction of God's throne in heaven.

We can't assume that this is an accurate depiction of reality!

2. The visions appear to be sequential

John heard a voice say, "Come up here, and I will show you what must take place after these things." This implies that the visions are in a chronological sequence.

Why would God discuss the state of only seven churches in the first century and then jump forward 2000 years to the Second Coming without discussing events in between?

Do the seven churches represent seven sequential ages?

3. John's vision is similar other OT visions

Isaiah 6:1 God is seated on His throne (4:2)

Ezek 1:4 Flashes of lightning from the throne (4:5)

Ezek 1:28 A rainbow around the throne (4:3)

Rev 4:4 Around the throne were twenty-four thrones; and upon the thrones I saw twenty-four elders sitting, clothed in white garments, and golden crowns on their heads. 5 Out from the throne come flashes of lightning and sounds and peals of thunder. And there were seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God;

1. John sees 24 elders around the throne

The text does not identify these "elders" (a term of dignity)

They sit on thrones near God = they have great authority

They are clothed in white = righteous deeds (19:8)

They have golden crowns (Greek, stephanos)

"The crowns were similar to those given victors in Greek games (stephanos), in contrast with the crown of a sovereign ruler (diadēma, "diadem")." Bible Knowledge Commentary s.v. Rev 4:4

The Book of Revelation - Notes

2. John sees the seven Spirits of God

Rev 4:5b And there were seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God

This is a symbol of the sevenfold Holy Spirit (cf. 1:4, 3:1, 5:6)

This is similar to the seven branched menorah in the Temple

This is also similar to the tongues of fire that appeared on Pentecost (Acts 2:1-4)

Christians are able to be a light to the world by indwelling of the Holy Spirit (cf. 1:20)

Rev 4:6 and before the throne there was something like a sea of glass, like crystal; and in the center and around the throne, four living creatures full of eyes in front and behind. 7 The first creature was like a lion, and the second creature like a calf, and the third creature had a face like that of a man, and the fourth creature was like a flying eagle. 8 And the four living creatures, each one of them having six wings, are full of eyes around and within; and day and night they do not cease to say, "HOLY, HOLY, HOLY is THE LORD GOD, THE ALMIGHTY, WHO WAS AND WHO IS AND WHO IS TO COME."

Rev 4:9 And when the living creatures give glory and honor and thanks to Him who sits on the throne, to Him who lives forever and ever, 10 the twenty-four elders will fall down before Him who sits on the throne, and will worship Him who lives forever and ever, and will cast their crowns before the throne, saying, 11 "Worthy are You, our Lord and our God, to receive glory and honor and power; for You created all things, and because of Your will they existed, and were created."

1. John sees four living creatures

This is also similar to earlier Old Testament visions

Ezek 1:5 Four living creatures around the throne (4:6)

Ezek 1:10 Faces like a man, lion, ox and eagle (4:5)

Isaiah 6:2 Seraphim covered with six wings (4:8)

Isaiah 1:3 Crying, "Holy, holy holy is the Lord" (4:8)

They are covered with eyes = they see everything

2. This vision reveals God's attributes

He is worthy of glory and honor and thanks (4:9)

He is eternal; He lives forever and ever (4:9)

He is worthy of worship (4:10)

He is worthy of glory and honor and power (4:11)

He has created all things because of His will (4:11)

Conclusion: God has the authority to rule His Creation and judge all people as revealed here

The Book of Revelation - Notes

Chapter 5

A voice told John to write the following things in a book:

The things you have seen (1:19)

Revelation 1: Vision of the seven lampstands

The things that are (1:19)

Revelation 2: Message to the first four churches

Revelation 3: Message to the last three churches

The things that will happen after this (1:19)

Revelation 4: John sees God's throne in heaven

Revelation 5: John sees a scroll with seven seals

Revelation 4-5 is a transition from John's time to the future, from the earthly to the heavenly. It introduces the main theme of the book, God's plan for the future written on a sealed scroll.

Rev 5:1 I saw in the right hand of Him who sat on the throne a book written inside and on the back, sealed up with seven seals. 2 And I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice, "Who is worthy to open the book and to break its seals?" 3 And no one in heaven or on the earth or under the earth was able to open the book or to look into it. 4 Then I began to weep greatly because no one was found worthy to open the book or to look into it; 5 and one of the elders said to me, "Stop weeping; behold, the Lion that is from the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has overcome so as to open the book and its seven seals."

1. John sees a book with seven seals

This is a papyrus or parchment scroll, not a modern book with bound pages and hard covers.

It is the message from God to Jesus then to John (1:1)

It is sealed with seven seals, symbolizing the full revelation of God's message (1:1-3)

They also represent 7 judgments

2. Only one Person can open the book

He is the Lion from the tribe of Judah, the Root of David (5:5)

Both descriptions refer to Jesus Christ

A lion is strong and powerful, the king of the beasts (royalty)

The pre-incarnate Jesus created Adam, so He is the source or root of David's family (Col 1:16)

Jesus is also a descendent of David through His human mother (cf. Isa 11:1, 10, Rev 22:16)

Rev 5:6 And I saw between the throne (with the four living creatures) and the elders a Lamb standing, as if slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God, sent out into all the earth. 7 And He came and took the book out of the right hand of Him who sat on the throne. 8 When He had taken the book, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each one holding a harp and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints.

The Book of Revelation - Notes

1. John sees a strange, symbolic Lamb

The Lamb appears to be slain but is standing; Jesus is the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world (John 1:29); Jesus was dead but has come to life again (2:8)

The Lamb has seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God, sent out into all the earth (5:6)

The number seven is associated with completion and perfection; animals use their horns as weapons, so horns became a symbol of strength and power in ancient Israel (1Kgs 22:11)
So, Jesus has complete strength, perfect power

The seven eyes are the seven Spirits of God (5:6)

Jesus has the seven attributes of the Spirit (Isa 11:2)

Seven eyes imply that Jesus is all-seeing (cf. Zech. 3:9; 4:10)

2Chr 16:9 For the eyes of the LORD move to and fro throughout the earth that He may strongly support those whose heart is completely His...

1Cor 2:10b The Spirit searches all things, even the deep things of God

2. John sees a representation of the Trinity

God the Father is on the throne of heaven (4:10-11)

God the Son appears as the slain Lamb (5:5)

God the Holy Spirit appears as seven burning lamps (4:5)

John's salutation is also very Trinitarian:

Rev 1:4 John to the seven churches that are in Asia: Grace to you and peace, from Him who is and who was and who is to come, and from the seven Spirits who are before His throne, 5 and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness....

3. Incense represents the prayers of the saints

The four living creatures and the twenty-four elders hold golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints (5:8)

The prayers of righteous people ascend to God like a cloud of fragrant incense (cf. 8:3)

Ps 141:2 May my prayer be counted as incense before You; the lifting up of my hands as the evening offering.

Rev 5:9 And they sang a new song, saying, "Worthy are You to take the book and to break its seals; for You were slain, and purchased for God with Your blood men from every tribe and tongue and people and nation. 10 "You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to our God; and they will reign upon the earth."

The Book of Revelation - Notes

1. Christians will be kings and priests

Rev 5:10a You have made them [Christians] to be a kingdom and priests to our God

Christians are citizens of God's kingdom now (Php 3:20)

Christians offer sacrifices of praise, intercessory prayers

Resurrected Christians will inherit an eternal kingdom, the Kingdom of God (cf. Dan 7:18, 1Cor 15:50-53)

A priest is God's representative to the people; resurrected Christians will show humanity what God is like

2. Christians will rule on the earth

Rev 5:10b and they [Christians] will reign upon the earth

Matt 5:3 Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Matt 5:5 Blessed are the gentle, for they shall inherit the earth.

Heaven is not the reward of the saved

The Earth is where the action is, focus of God's plan

Rev 5:11 Then I looked, and I heard the voice of many angels around the throne and the living creatures and the elders; and the number of them was myriads of myriads, and thousands of thousands, 12 saying with a loud voice, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing." 13 And every created thing which is in heaven and on the earth and under the earth and on the sea, and all things in them, I heard saying, "To Him who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb, be blessing and honor and glory and dominion forever and ever." 14 And the four living creatures kept saying, "Amen." And the elders fell down and worshiped.

1. There are lots of angels

Rev 5:11 Then I looked, and I heard the voice of many angels around the throne and the living creatures and the elders; and the number of them [i.e., the angels] was myriads of myriads, and thousands of thousands

The Bible doesn't give us an exact number of all these heavenly servants, but myriads of myriads would imply tens or possibly hundreds of millions

The Bible calls God the Lord of hosts, which is a large army

2. The Kingdom of God is not a democracy

Every created thing cries out, "To Him who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb, be blessing and honor and glory and dominion forever and ever" (5:13)

There is one supreme power in the universe

Do we give God praise, honor, glory and obedience today?

Chapter 6

Revelation 6 covers six of the seven seals

- The First Seal = the White Horse
- The Second Seal = the Red Horse
- The Third Seal = the Black Horse
- The Fourth Seal = the Pale Horse
- The Fifth Seal = Martyrdom
- The Sixth Seal = Supernatural Signs

Revelation 6 deals with the signs of the Second Coming

It matches the Olivet Prophecy of Matt 24, Mark 13 & Luke 21

Rev 6:1 Then I saw when the Lamb broke one of the seven seals, and I heard one of the four living creatures saying as with a voice of thunder, "Come." 2 I looked, and behold, a white horse, and he who sat on it had a bow; and a crown was given to him, and he went out conquering and to conquer.

1. The First Seal = the White Horse, a Counterfeit Savior

This rider sits on a white horse; he has a bow and a crown (Greek, *stephanos*), and he goes forth conquering. Many people confuse this counterfeit savior with Jesus because he comes on a white horse and conquers. But, in Revelation 19:11-16, Jesus has a sword and many diadems (Greek, *diadéma*) on His head. The former is a crown of victory; the latter is a royal crown. This counterfeit messiah is victorious in a religious crusade

This is consistent with first sign in the Olivet Prophecy

Matt 24:3 As He was sitting on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to Him privately, saying, "Tell us, when will these things happen, and what will be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?" 4 And Jesus answered and said to them, "See to it that no one misleads you. 5 For many will come in My name, saying, 'I am the Christ,' and will mislead many.

1Thes 2:7 For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only he who now restrains will do so until he is taken out of the way. 8 Then that lawless one will be revealed whom the Lord will slay with the breath of His mouth and bring to an end by the appearance of His coming; 9 that is, the one whose coming is in accord with the activity of Satan, with all power and signs and false wonders, 10 and with all the deception of wickedness for those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth so as to be saved.

Dan 9:27 And he will make a firm covenant with the many for one week, but in the middle of the week he will put a stop to sacrifice and grain offering; and on the wing of abominations will come one who makes desolate, even until a complete destruction, one that is decreed, is poured out on the one who makes desolate.

A European leader will establish a 7 year treaty with many people (the final heptad of the 70 Weeks prophecy) then break it after ~3.5 years, ending Jewish sacrifices (cf. Dan 9:26)

The Book of Revelation - Notes

Rev 6:3 When He broke the second seal, I heard the second living creature saying, "Come." 4 And another, a red horse, went out; and to him who sat on it, it was granted to take peace from the earth, and that men would slay one another; and a great sword was given to him.

2. The Second Seal = the Red Horse, War

Red is the color of blood; this rider has a great sword, and he causes men to slay one another

This is the second sign listed in the Olivet Prophecy

Matt 24:6 You will be hearing of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not frightened, for those things must take place, but that is not yet the end. 7 For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom...

Dan 11:40 "At the end time the king of the South will collide with him, and the king of the North will storm against him with chariots, with horsemen and with many ships; and he will enter countries, overflow them and pass through.

Earlier in Daniel 11, the king of the South was the Ptolemaic dynasty located in Egypt; the king of the North was the Seleucid dynasty that ruled over Syria until the Roman Empire defeated and replaced this kingdom in 64 BC

Dan 11:41 "He will also enter the Beautiful Land, and many countries will fall; but these will be rescued out of his hand: Edom, Moab and the foremost of the sons of Ammon.

The Beautiful Land is a reference to Israel, the Holy Land
The ancient territory of Edom, Moab and Ammon is Jordan

Dan 11:42 "Then he will stretch out his hand against other countries, and the land of Egypt will not escape. 43 "But he will gain control over the hidden treasures of gold and silver and over all the precious things of Egypt; and Libyans and Ethiopians [Cushites] will follow at his heels. Egypt, Libya and Sudan have large deposits of oil and natural gas; Egypt and Ethiopia control the Red Sea shipping lanes that pass through the Suez Canal and the Gulf of Aden

Rev 6:5 When He broke the third seal, I heard the third living creature saying, "Come." I looked, and behold, a black horse; and he who sat on it had a pair of scales in his hand. 6 And I heard something like a voice in the center of the four living creatures saying, "A quart of wheat for a denarius, and three quarts of barley for a denarius; and do not damage the oil and the wine."

3. The Third Seal = the Black Horse, Famine

This rider has a pair of scales to measure out small quantities of food in exchange for a denarius, the wage for a day of work. He is not to "damage" (act unjustly with) the oil & the wine (perhaps, cheating customers by diluting these).

This is the next sign in the Olivet Prophecy

Matt 24:7b ...and in various places there will be famines....

Rev 6:7 When the Lamb broke the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth living creature saying, "Come." 8 I looked, and behold, an ashen horse; and he who sat on it had the name Death; and Hades was following with him. Authority was given to them over a fourth of the earth, to kill with sword and with famine and with pestilence and by the wild beasts of the earth.

4. The Fourth Seal = the Pale Horse, Death

NIV, ESV translate the Greek term *hippos chlōros* as a pale horse, while the NET, NLT call this a pale green horse; this is the zombie horse of the apocalypse. The rider is Death personified; Hades is a Greek term for the grave. They kill a quarter of the earth at one time with war (red horse), famine (black horse), pestilence (pale green horse) and wild beasts.

God sends these 4 horsemen as judgments on a sinful world

Rev 6:9 When the Lamb broke the fifth seal, I saw underneath the altar the souls of those who had been slain because of the word of God, and because of the testimony which they had maintained; 10 and they cried out with a loud voice, saying, "How long, O Lord, holy and true, will You refrain from judging and avenging our blood on those who dwell on the earth?" 11 And there was given to each of them a white robe; and they were told that they should rest for a little while longer, until the number of their fellow servants and their brethren who were to be killed even as they had been, would be completed also.

5. The Fifth Seal = Martyrdom

This seal is also the next event predicted in the Olivet Prophecy

Matt 24:9 Then they will deliver you to tribulation, and will kill you, and you will be hated by all nations because of My name. 10 At that time many will fall away and will betray one another and hate one another.

Clearly, Jesus will NOT remove these Christians from the earth in a secret Rapture prior to the Tribulation; they will suffer hatred, persecution and martyrdom

This is a vision; the images are symbolic, not literal. An altar is a symbol of sacrifice; the ashes and bones of animal sacrifices accumulated at the bottom, underneath the grating. The souls of those who died for the truth are under the altar to show that they are currently in the grave. Symbolically, they cry out for justice just as Abel's blood cried out for justice after Cain killed his brother (cf. Gen 4:10).

The Bible clearly says that the dead are unconscious in grave

Eccl 9:5a The living at least know they will die, but the dead know nothing. (NLT)

Eccl 9:10 Whatever you do, do well. For when you go to the grave, there will be no work or planning or knowledge or wisdom. (NLT)

Ps 115:17 The dead do not praise the LORD, Nor do any who go down into silence

The Book of Revelation - Notes

The Bible compares death to sleep or rest (Dan 12:2, 1Thes 4:15)

The martyrs are told to rest a little while longer (6:11)

Dan 12:13 But as for you [Daniel], go your way to the end; then you will enter into rest and rise again for your allotted portion at the end of the age.

Rev 14:13 And I heard a voice from heaven, saying, "Write, 'Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on!'" "Yes," says the Spirit, "so that they may rest from their labors, for their deeds follow with them."

Dan 7:23 Thus he said: 'The fourth beast will be a fourth kingdom on the earth, which will be different from all the other kingdoms and will devour the whole earth and tread it down and crush it. 24 As for the ten horns, out of this kingdom ten kings will arise; and another will arise after them, and he will be different from the previous ones and will subdue three kings. 25 He will speak out against the Most High and wear down the saints of the Highest One, and he will intend to make alterations in times and in law; and they will be given into his hand for a time, times, and half a time.

Rev 6:12 I looked when He broke the sixth seal, and there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth made of hair, and the whole moon became like blood; 13 and the stars of the sky fell to the earth, as a fig tree casts its unripe figs when shaken by a great wind. 14 The sky was split apart like a scroll when it is rolled up, and every mountain and island were moved out of their places.

Rev 6:15 Then the kings of the earth and the great men and the commanders and the rich and the strong and every slave and free man hid themselves in the caves and among the rocks of the mountains; 16 and they said to the mountains and to the rocks, "Fall on us and hide us from the presence of Him who sits on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb; 17 for the great day of their wrath has come, and who is able to stand?"

6. The Sixth Seal = Supernatural Signs

Jesus also predicted these events in the Olivet Prophecy

Matt 24:7b ...and in various places there will be famines and earthquakes.

Luke 21:10 Then He continued by saying to them, "Nation will rise against nation and kingdom against kingdom, 11 and there will be great earthquakes, and in various places plagues and famines; and there will be terrors and great signs from heaven.

The world will know that Jesus is coming but refuse to repent