

Book of Revelation

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Introduction

The world's biblical scholars have seemed to be frustrated and confused by the book of Revelation. This fact notwithstanding, the Prophet Joseph once said: "The book of Revelation is one of the plainest books God ever caused to be written" (TPJS, 290). Obviously, Joseph, through the Spirit, had caught the secret of the book, and he loved it!

While even today the book remains difficult to interpret, we in the Church do have a considerable advantage over the rest of the world. Modern revelation has given us considerable insight into the meaning of the book. This revealed material includes sections 77, 88, 130, and 131 of the Doctrine and Covenants, 1 Nephi 14:10-27, Ether 4:16 in the Book of Mormon, Joseph's inspired revision of the King James Bible, and some sermons of the Prophet's which are recorded in his *History of the Church*, volume 5, pages 298, 336- 37, 339-45 and volume 6, pages 363-67. In addition, we will draw upon the helpful work by Dr. Richard D. Draper, *Opening the Seven Seals: The Visions of John the Revelator* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1991).

Brother Draper introduces his book with a provocative keynote statement:

John's invocation upon all those who receive the revelation is rendered by the King James translators: "Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein: for the time is at hand" (Revelation 1:3). The last phrase, "for the time is at hand," is what urges me. The Greek (*ho gar kairos eggus*) can be translated as the King James Version does it, but I fear that with that rendering we are likely to misunderstand John's thrust — the sense is that time is limited, or that time presses. This captures the idea of how the inner tempo, the spiritual vigor of the age, will escalate as mankind enters the apocalyptic era. As the earth prepares for the coming of her Lord, time becomes laden with force, charged with an irresistible destiny. The Greek does not employ the ordinary word for time (*chronos*) but speaks of the *Kairos* — time that has matured; time that has found fulfillment.

Closely connected with the thought is a phrase repeated three times near the end of the book: "Behold, I come quickly" (Revelation 22: 7, 12, cf. 20). The Lord is not telling the early Christians to expect him at any moment. Rather, the phrase characterizes a dynamic quality of time. The Lord is saying that he comes in the pressing, the urgent time — the time bearing within it a measureless spiritual hastening that moves to crescendo upon a humanity unmoved, unrepentant, and unprepared. One scholar said, "That Christ comes quickly can very well mean that He comes 'too quickly' for an unprepared and sleeping humanity. That the time is 'near' may mean that it is 'short'; that it is actually too short considering the slowness and laziness of human souls" (Emil Bock, *The*

Apocalypse of Saint John, trans. Alfred Heidenreich, Edinburgh: Floris Books, 1951, 17) (Draper, 9).

The following notes will hopefully create a background framework that will make your reading and studying the book of Revelation more fun and meaningful in the future.

Background

Numerous prophets have been privileged to see panoramic visions that sweep through time, but to John was given the privilege of recording the comprehensive vision of the earth from its beginning to its end. Joseph Smith on one occasion stated that John “saw the same things concerning the last days, which Enoch saw” (*TPJS*, 84). This statement may allude to the vision of Enoch recorded in Moses 7:41-67, which says in part, “The Lord showed Enoch all things, even unto the end of the world; and he saw the day of the righteous, the hour of their redemption, and received a fulness of joy” (verse 67).

The brother of Jared in the Book of Mormon saw, like John, the entire history of the world (see Ether 3:25-27). The sacred revelation given to the brother of Jared was not to be shared with a faithless world. The Lord gave him explicit instructions:

Behold, thou shalt not suffer these things which ye have seen and heard to go forth unto the world, until the time cometh that I shall glorify my name in the flesh; wherefore, ye shall treasure up the things which ye have seen and heard, and show it to no man. And behold, when ye shall come unto me, ye shall write them and shall seal them up. . .

When the Lord had said these words, he showed unto the brother of Jared all the inhabitants of the earth which had been, and also all that would be; and he withheld them not from his sight, even unto the ends of the earth. . . And the Lord said unto him: Write these things and seal them up; and I will show them in mine own due time unto the children of men (*Ether* 3:21-22, 25, 27).

Moroni’s translation of the vision of the brother of Jared was preserved as the sealed portion of the plates of Mormon. Joseph Smith was expressly forbidden to translate this sealed portion: “Touch them not in order that ye may translate; for that thing is forbidden you, except by and by it shall be wisdom in God” (*Ether* 5:1). That vision has remained sealed ever since. However, another saw and recorded the same vision. The sealed portion of the Book of Mormon “contains the same revelation which was given to John upon the isle of Patmos,” albeit Jared’s brother apparently wrote with a great deal more detail.

The unique feature about John’s revelation is that the prophet was commanded not to seal it up. Indeed, John seems to be the only prophet commissioned to publish the vision up to this time. Daniel and Nephi also saw and wrote these things, but, like Jared’s brother, they were commanded to seal them up that they might later come forth in their purity (see Daniel 12:4, 9; 1 Nephi 14:25-26). Nephi was expressly forbidden to write what he saw (1 Nephi 14:28).

Someday, the Lord has promised, the revelation recorded by the brother of Jared will be revealed. This will be in conjunction with the restoration of the gospel. Until then John’s record will have to fill the gap. Fortunately, this is far from being a burden. Unto Moroni the Lord stated, “And then [when Israel comes to accept the Savior] shall my revelations which I have caused to be written by my servant John be unfolded in the eyes of all the people.

Remember, when ye see these things, ye shall know that the time is at hand that they shall be made manifest in very deed" (Ether 4:16). Reading and understanding Revelation can result in a sensitivity to the latter-day events as they unfold.

The Revelation of St. John the Divine or the book of Revelation, as we commonly call it, portrays in a dramatic way the historical struggle between the forces of good (Jesus Christ and his adherents) and the forces of evil (Satan, the anti-Christ).

John's vision is often called the Apocalypse. This title is derived from the ancient Greek word *apokalupt*, which means to make bare, unveil, disclose, or uncover. In a religious sense, it carries the idea of disclosing divine secrets and making known holy mysteries. Some have felt, because of the difficult literary style of the book that much of what is written in the book seems to cover rather than uncover its meaning. Ancient Greek-speaking Jews and early Christians used the word to signify a vision with its interpretation, as opposed to a revelation or prophecy (see Romans 16:25; 2 Corinthians 12:1; Galatians 1:12). Thus, "The Apocalypse" is an appropriate title for John's revelation.

There are at least four schools of thought regarding the way in which the book ought to be interpreted:

1. Preterit — Everything in the book is in the past, that is, it took place before the book was written.
2. Allegorical — Everything in the book is simply symbolic – nothing is historical or literal or real.
3. Futuristic — Everything in the book still lies in the future and has not yet happened.
4. Historical — Contained in the book is past history, present history (at the time of John), and predictions of future historical events.

It would appear that approaching the interpretation of the book from a combination of all four of these viewpoints is most appropriate.

The book is probably the finest example of a special literary form called "apocalyptic literature." Broadly speaking, this type of literature includes accounts of visions of the heavenly world and deals chiefly with the coming Millennium. It is the only example of this type of literature in the New Testament, though there are other examples in the Old Testament including the books of Daniel, Joel, Ezekiel, and Zechariah. Even the Book of Mormon gets into the act with 1 Nephi 8, 11-14.

Let us explore some of the characteristics of this special type of literature. It is composed of three elements. First, it is nearly always eschatological (literally, the study of last things). That is, it focuses on a period of time yet future when God will disrupt the flow of history to bring about the end of wickedness and institute a new order of righteousness and peace. It is God's breaking into the flow of history and altering it that distinguishes the apocalyptic panorama from its counterpart, prophecy. Apocalyptic literature ignores, and in this way, denies, man's capacity to create a peaceful future by overcoming wickedness.

Second, apocalyptic literature is dualistic. That is, apocalyptic reality consists of two irreducible elements or opposing principles: good and evil. The present age is subject to the

powers of evil. Satan and his hosts reign. But his world will collapse into a new timeless age of perfect righteousness under the authority of ultimate goodness, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Third, a rigid determinism marks the whole. Revelation testifies that all things move in concert toward a divinely predetermined end. Everything is inevitable; nothing is left to chance. The problem of human agency or free will within the context of God's omniscience never surfaces. But there is a tacit insistence that God's ultimate victory is worked out within the framework of human freedom. Yet apocalyptic writers in general, and John in particular, are very pessimistic about mankind's being able to combat evil and rise out of the present wicked world. Though individuals can and will repent, as John insists throughout his revelation, the world as a whole will not. Thus, God alone has the power to overcome the power of Satan and the wickedness that exist in it. Therefore, central to the apocalyptic framework is faith in God and in his power to control the future and turn all things to the blessing of the righteous.

The main theme of apocalyptic literature is "last things": the end of the earth, the end stage of the age, the ultimate destruction of evil. Its tone is not "Christian" — "turn the other cheek" — but rather it is often violent and vindictive. There are "rivers of blood," and the wicked are destroyed by graphic means such as hail, fire, poisons, vapors, and ugly beasts. The righteous exult that the wicked are being destroyed, and they even ask to help in the destruction. Apocalyptic literature is sometimes also called "crisis literature" since it is written during a major crisis among the saints. In the book of Revelation, the Christians are being severely persecuted under the Roman Emperor Domitian — more about this persecution later. Apocalyptic literature may also be called "detour literature." Generally, when God's people are on the earth, their theology has had the general theme: "We are the covenant people, and we are going to prosper and march onward and upward to our exaltation or happy end." History has frequently come along and smashed this idealistic theology. The Assyrians or Persians or Romans or Missourians, etc., have significantly oppressed the Christians, for example. A crisis is thus created. At this time of crisis, a prophet comes on the scene and writes this type of literature and "detours" the people around the crisis. He may say, for example, something like, "We did something wrong, and God is punishing us. But be patient. All of God's promises to us will still come to pass, but it will simply take a bit longer than we anticipated." Apocalyptic literature may also be called "upside down literature." Here are God's people, and there are the enemies of God's people — the tools of the devil. Whether they are Romans or Assyrians or Missourians, they are always smashing God's people! But in the end, some day, there will be a reversal, a turning upside down. God's people will overcome the enemy. Finally, there will be justice!

Most of the world's Bible scholars do not believe that the book of Revelation was written by John the Apostle, especially since his other writings — the Gospel of John and the epistles of John are full of love and sweetness, and the book of Revelation is rather dark and vengeful in its tone. We believe, however, that the book was written by John, the beloved apostle of Jesus, probably about AD 90-95 while he served an eighteen-month sentence as a prisoner on

the Isle of Patmos, off the coast of Ephesus. With Peter and James, he had served in the First Presidency of the Church, and he was the last of the ancient apostles to minister among the saints of his day. After his exile on Patmos, he ministered at Ephesus. The Gospel of John and his letters were probably written after his exile, between AD 96 and 100.

A feeling for the historical setting at the time of John is vital in order to understand the book. The Roman Empire was led by Julius Caesar between 40 and 44 BC. Following his assassination, Rome was ruled by a three-man government consisting of Anthony, Octavius, and Lepidus. Then followed the Roman Emperors, the first of which was Octavius who took the title Augustus Caesar. At the time of Christ's birth, Rome was ruled by this Augustus Caesar who ruled from 27 BC to AD 14. At the time of John, Rome was ruled by its eighth emperor, Domitian, who ruled from AD 81 to 96. Between Augustus and Domitian there were six other emperors. It might seem unimportant to list these six emperors, but it turns out to be very important to know something about them. The second emperor of Rome was Tiberius (AD 14-37), then Caligula (AD 37-41), Claudia (AD 41-54), Nero (AD 54-68), Vespasian (AD 69-79), and Titus (AD 79-81 — only a two-year reign). After the suicide of Nero and before the confirmation of Vespasian, three military generals vied for control of Rome. Each ruled briefly in succession. They were Galba (6 months), Otho (4 months), and Vitellius (8 months). These military generals were never confirmed as emperors, but each wore the crown of leadership.

Each of Rome's emperors believed that he ruled by divine right — that he was in fact divine and should be worshiped by the Roman populace. The emperor most adamant in commanding that all Roman subjects (except Jews whom he realized could never be forced to submit) worship him as a god, was Domitian. He allowed each Roman citizen to keep his own gods, but he had to be one of them. In order to enforce this worship of himself, Domitian strengthened and used the state Church and its imperial Roman "priesthood" vested in Rome's priests. These same priests became, in effect, the enforcers of Domitian's heinous religious policy. They were assigned to systematically interview Roman subjects to ensure that each paid his worshipful homage to Domitian. Upon satisfactory completion of this interview, the subject would receive a certified card which he carried on his person and which allowed him to do business — to buy and sell. Anyone not holding a card was not only prevented from buying provisions and selling their services or wares but also might be harassed by being arrested, killed, imprisoned, or in other ways persecuted.

Keep in mind that Domitian was emperor of Rome in John's day. His religious policy, of course, presented a serious predicament for Christians of the day. John set the precedent for the Christian world by refusing to worship the emperor, and for his stand was imprisoned on Patmos. He also urged all Christians to do the same — to "overcome" or to persist in their conviction and not pay religious homage to the Emperor Domitian. In order for John to be able to encourage this open rebellion against the prevailing Roman government and emperor, and to even do it in writing — the book of Revelation — John had to disguise his references to Rome and to the Emperor Domitian lest he be found guilty of treason. In disguising these references in the book, he had to do it in such a way that Christians might understand his references and

allusions. He thus refers to Rome as the “beast with seven heads” (the seven emperors excluding Domitian) and “ten crowns” (the seven emperors plus the three non-emperor military leaders).

In order to refer to Domitian himself, he used a clever ploy. To understand this ploy one must understand the legend of Nero reditivus. Following the suicide of the maniacal Emperor Nero in AD 68, a tradition grew among Roman subjects that the wicked Nero was not really dead – that he was simply hiding somewhere, and he would some day return to resume his tyrannical rule. Interestingly, we in this country did the same thing in a more modern day. At the death of Adolph Hitler, the story developed that he hadn’t really committed suicide, but rather that his suicide was faked, and he really was alive and living in South America. Apparently, we as humans have a reluctance to let infamously wicked men die. This tradition in Rome grew into a legend or myth and was promulgated in the art and literature of the day. The myth came to be known as Nero reditivus. It wasn’t really believed by intelligent, knowledgeable people, but all knew the story. An analogy in our time might be the story of Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs. We all know the story though we also know it is not literally true. The legend of Nero reditivus gave John the opportunity to disguise his references to Domitian. In the book of Revelation, he refers to Domitian as the revived or “resurrected” Nero. Neither John nor any of the Christians believed the legend of Nero reditivus, but the myth gave the Christians a way of referring to Domitian without his or Rome’s knowing it.

Keep in mind that at the time of John there was no New Testament. The Christians’ scripture was the Old Testament. The Christians had an intimate knowledge of the Old Testament – almost every phrase. The Romans did not know the Bible. Thus, John could use the concepts in the Bible to communicate meaningfully with the Christians and still hide his meaning from the Romans. And use it he did! There are some 400 allusions to Old Testament passages in the book of Revelation. There are 258 direct quotations from the Old Testament in the book.

Near Eastern literature, not just Hebrew, reveals a fondness for using numbers to communicate ideas. This practice is referred as “numerology.” Why certain numbers became laden with symbolic meaning is unknown. In most cases this arose in prehistoric times and is now lost to us. Interestingly there is a general consistency across cultures to the meaning of certain numbers. That is not to say that numbers are never used as numbers. However, in certain contexts they express ideas. This is the case in the book of Revelation. One should interpret numbers just as the other symbolic representations. Fortunately, they are used consistently. For example, the number “7” meant “totality,” “perfection,” or “wholeness.” God created the world in seven days, and when he finished it was complete. It took seven days to completely knock down the walls of Jericho. Seven plagues, seven woes, seven angels, seven thousand years to complete the history of the earth, etc. The number “3” was representative of government – three in the godhood. The number “777” thus combines the meanings of “3” and “7” – the ultimate in organizational perfection. The number “4” refers to

things of heaven. The number "6" is "human," "ordinary," or "common." The ultimate human frailty is "666." In addition to the special meaning assigned to each number, there was a number assigned to each letter of the alphabet used at the time. Thus, a word or name could be assigned a numerical value by adding up the numbers assigned to each letter. The name "Jesus" so calculated is "888" which is even greater than the ultimate in perfection — "777."

Brother Richard D. Draper has offered another possible explanation as to why the book of Revelation was recorded in code:

There was . . . a problem with recording that information. Both John and Nephi seemed to have been aware of it, but Nephi articulated it, stating that the Bible would go through the hands of the "great and abominable church, which is most abominable above all other churches; for behold, they have taken away from the gospel of the Lamb many parts which are plain and most precious; and also, many covenants of the Lord have they taken away" (1 Nephi 13:26). This was done in a deliberate attempt to pervert the gospel and lead men astray (see 1 Nephi 13:14-28). The problem was to get the message through the editors of the great and abominable church.

John did not choose the form of the vision; God did. The form is now called apocalyptic. It provided John with the means of being able to write in a kind of divine code. And it seems to have worked well for him. (*Opening the Seven Seals: The Visions of John the Revelator*, Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1991, 14).

To his disciples, Jesus said, "Verily I say unto you, There be some standing here, which shall not taste of death, till they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom" (Matthew 16:28). One wonders if the Lord's gaze fell upon John. Not many months later, the Savior said to him, "John, my beloved, what desirest thou? For if you shall ask what you will, it shall be granted unto you" (D&C 7:1). Standing before the Lord of life, John asked what would otherwise have been the inconceivable: "Lord, give unto me power over death, that I may live and bring souls unto thee" (D&C 7: 2). His desire was granted. "Because thou desirest this," affirmed the Lord, "thou shalt tarry until I come in my glory, and shalt prophesy before nations, kindreds, tongues and people" (D&C 7: 3).

John's aspiration set on course the fulfillment of a prophecy made nearly six hundred years earlier. The American prophet Nephi, caught away in vision, saw the entire history of the world. Like others, he was forbidden to write but not without explanation:

The angel spake unto me, saying: Look! And I looked and beheld a man, and he was dressed in a white robe. And the angel said unto me: Behold one of the twelve apostles of the Lamb. Behold, he shall see and write the remainder of these things; yea, and also many things which have been. And he shall also write concerning the end of the world.

Wherefore, the things which he shall write are just and true; and behold they are written in the book which thou beheld proceeding out of the mouth of the

Jew; and at the time they proceeded out of the mouth of the Jew, or, at the time the book proceeded out of the mouth of the Jew, the things which were written were plain and pure, and most precious and easy to the understanding of all men.

And behold, the things which this apostle of the Lamb shall write are many things which thou hast seen; and behold, the remainder shalt thou see. But the things which thou shalt see hereafter thou shalt not write; for the Lord God hath ordained the apostle of the Lamb of God that he should write them.

And also, others who have been, to them hath he shown all things, and they have written them; and they are sealed up to come forth in their purity, according to the truth which is in the Lamb, in the own due time of the Lord, unto the house of Israel.

And I, Nephi, heard and bear record, that the name of the apostle of the Lamb was John, according to the word of the angel (1 Nephi 14:18-27).

Thus, it fell to John to give the vision to the world. But as he did so, he also chronicled the history through which he himself would live. He knew in broad terms the entire history of the last two millennia. It is unlikely, however, that he knew of the spiritual manifestation that awaited him after a Roman ruler, probably Domitian himself, banished him for some time to a little Greek island in the Aegean Sea.

Patmos is a small, roughly butterfly-shaped volcanic island southwest of the Turkish city of Ephesus. It measures about ten by five miles. Under Rome a number of islands were used as penal settlements. In addition to Patmos, there were Pontia, off the coast of Latium, and Gyara and Seriphis in the Aegean Sea. At that time, Patmos was fertile though it relied heavily upon rain for its water supply. The prisoners were thus able to take care of themselves. Today, though no longer fertile, the island boasts a population of about 2,400 fishing families.

The revelation came while John was serving time in that penal colony. The exact nature of his punishment is unknown, but it consisted at least in part of banishment. Among the Romans there were two types of exile: *deportatio* and *relegatio*. *Deportatio* was permanent and consisted of the loss of rights and property. Only the emperor could impose it. *Relegatio* ran in length from one-half to ten years and involved no loss of rights or property. The Roman senate, a city prefect, or other officials could inflict it. John seems to have suffered the milder *relegatio*, probably imposed by a governor of the Roman province of Asia if not by the emperor himself. At any rate, he was later freed and able to continue his work.

Establishing a firm date for John's imprisonment is impossible. According to his testimony, it was at a time when the Christians were being persecuted on a fairly large scale. Since some forms of harassment were going on from the mid-40s AD and continued off and on throughout the first and later centuries after the birth of the Lord, no period is totally exempt. Two times vie for the most support among scholars as the period of greatest persecution: the late-60s AD and the 90s AD. During the former, Nero launched his persecution against the

Christians at Rome. During the latter, Domitian pushed his empire-wide pogrom (an organized massacre) of all Christians.

Those who favor the Neronian era use evidence from Revelation itself. For example, they point to the head of the beast that was wounded and came alive (see Revelation 13:3) as a reference to Nero. Because this fits certain legends that sprung up shortly after the death of the emperor, they insist that John had him in mind. Those who favor Domitian's time base their evidence on the early sources, which are quite unanimous on the subject. In this case, it is the name of Domitian whose name is hidden by the ploy of Nero *redivivus*. The decade of the 90s AD also best fits the evidence.

During this decade, the triangular struggle between pagans, Jews, and Christians escalated in Asia Minor. This was an area that had a tradition for religious strife often sparked by the frequent natural disasters. About AD 92 there was an anti-Christian outbreak due in part to a serious famine blamed on the saints because they refused to pay homage to pagan gods. Boycotts and trade sanctions were directed against the churches. Arrests, imprisonments, banishments, and even executions followed. The famine first affected Pisidian Antioch and later Prusa in the north of the province. Apparently, even areas outside this province were hit.

In addition, the emperor Domitian launched a wide pogrom specifically against the Christians. He had a profound hostility toward any form of religious unorthodoxy, that is, any religion he felt was antithetical to Roman belief. Prominent citizens who lapsed too blatantly into an "external religion" such as Christianity or Judaism came under his censure even to the point of banishment and death. Further, he became megalomaniacal late in his career, eventually persuading himself he was lord and god. He demanded that his court address him as such. He ordered libations to be made and incense to be offered before his statues. Those who refused, many Christians included, were punished.

Under these or similar circumstances John received a sentence of banishment to the island. There he remained probably for years. At what point he received the apocalypse is unknown, but one may rest assured that this was not the only time John enjoyed comfort from the Spirit during his long vigil "for the testimony of Jesus." Finally, the day came for his release. According to one tradition, he retired to western Asia Minor (present-day Turkey) and there continued the work of the ministry.

What was John's purpose in writing the book of Revelation? It was at least in part to fulfill the commandment given him directly by Jesus Christ himself (see Revelation 1:11). However, there were at least two other factors at play. Many of the saints were discouraged, even frightened. They were in the midst of the greatest crisis yet faced by the early Church. The ordeal through which they were passing had terrifying prospects. Rome, the seemingly omnipotent master of their world, had determined that holding to the Christian faith constituted a crime worthy of death. The churches in Asia already knew the effect of that brutal decision. Many undoubtedly wondered how a few powerless Christians could survive against the Latin colossus.

But more than external danger threatened the life of the fledgling Church. Indeed, a far greater threat overshadowed them than the injustice of the Rome. This was the period in which apostasy was visibly gaining the upper hand after a half century of struggle. The Savior's apostles and prophets knew it was coming. It was one of the themes on which the Lord had dwelt during his forty-day ministry after his resurrection (see Acts 1:3). Paul warned that a "falling away" would occur because men would not endure sound doctrine (see 2 Thessalonians 2:1-5; 2 Timothy 4:3-4; Acts 20:29-31). "Also of your own selves," he told them, "shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them" (Acts 20:30). As a result of this falling away the "man of sin," a son of perdition, would be revealed "who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple [i.e., the church] of God, [showing] himself that he is God" (2 Thessalonians 2:3-4).

The Greek word Paul used that is translated as "falling away" is *apostasia*. It meant literally to stand apart in immovable opposition, and in a civil sense, "rebellion" or, better, "revolution" or "mutiny." It carried the idea of an internal takeover by parties hostile to established authority, leadership, and constitution. Paul warned the Church for over three years that there would be such a rebellion. Once the rebellion succeeded, those leaders whom the Savior chose would be replaced by others of a perverse nature (wolves in sheep's clothing) who would change the doctrine (constitution) of Christ to fit their own base desires. Paul's warning shows that the Church was not in danger of totally disappearing. Rather, those antichrists, who would replace Christ's gospel with the doctrines of men, would assume control.

John fought against these stubbornly disobedient and defiant individuals. We know the names of some of them: Diotrephes, Alexander the coppersmith, Hymenaeus, and Philetus (see 3 John 1:9-10; 1 Timothy 1:20; 2 Timothy 2:17; 4:14). These and others perverted the doctrine by setting themselves up as leaders and replacing the teachings of Christ with their own. It appears that in many areas local officers also struggled to supplant the authority and leadership of the prophets and apostles. Presbyters and bishops vied for power and claimed authority that was not theirs.

The situation was critical. A false prophetic circle arose that competed with the true prophets for ecclesiastical authority and theological acceptance. False apostles infiltrated the church at Ephesus (see Revelation 2:2); at Pergamos a faction upheld what John called the "doctrine of Balaam" (Revelation 2:14), which was probably a move to incorporate into Church practice certain elements of the pagan orgiastic religion of the Romans; while at Thyatira a false prophetess with quite a number of followers seduced many with her teachings (see Revelation 2:20). Heresy was spreading everywhere.

A better grasp of these passages is gained when one understands the nature of the prophetic office in the early Church. The Apostles were the ranking authorities (see 1 Corinthians 12:28); indeed, the very foundation of the Church consisted of apostles and prophets (see Ephesians 2:20). However, this led to a problem: certain persons arose

claiming the prophetic gift and, on that basis, church authority. This happened as early as the mid-fifth decade.

Paul pointed out the necessity of discerning between the alternate voices claiming to speak by the Spirit (see 1 Timothy 6:20-21) and laid down some basic rules for distinguishing the true from the false (see 1 Corinthians 12:3). The need seems to have become even more acute a few decades later when John told his followers to “test the spirits” (1 John 4:1). And this problem was still being felt a half century after that. The writer of the Didache warned his readers that a man was not a prophet who sponged off the community of believers and demanded meals or money while in purported prophetic ecstasy.

At the time, John wrote Revelation, a power struggle raged within the Christian community. John wrote his work for those who yet clung to the truth. He warned against false prophets and their source of inspiration, and emphasized that God would not allow them to continue without consequence. If the churches chose to reject God’s officers, he would come out in judgment by abandoning the churches and allowing the false leaders to take over. However, this condition would only last for a time. Eventually, the apostate church would be consumed under a blaze of truth and light.

But what of the nation that was the political seat of persecution and whose authority even the least of the Christians felt? The Revelator had an answer. God would move against Rome and the other apostate nations that would follow. His authority would prevail over even these seemingly omnipotent masters. And the powers of hell, which undergirded and supported the corrupt governments and from which they drew both their strength and inspiration, would also incur the terrible wrath of God. Driven into a war lust, they would fight against themselves until the time God would intervene and stop all fighting, rendering them eternally impotent.

Thus, the focus of Revelation — the core around which everything revolves — centers on the issue of authority. Who really overmasters the world? Is it the political institutions? the powers of evil? or God? To the faithful few, struggling against external pressure and deadly persecutions and being buffeted by alternate voices, the message of Revelation with its omnipotent, wrath-filled yet caring God, must have brought comfort and hope with the promise of final victory.

But all was not bliss. There was no promise of relief from suffering outside of death. The picture John portrayed gave no illusion of peace but of an extended period of warfare. The future, until the end of time, was to be ruled by Satan who, though mortally wounded, would fight desperately using his minions both incorporeal and mortal.

Some have viewed John’s intent as nothing more than keeping the saints in line by holding out the promise of eternal reward. But John’s aim seems far more noble. It is true that the course of history he presents stressed the ultimate, rather than the immediate triumph of goodness over evil, and yet the call was for the saints to work out their salvation in the present and to place their trust in God who was not yet ready to expose his mastery over history. Triumph was not immediately at hand. The saints had to exercise faith through a hope that

made no demands upon the present. They could not escape history. The work of God would continue for a long period within its confines. Even today, an aspect of faith is a willingness to allow God to operate in his own way in the present, to take what comes, and to continue strong. God, through his saints, will achieve ultimate victory. John's readers had to accept the agony of the present as travail necessary to bring into being a glorious future.

Surely in writing Revelation, John also wrote for the Lord's people living in the latter days. For those who understand, the flaming fire of his testimony still lights the way to the Lord and Savior of the world.

Many who have labored to understand the book of Revelation have encountered frustration. But God gave the vision and preserved it for a purpose. He meant his saints to understand it. It is not, however, a book for the spiritual novice. John received it by the power of prophecy, and one can best understand it by that same power.

In response to the question, "Are we expected to understand the book of Revelation?" Elder Bruce R. McConkie stated:

Certainly. Why else did the Lord reveal it? The common notion that it deals with beasts and plagues and mysterious symbolisms that cannot be understood is just not true. It is so far overstated that it gives an entirely erroneous feeling about this portion of revealed truth. Most of the book — and it is no problem to count the verses so included — is clear and plain and should be understood by the Lord's people. Certain parts are not clear and are not understood by us — which, however, does not mean that we could not understand them if we would grow in faith as we should. The Lord expects us to seek wisdom, to ponder his revealed truths, and to gain a knowledge of them by the power of his Spirit (Cited in Robert J. Matthews, "A Plainer Translation" — Joseph Smith's Translation of the Bible: A History and Commentary, Provo: Brigham Young University Press, 1985, 25).

Elder McConkie's point is that Latter-day Saints are in an excellent position to understand the Apocalypse. To us the Lord has stated, "Unto you it shall be given to know the signs of the times, and the signs of the coming of the Son of Man" (D&C 68:11). And again:

For thus saith the Lord — I, the Lord, am merciful and gracious unto those who fear me, and delight to honor those who serve me in righteousness and in truth unto the end. Great shall be their reward and eternal shall be their glory. And to them will I reveal all mysteries, yea, all the hidden mysteries of my kingdom from days of old, and for ages to come, will I make known unto them the good pleasure of my will concerning all things pertaining to my kingdom. Yea, even the wonders of eternity shall they know, and things to come will I show them, even the things of many generations (D&C 76:5-8).

The Lord has admonished further, "The coming of the Lord draweth nigh, and it overtaketh the world as a thief in the night — therefore, gird up your loins, that you may be the children of light, and that day shall not overtake you as a thief" (D&C 106:4-5). These

scriptures show that the Lord has no intention of hiding the future from his saints. The book of Revelation proves this fact. As further evidence that God is willing to share this knowledge, we can look to Joseph Smith's latter-day example. He saw the entire history of the earth. Of the experience, he stated: "After I got through translating the Book of Mormon, I took up the Bible to read with the Urim and Thummim. I read the first chapter of Genesis and I saw the things as they were done. I turned over the next and the next, and the whole passed before me like a grand panorama; and so on, chapter after chapter until I read the whole of it. I saw it all!" (Cited in Robert J. Matthews, "A Plainer Translation" — Joseph Smith's Translation of the Bible: A History and Commentary, [Provo: Brigham Young University Press, 1985, 25; *italics added*]).

Most of the New Testament was written primarily for those who have ears to hear; this is not so with Revelation. It was written more for those who have eyes to see. John received the revelation through impressions and symbols. To these he added some explanations to assist his readers. A dozen times in the course of the revelation John was commanded to write. As he did so, full of the Spirit, he became an artist, a poet — attempting to communicate the sweep of the grand vision presented to him. It was beyond the possibilities of adequate portrayal through the normal use of words. His understanding had compassed marvelous scenes surpassing the natural man's ability to grasp.

The reader cannot fully appreciate the message of the book of Revelation until he can see past the symbols to the vast realities for which they stand. Fortunately, John is very helpful in the task. Though he interpreted his symbols only in a few instances, he did not design them to contradict or confuse. Therefore, his use of major symbols is uniform throughout Revelation. The trumpets, seals, bowls, beasts, and so forth all have a fixed and consistent meaning. The context allows most of the meanings to be ascertained. Further, modern revelation helpfully elucidates and provides the key to understanding others. But, it needs to be understood that some images remain obscure, and their full interpretation must wait for further light. These, however, constitute but a small portion of the book.

One last note seems necessary. Not every detail described by John has deep significance. Some of the vision's particulars reflect what John saw and round out the image, giving vividness and power to his presentation. Flaming eyes, feet burning as brass, or various colored stones are all means by which John catches and holds the mind's eye. There, individual meaning must never be taken out of the context of which the images are a part.

Three major divisions make up the work: Chapters one through three contain the introduction and the message to the seven Asian churches; four through eleven contain a brief survey of earth history and then focus on the time just before the Second Coming of the Lord; and twelve through twenty-two begin at John's day and again move toward and through the second coming, then on through the Millennium to the end time, but from a different perspective. The latter two divisions are full of instructive interludes, flashbacks, and flash-forwards. There is little doubt that John understood perfectly what the visions meant, and he added explanatory material by way of elaboration and example. These expanded the symbols and served to allow the reader to better understand them.

Revelation 1-3

John writes to the seven churches of Asia, counseling them regarding their current problems. The churches in Asia were in the throes of apostasy, and the problems of the churches in Asia were the problems of the entire Christian world. Recall that the number "7" signifies "totality" or "completeness." Thus, the letter to the seven churches were intended for all the Christian world. In those days, Asia was the largest province of the Roman Empire, and today it is essentially the country of Turkey or "Asia Minor." Asia was not the large continent that we know today.

Keep in mind also that the Christians in John's day are enduring probably the most severe persecution ever, under Domitian's rule. The general theme of John's letter to the seven churches is to urge the Christians to "overcome" — to keep the faith in spite of the persecution. Each separate church is promised exaltation if they will repent and endure. Note that the wording of the Lord's promises of exaltation is different for each church.

The commentary below will be based on the King James Version or translation of the Bible (KJV). However, Joseph Smith's inspired revision of Revelation (JST) will also be included. The JST rendering of each verse, if not identical with the KJV, will be included within the commentary and will be bolded for easy identification.

The Prophet Joseph himself seldom preached either from or about the book of Revelation. However, in a conference sermon delivered in Nauvoo on April 8, 1843, Joseph did expound on some of the symbols earlier discussed in section 77, and on the use of the book of Revelation by the Church in general. He did this primarily to diminish a disproportionate interest in the book among the members — a fault that continues to plague many saints today. The intent of his remarks was to discourage speculation on the book of Revelation, and his advice to the Church was to leave its mysteries alone: "I have seldom spoken from the revelations [of John]. . . It is not very essential for the elders to have knowledge in relation to the meaning of beasts and heads and horns, and other figures made use of in the revelations. Declare the first principles, and let mysteries alone, lest ye be overthrown. Never meddle with the visions of beasts and subjects you do not understand. Elder Brown, when you go to Palmyra, say nothing about the four beasts, but preach those things the Lord has told you to preach about repentance and baptism for the remission of sins" (HC,5:340, 342, 344). Mature saints today continue to heed the Prophet's advice.

Revelation Chapter 1 John's Introduction to His Vision

1 The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him, to shew unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass; and he sent and signified it by his angel unto his servant John:

verse 1 "The Revelation of Jesus Christ" This phrase may be interpreted in two ways. This may be a revelation given by Jesus Christ; or it may be a revelation which reveals or unveils the Lord Jesus Christ. The direction of the vision as a whole emphasizes the latter

interpretation, that is the revelation proclaims the mission, ministry, and importance of the Lord and Savior. The JST version of this verse is also ambiguous as it states that this revelation “was given unto [John] of Jesus Christ” (italics added). Does “of” mean about or by?

“which God gave unto him” The source of the revelation from the KJV seems to be the Father who has never spoken directly to fallen man except to testify of the Son. Here he reveals the importance of his Son Jesus Christ. The recipient of the revelation is John — the revelation is given “unto him.”

“to shew unto his servants” John’s duty is to show it to the mortal servants of the Father and bear witness of it. The Father wanted it read and listened to. He wanted it understood. He did not give it to be a mystery, a puzzle, or an enigma that his people could not solve. He ordered John to disclose truth that otherwise would have remained hidden.

“things which must shortly come to pass” The Prophet Joseph proclaimed, “Now, I make this declaration, that those things which John saw in heaven had no allusion to anything that had been on the earth previous to that time, because they were the representations of ‘things which must shortly come to pass,’ and not of what has already transpired” (*TPJS*, 290).

Nephi prophesied that John would “write concerning the end of the world” (1 Nephi 14:22). One scholar notes: “The entire vision from beginning to end takes 317 verses, and yet John spends only eleven verses (or about 3.5 percent) on the first five thousand years of history, which is about 71 percent of the earth’s total seven thousand years of recorded history. Without a doubt, the vast majority of the vision focuses on things ‘which must be hereafter’ (*Revelation* 4:1). Furthermore, on closer examination, we see that the focus is even more limited than that. . . The Millennium itself is treated in only seven verses (see *Revelation* 20:1-7). By far the largest portion of the book describes the events that immediately precede the second coming of the Savior” (Lund, *Seeing the Book of Revelation*, 51-52).

“and signified it” So important was the vision that an angel “signified it.” The term *signify* is a translation of the Greek *smain* and means not only to foretell, but also to give a sign or identifying token. The English term comes from the Latin *signum*, which carries much of the same idea, that is, representing, indicating, or validating something by a sign, mark, or token. Apparently, the angel gave John a sign or a token that authenticated the vision. John then witnessed this confirmation for his readers. Such stress on the validation of the vision emphasizes its importance in the sight of both God and of John.

“by his angel” The entire book of Revelation was given to John by an angel upon whom the Lord had placed his name and who acted in the Lord’s place and stead. He even spoke in the first person as if he were the Lord. This is an application of the principle of the “divine investiture of authority.”

Again, the JST version of each verse will be included in bold at the end of the commentary for each verse.

“The Revelation of John, a servant of God, which was given unto him of Jesus Christ, to show unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass, that he sent and signified by his angel unto his servant John.”

2 Who bare record of the word of God, and of the testimony of Jesus Christ, and of all things that he saw.

verse 2 “bare record of the word of God” “Word of God” here may be either Jesus Christ who is called the “Word of God” (Revelation 19:13; see also John 1:1; D&C 93:8). “Word of God” also refers to scriptural records. In this case, the phrase may mean either or both.

“of all things that he saw” The content of the vision had to be communicated to others by John precisely. John’s responsibility was to write neither less nor more than he received.

“Who bore record of the word of God, and of the testimony of Jesus Christ, and of all things that he saw.”

The JST changes the word “bare” to “bore.” Otherwise it is identical.

3 Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein: for the time is at hand.

verse 3 This verse invokes the first of seven beatitudes — or “blessed are theys” — found in the revelation. The others are found at 14:13; 16:15; 19:9; 20:6; 22:7, 14.

This passage speaks of spiritual understanding, or understanding by the Spirit. Jesus said, “Who hath ears to hear, let him hear” (Matthew 13:9; 13:43), and King Benjamin told his people, “Open your ears that ye may hear, and your hearts that ye may understand” (Mosiah 2:9; see also D&C 136:32). Unfortunately, there are those who will not attune themselves to understand spiritual things; such have “stopped their ears, that they should not hear” (Zechariah 7:11) and are “a rebellious house, which have eyes to see, and see not; they have ears to hear, and hear not” (Ezekiel 12:2; Jeremiah 5:21).

The blessing was pronounced both upon “he that readeth” and “they that hear,” provided that they respond to the admonition written therein. The singular “he who readeth” and the plural “they that hear” reflect a practice of worship in the early Church. Patterned after the service of the synagogue, one person read a scripture or message while the congregation listened.

John declared a blessing upon those who were obedient to his writings whether they read his words or heard others read them.

“Blessed are they who read, and they who hear and understand the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein, for the time of the coming of the Lord draweth nigh.”

The reader should make particular note of the words “read,” “hear,” “understand,” and “keep.” Upon any one who receives it, regardless of the time frame, rests the responsibility not only to read, but also to understand and to do. One must pay the price to realize the blessing. Joseph Smith’s modifications point to conditions in which many would be able to read and hear the words of the prophecy. He seems to have our present day in mind. He seems to be speaking primarily to the saints living in the last days. He intends to assist them in preparing

for the second coming of the Son. Indeed, there is no other people for whom it is more germane.

4 John to the seven churches which are in Asia: Grace be unto you, and peace, from him which is, and which was, and which is to come; and from the seven Spirits which are before his throne;

verse 4 “to the seven churches which are in Asia” John identifies those who were to receive his letter. They are seven of the churches in the Roman province of Asia — actually Asia Minor which is now present-day Turkey. Elder James E. Talmage has suggested that these seven were the last bastions of faith, the great apostasy having eaten up all the other areas. John was writing a letter of comfort and warning to the surviving remnants of the true Church.

“seven churches” Implications from John’s symbolic use of numbers should not be overlooked. John possibly uses seven to denote that the message is universal for all branches of the church, even those outside of Asia, and those beyond John’s day. After all, equally important were the churches at Troas (see Acts 20:5ff), Colossae (see Colossians 1:2), and Hierapolis (see Colossians 4:13). If the use of numerology was intended here, then the “seven churches” become symbolic of the church of God anytime, anywhere, and the message applicable wherever similar conditions are faced.

“grace be unto you, and peace” Greetings of grace and peace are elements common to ancient epistles. Here they indicate that John sends his message to the seven churches in style like an epistle.

John’s letter was not for the leaders alone. John directed that it be shared with the congregations as well, and he invokes a blessing of grace and peace upon these faithful servants from three sources:

1. The first source of blessings is “him which is, and which was, and which is to come” is a partial quote of the name of God given to Moses in Exodus 3:14-15 as translated in the Septuagint (cf. Jeremiah 1:6; 14:13; 32:17, where the names of God would also translate “He who is”). This rephrase of the divine name reminds John’s reader that God is eternally existent, without beginning of days or end of years. John underscores the idea that God is always the subject: he holds the initiative; things happen because he orders all thing according to his will. Men do not force his hand but work, even in their rebellion, to his purposes (see Romans 9:15-18; John 10:18; Ezekiel 38:4, 14-22). Jehovah stands as the Lord of the past, the present, and the future. The temporal order holds significance because the present is when he works out his purposes. Yet his eternal present embraces the past and the future. Such a rendering would be especially appropriate at this moment when the Church approached its final hours. The saints could find hope in the face of a disheartening future on the grounds that God, by virtue of his eternal existence, exercises power and fulfills his purposes through the course of history.

2. The second source of blessing to the churches is the seven spirits who stand before the throne of God. We run into these spirits again in chapters 4 and 5, still standing before the throne of God. In Revelation 4:5, these spirits are identified as fiery lamps, and 5:6 calls them the eyes of the Lamb “sent forth into all the earth.” JST 1:4 makes it clear that these spirits are symbolic of the leaders of the various branches and that an angel was sent to testify to them of the things of God. This image of the seven servants could be a foreshadowing of both their future destiny as well as their present responsibility. As they labor, they act as the eyes of God overseeing the affairs of the Church. In doing so, their calling and election are made sure, and thus they gain eternal life. It is little wonder, then, that these devout servants were a source of blessing to the struggling branches.

3. The third source of blessing is described in the commentary for the following verse.

“**his throne**” Christ’s throne, located in the “temple in heaven” (Revelation 14:17; 16:17), which is John’s name for the celestial kingdom, is a symbol of his divine kingship.

“Now this is the testimony of John to the seven servants who are over the seven churches in Asia. Grace unto you, and peace from him who is, and who was, and who is to come; who hath sent forth his angel from before his throne, to testify unto those who are the seven servants over the seven churches,”

The JST makes it clear that the letter contains the testimony of John, the last testimony, to be directed to the local churches.

5 And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth. Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood,

verse 5 The final source of blessing is, again, from the Lord, but this blessing grows not out of what he is (the God of all time), but out of what he did. John identifies the Savior as “the faithful witness,” “the first begotten of the dead,” and “the prince of the kings of the earth.” The ideas conveyed by these titles are those of priority and sovereignty.

“**who is the faithful witness**” The term witness comes from the Greek *martus*. It came to mean in Christian circles one who bore testimony through the giving up of his life. The Savior was the epitome of the faithful witness, or martyr, in this sense. However, death could not hold him, and so he is also the first born from the dead. Because he now exercises sovereign control, he can bestow the powers both of life and of kingship on those who follow him. These will reign with him a thousand years (see Revelation 20:4-6). He can do this because, through his love, he shed his blood so that all can be cleansed from sin.

“**the first begotten of the dead**” John’s reference echoes Psalm 89:27 which states, “I will make him my firstborn, higher than the kings of the earth.” This term also appears in Colossians 1:18, when Paul uses the title to declare Christ sovereign over the Church by virtue of his resurrection from the dead.

“Therefore, I, John, the faithful witness, bear record of the things which were delivered me of the angel, and from Jesus Christ the first begotten of the dead, and the Prince of the kings of the earth.”

This passage makes John the “faithful witness” rather than the Savior. John was true to the charge given him to declare the message accurately. It also suggests that the revelation had dual attestation (the angel and the Lord), and thus fulfilled the law of witnesses (see Deuteronomy 17:6; Matthew 18:16). Additionally, angelic and divine administration were coupled in such a way that the Savior himself was somehow involved in the process of the revelation. The revelation is not merely about him but came through him.

6 And hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.

verse 6 This verse focuses on the end result of the resurrection and supremacy of the Lord: he is able to make his followers kings and priests unto God. The seven servants mentioned twice in JST Revelation 1:4 apparently were to achieve this rank and blessing through their faithfulness. The idea of becoming priests and kings unto God was earlier expressed in Exodus 29:6 and Isaiah 61:5-6. It is repeated in 1 Peter 2:9. The Greek of the Septuagint and of 1 Peter would translate “a kingdom of priests,” the idea being that the Savior has set up his kingdom composed of those who hold his priesthood. This kingdom was meant to endure forever, and those who are members are eternal heirs of glory. The kingship John speaks of is an everlasting possession based on the power and authority anchored in the priesthood. According to Bruce R. McConkie, the kings and priests were

holders of the Melchizedek Priesthood [who] have power to press forward in righteousness, living by every word that proceedeth forth from the mouth of God, magnifying their callings, going from grace to grace, until through the fulness of the ordinances of the temple they receive the fulness of the priesthood and are ordained kings and priests. Those so attaining shall have exaltation and be kings, priests, rulers, and lords in their respective spheres in the eternal kingdoms of the great King who is God our Father (*Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, 3:436).

That the same program is still going on is evident from the Lord’s admonition in Doctrine and Covenants 78:15: “That you may come up unto the crown prepared for you, and be made rulers over many kingdoms, saith the Lord God, the Holy One of Zion, who hath established the foundations of Adam-ondi-Ahman.”

“unto God and his Father” Here Jehovah is obviously referred to as “God.” Joseph Smith expounded on this expression from the King James Version of the Bible in his sermon dated June 16, 1844, in which he explained the plurality of Gods. He first read Revelation 1:6 and then stated, “It is altogether correct in the translation.” He continued, “I will preach on the plurality of Gods. . . I have always declared God to be a distinct personage, Jesus Christ a separate and distinct personage from God the Father, and that the Holy Ghost was a distinct

personage and a Spirit: and these three constitute three distinct personages and three Gods. . . . Hence the doctrine of a plurality of Gods is as prominent in the Bible as any other doctrine." (*TPJS*, 369-70).

"to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen." Knowing that the Lord possesses such power, we should not be surprised that John closes this portion of his epistle with the doxology, "to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen." A doxology is a hymn of praise or a series of words that praise the Lord. "Glory" and "dominion" are two aspects of full salvation, or exaltation. Christ is "the prototype or standard of salvation . . . salvation consists in the glory, authority, majesty, power and dominion which Jehovah possesses and in nothing else" (*Lectures on Faith*, 7:9; see also Daniel 7:14). Glory seems to suggest Christ's light; dominion indicates his sovereignty over us and all his creations.

"And unto him who loved us, be glory; who washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God, his Father. To him be glory and dominion, for ever and ever. Amen."

"And unto him who loved us" This phrase is a carry-over from verse 5 of the KJV. Jesus loves us so much that he gave his life for us (*Galatians* 2:20; *Ephesians* 5:2, 25).

"who washed us from our sins in his own blood" Faithful temple worshippers approach the most holy places after they have been washed, both ritually and symbolically, with water (*Exodus* 29:4; *Hebrews* 9:9-10). Those who prove faithful will metaphorically receive another washing, not with water but with the blood of the Lamb (*1 John* 1:7). The expression "washed us . . . in his own blood" refers to individuals who become pure "because of their faith, and the repentance of all their sins" (*3 Nephi* 27:19) through the blood that Christ shed.

They then are made "kings and priests." The pronoun *us* refers to John as well as to the righteous saints of his day and of all ages. The word "God" in the JST obviously refers to the Father — unlike the KJV in which "God" refers to the Son.

7 Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him. Even so, Amen.

verse 7 "he cometh with clouds" The cloud (Greek *nephele*) was a sign of the presence of God (see *Matthew* 17:5; *Mark* 9:7; *Luke* 9:34-35). At the time of his second coming, Jesus will descend in clouds of glory (*Daniel* 7:13; *Matthew* 24:30; *Acts* 1:9-11; *D&C* 34:7; 45:16). With him, righteous saints "shall be caught up together . . . in the clouds" (*1 Thessalonians* 4:17). Clouds represent the glory of the Lord (*D&C* 84:5; *Ezekiel* 10:3-4), act as the chariot of God upon which he travels through the heavens (*Psalm* 104:3; *Isaiah* 19:1), and symbolize a veil that oftentimes conceals his presence from mortals (*Exodus* 19:9, 16; 24:15; *3 Nephi* 18:38).

"every eye shall see him" All peoples of the earth and every individual shall see Christ when he comes in glory at his second coming. "Then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn,

and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory" (Matthew 24:30).

"and they also which pierced him" This passage refers to those who participated in the crucifixion of Jesus, piercing his hands and his feet with nails. This passage may also speak of those who reject Jesus Christ after having known him and his goodness (see also Hebrews 6:6).

"all kindreds . . . shall wail because of him" This scene, which pertains to the wicked, will fulfill Zechariah's prophecy that "they shall look unto me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him" (Zechariah 12:10). Matthew also prophesied: "And then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory" (Matthew 24:30; see also Revelation 6:15-17).

"Even so, Amen" This phrase is "the double affirmation . . . [which] is the Spirit's seal to this striking prophetic testimony. The 'Even so' is Greek, the 'Amen' is Hebrew. To both Gentiles and Jews his Word is unchangeable" (Scott, *Exposition of the Revelation of Jesus Christ*, 30).

"For behold, he cometh in the clouds with ten thousands of his saints in the kingdom, clothed with the glory of his Father. And every eye shall see him; and they who pierced him, and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him. Even so, Amen."

The JST adds John's announcement that Christ will come "with ten thousands of his saints in the kingdom." Many will inherit his kingdom and return to reign with him in glory. In the past, the Lord traveled with "ten thousands of saints" (Deuteronomy 33:2), and Enoch prophesied that the Lord would come "with ten thousands of his saints" at the Second Coming (Jude 1:14). These people will come in clouds of glory; they may be saints who have been blessed with exaltation. "Ten thousands" is an ancient way of saying "great numbers."

"clothed with the glory of his Father" Christ will wear red garments at his coming (Isa. 63:1-2; D&C 133:48) and will be clothed in brilliant light and glory.

8 I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty.

verse 8 Nothing can stop him from bestowing his favor upon the faithful. As he says, "I am . . . the beginning and the ending, . . . the Almighty."

"Alpha and Omega" Alpha and Omega are the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet, here signifying Christ as the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End (1:17; 21:6; 22:13; Isaiah 41:4; 48:12). The Lord himself proclaims these titles, reminding the reader that even though the world may appear godforsaken, the Lord is in control of all things.

The last title, "the Almighty," is most significant. It occurs eight times in Revelation (1:8; 4:8; 11:17; 15:3; 16:7, 14; 19:15; 21:22). The Greek pantokrator, "almighty," does not designate one who can do anything, but rather one who enables and regulates all things. Therefore, this title alone epitomizes the central message of Revelation. That message is further underscored

in modern scripture, which declares that the Savior “ascended up on high, as also he descended below all things, in that he comprehended all things, that he might be in all and through all things, the light of truth” (D&C 88:6). It is this “light which is in all things, which giveth life to all things, which is the law by which all things are governed” (D&C 88:13). Thus, the Lord overmasters the sun, the moon, and even the stars with all the world systems that surround them. He is indeed God, the Almighty.

“For he saith, I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, the Lord, who is, and who was, and who is to come, the Almighty.”

9 I John, who also am your brother, and companion in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, was in the isle that is called Patmos, for the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ.

verse 9 “patience of Jesus Christ” The word patience is found seven times in Revelation (1:9; 2:2-3, 19; 3:10; 13:10; 14:12), each time speaking of the saint’s endurance of trials and tribulation. The New English Bible gives a helpful alternative reading: “I, John, your brother, who share with you in the suffering and the sovereignty and the endurance which is ours in Jesus.”

John notes that his crime, the reason for his banishment to Patmos, was declaring “the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ.”

“I John, who also am your brother, and companion in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, was in the isle that is called Patmos, for the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ.”

10 I was in the Spirit on the Lord’s day, and heard behind me a great voice, as of a trumpet,

verse 10 This section of the revelation contains John’s explanation of how the revelation came. It was Sunday, the Lord’s day, and John was “in the Spirit.” Lehi was similarly “overcome with the Spirit, [and] was carried away in a vision” (1 Nephi 1:8), and Ezekiel testified, “The spirit lifted me up, and took me away” (Ezekiel 3:14). Being “in the Spirit” seems to be both a prerequisite and a vehicle for receiving a vision from God. Today we might describe this state as “being filled with the Spirit,” although the instances spoken of in scripture probably involve being filled with the Spirit to a greater degree than we commonly experience or contemplate.

John heard a voice that he describes as a trumpet. One must not picture a musical instrument, but an instrument used to give orders in battle, or to announce a message from a king. Thus, the voice was that of a herald summoning John, as it were, to battle, or preparing him for a notice from the King. The voice of the Lord is apparently distinctive – as the sound of a trumpet. Alma the Younger wished that he could “speak with the trump of God, with a voice to shake the earth” (Alma 29:1).

The voice will command him to write upon a scroll (translated “book”) what he was about to see and hear, and to send it to the seven churches. This prophecy, composed of several separate visions, constitutes the book of Revelation.

As a trumpet calls soldiers to battle, a voice deep as eternity summoned John away from his Sabbath meditations. Turning toward the sound, he saw a radiant being, even Jehovah himself surrounded with indescribable light. The Lord announced that John was about to have a revelation that he was to record and then send to the organized churches of Christ.

The title given to this work in the King James Version is most appropriate: “The Revelation of St. John the Divine.” The term divine, as used here, is not an adjective describing one who is godly, but rather a noun denoting one who foresees. The breadth of John’s vision encompassed all earthly time and reached even into eternity.

11 Saying, I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last: and, What thou seest, write in a book, and send it unto the seven churches which are in Asia; unto Ephesus, and unto Smyrna, and unto Pergamos, and unto Thyatira, and unto Sardis, and unto Philadelphia, and unto Laodicea.

verse 11 “What thou seest, write in a book” Three scrolls or books are identified in the course of the vision: The first is referred to in this verse. It is the one John was to produce or write. In chapter five we will read of one opened by the Lamb of God, and in chapter ten we will read of one delivered to John by an angel. John’s consistent use of the scroll image specifies its meaning: each contains the divine secrets of God so far as a portion of the earth’s destiny is concerned. Therefore, the scroll symbolizes the whole of the divine plan.

John’s writings on the scroll or book contained in this verse will contain the guidance of God to his churches in preparing for the coming of the Son of Man.

12 And I turned to see the voice that spake with me. And being turned, I saw seven golden candlesticks;

“And I turned to see from whence the voice came that spake to me; and being turned, I saw seven golden candlesticks;”

13 And in the midst of the seven candlesticks one like unto the Son of man, clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about the paps with a golden girdle.

verses 12-13 As John turned, he saw a figure resplendent in glory standing in the midst of seven candlesticks or lamp stands. John sees Christ in “the midst of the seven candlesticks,” meaning the “seven churches” (Revelation 1:20). This symbolism suggests that Christ visits his church and spends time with the righteous. Christ taught, “Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them” (Matthew 18:20) and “Lo, I am with you alway” (Matthew 28:20; see also 2 Corinthians 6:16).

The image of the seven candlesticks recalls the menorah, the seven-branched lamp stand of the temple (see Exodus 25:31-37; Zechariah 4:2). Here, however, each lamp has its own base. Even so, the figure of the temple cannot be far off, for Solomon placed ten separate lamp stands in the Holy of Holies during the temple dedication (see 1 Kings 7:49).

“clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about the paps with a golden girdle” Tying the vision even closer to the temple was the figure’s dress. The word paps is an archaic word meaning “breasts.” The word girdle could be translated “sash.” The New International Version renders this passage as “dressed in a robe reaching down to his feet and with a golden sash around his chest.” The words John used to describe the robe are the same as those in the Septuagint for the costume of the high priest (see Exodus 28:4; 29:5; Daniel 10:5). This is combined with the symbol of royal office: the golden girdle or clasp worn just under the armpits. Thus, John seems to present the Savior as both high priest and king, offices associated with the temple and the fulness of priesthood (see D&C 124:28).

John describes the glorious figure as “like unto a Son of man.” The phrase “Son of man” is found in all the Standard Works usually referring to the Savior, though the Old Testament (see Numbers 23:19; Psalm 8:4; Isaiah 51:12) uses it primarily to distinguish mortals from Gods, especially when the context is one of judgment. The term emphasizes the anthropomorphic nature of deity. But Moses 6:57 suggests that John may have had in mind a higher meaning. There the name is capitalized “Son of Man,” showing that it is a proper name or title. According to that passage, “in the language of Adam, Man of Holiness” is the name of God, “and the name of his Only Begotten is the Son of Man, even Jesus Christ, a righteous Judge.” Therefore, the name designates he who is the Son of the Man of Holiness.

The phrase in Revelation – “one like unto the Son of man” – implies that John did not actually see the Son of Man but rather one like him. This is not the case. There are a number of instances in the scriptures where the phrase “like unto the Son of man” has definite reference to the Lord himself. In Abraham 3:27, for example, where there is no doubt that the Lord is being referred to, and in Revelation 14:14. That the divine being is not an angel is further borne out by the fact that he allows John to worship him whereas the angel in Revelation 22:8 rebukes John’s attempt to worship him even though the angel is speaking through the divine investiture of authority. Therefore, the personage John saw was the Lord himself in glory. Later in the vision angels are the ones who actually speak to John. Therefore, the context must be used to determine whether the Lord is administering directly or through one of his divine servants.

The resplendent figure stood with the candlesticks – which symbolized the churches – surrounding him (see verse 20). The image is appropriate. Candlesticks do not create the light but make it available to others. The Church is to carry the light of Christ to the world. The Savior stated, “I am the law, and the light. Look unto me, and endure to the end, and ye shall live” (3 Nephi 15:9). He further admonished, “Hold up your light that it may shine unto the world. Behold I am the light which ye shall hold up” (3 Nephi 18:24; cf. Matthew 5:14-16).

However, the Church is to do more than merely reflect the light. The Lord stated unequivocally, “I give unto you to be the light of this people. . . Therefore let your light so shine before this people, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father who is in heaven” (3 Nephi 12:14, 16). Further, the Lord is ever with his Church; he stands among his saints as their king and high priest, knowing every facet of their lives and struggles, giving counsel through their leaders and comfort to all. The leaders are, as it were, in his right hand where he can sustain, uphold, and direct them. Thus, the Church can find security in following them.

14 His head and his hairs were white like wool, as white as snow; and his eyes were as a flame of fire;

verse 14 “his hairs were white like wool, as white as snow” White is a symbol of light, purity, and triumph; therefore, John sees the Lord in brilliant glory. The word wool recalls Jesus as the Lamb of God, who was sacrificed for our sins.

“his eyes were as a flame of fire” Eyes can represent knowledge (D&C 77:4), and here may specifically refer to God’s omniscience and ability to penetrate all things. “Flame of fire” describes his brilliant glory.

15 And his feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace; and his voice as the sound of many waters.

verse 15 “his voice as the sound of many waters” Recall that John is on the small island of Patmos which measures only some fifty square miles. He likely lived daily with the sound of the crashing waves of the Mediterranean. There are several references in the book to “mighty waters.” The voice of the Lord is as “many waters” (see also Ezekiel 43:2), “as the sound of the rushing of great waters” (D&C 110:3), “like the noise of great waters” (Ezekiel 1:24), “as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of a great thunder” (D&C 133:22), and “like the voice of a multitude” (Daniel 10:6). These expressions seem to describe the power, authority, uniqueness, and intensity that exists in the Lord’s voice.

Of course, sometimes the Lord’s voice comes much more quietly, though still with great power. To the Nephite saints gathered at the temple of Bountiful, the voice of God “was not a harsh voice, neither was it a loud voice; nevertheless, and notwithstanding it being a small voice it did pierce them that did hear to the center, insomuch that there was no part of their frame that it did not cause to quake; yea, it did pierce them to the very soul, and did cause their hearts to burn” (3 Nephi 11:3). John’s vision of Christ appears to take place in the celestial kingdom, or, more specifically, “the temple which is in heaven” (Revelation 14:17). The most definitive single source on the heavenly temple is recorded here in Revelation. In Revelation 4:1, John beholds an open door in heaven that led from the Holy Place to the celestial Holy of Holies, or the throne room of God.

The prophets Daniel, in the book of Daniel, and Joseph Smith, in the Doctrine and Covenants, also received visions of the Savior and used language similar to that of John's in Revelation to describe those visions. See the table below which compares these visions:

	John (Revelation 1:13-16)	Daniel (Daniel 10:5-6)	Joseph Smith (D&C 110:2-4)
Identity	one like unto the Son of Man	a certain man	the Lord
Vesture	clothed with a garment down to the foot	clothed in linen	no comment
Girdle	and girt about the paps with a golden girdle	whose loins were girded with fine gold of Uphaz*	no comment
Head	his head and his hairs his face as the were white like wool, as white as snow	appearance of lightning	the hair of his head was white like the pure snow
Countenance	his countenance was as the sun [shining] in his strength	no comment	his countenance shone above the brightness of the sun
Eyes	and his eyes were as a flame of fire	his eyes as lamps of fire	his eyes were as a flame of fire
Feet	And his feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace	his arms and his feet like in colour to polished brass	under his feet was a paved work of pure gold, in color like amber
Voice	his voice as the sound of many waters	the voice of his words like the voice of a multitude	his voice was as the sound of the rushing of great waters

* Uphaz is a word usually understood as a proper noun; it is an otherwise unknown location where gold was obtained (see also Jeremiah 10:9). However, the Hebrew text is uncertain in both references. Many scholars, following some ancient versions (Targums, Syriac, Hebrew manuscripts), take Uphaz as a scribal error for Ophir, a near-legendary source of gold (cf. 1 Kings 9:28). Other scholars have suggested that Uphaz is a misspelled form of the word "refine" (Hebrew muphaz) and should be translated "pure" or "finest" (cf. 1 Kings 10:18); Song of Solomon 5:11).

16 And he had in his right hand seven stars: and out of his mouth went a sharp two edged sword: and his countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength.

verse 16 “in his right hand seven stars” The right hand of God is associated with righteousness (Psalm 48:10; Isaiah 41:10), power (Exodus 15:6; Psalm 89:13), and covenant making (Isaiah 62:8). With his right hand, the Lord executes justice (3 Nephi 29:4, 9), dispenses the law (Deuteronomy 33:2), and saves his people (Psalm 17:7; 20:6) created the heavens and the earth (Isaiah 48:13). After the divine judgment, the righteous will dwell eternally at the right hand of God (Mosiah 26:23-24; D&C 29:27)" (McConkie and Parry, *Guide to Scriptural Symbols*, 93).

“seven stars” These stars are the “seven servants [or leaders] of the seven churches” (Revelation 1:20). The “seven stars,” or servants in his right hand, indicate that they are in God’s special protection and are under his direction. The stars in Jesus’s right hand may also show that he has perfect, or complete (“seven”), power and dominion over the cosmos and all his creations.

Through symbolic representation, John is describing the power, glory, and purity of the Lord. But the image becomes somewhat hard to picture when the text states, “And out of his mouth went a sharp two-edged sword.” Two Greek words are translated “sword” in the KJV. These are machaira and rhomphaia. Though both terms were used for swords in general, the term machaira could also describe a knife such as a butcher or surgeon uses. The rhomphaia, the term John chose to use, designated particularly a Thracian broadsword, but the word also denotes a lance or spear with a broad double-edged head.

The symbolism goes back to Isaiah 11:4 — “he shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth” (the Septuagint replaces “rod” with “word”) — and 49:2 — “he hath made my mouth like a sharp sword.” Either sword is an excellent symbol for the executive and judicial powers of God: that which severs, cuts, opens, and reveals. But what John seems to portray in particular is the word of God which is “quick and powerful, sharper than a two-edged sword, to the dividing asunder of the joints and marrow, soul and spirit; and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart” (D&C 33:1).

“his countenance was as the sun [shining] in his strength” Christ’s glory is greater than the noonday sun (Malachi 4:2; Matthew 17:2). His servants are compared to the stars (Revelation 1:20), which pale in comparison.

“And he had in his right hand seven stars; and out of his mouth went a sharp two- edged sword; and his countenance was as the sun shining in his strength.”

17 And when I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead. And he laid his right hand upon me, saying unto me, Fear not; I am the first and the last:

verse 17 “I saw him” John bears witness that he saw the Lord in the heavenly temple. Similarly, Joseph Smith and Sidney Rigdon testified, “For we saw him” (D&C 76:23). Many other prophets have so testified — and the righteous may see him in his earthly temple (D&C 97:16; 110:8).

“I fell at his feet as dead” Perhaps John falls because he feels great reverence for the Lord, or maybe he falls because he feels great awe and fear at being in the presence of such a great and glorious heavenly being. Other prophets have felt compelled to fall on their faces, including Abraham (Genesis 17:3), Joshua (Joshua 5:14), Peter, James, and John (Matthew 17:6), the brother of Jared (Ether 3:6), and the Nephite multitude (3 Nephi 11:12).

“And he laid his right hand upon me, saying unto me, Fear not” Like the comforting hand of a loving parent upon a troubled child, the divine hand, accompanied with the words “Fear not,” still John’s fears. A similar event is recorded in Matthew’s account of the three apostles on the Mount of Transfiguration, in which it is recorded that Peter, James, and John “fell on their face, and were sore afraid.” But Jesus touched them and said, “Arise, and be not afraid” (Matthew 17:6-7).

18 I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death.

verse 18 “and have the keys of hell and of death” Before giving his final commission to John, the Lord stated, “[I] have the keys of hell and of death.” This statement surprises many. They believe wrongly, that Lucifer holds those keys. Keys give access or control; they symbolize authority. In New Testament times, Hell (Greek hades) was the world of spirits where the wicked await the day of judgment in torment. God rules both paradise and spirit prison. His justice places the wicked in torment that they might be purged in the fire and prepared for glory.

Through his atonement, the Savior gained power over hell and death. In exercising the keys of the resurrection, the Lord demonstrated his complete authority. John here echoes Peter, who stated that Christ taught the spirits in prison. Thus, neither death nor hell can resist the power of the risen Lord. The Savior does more than rescue the faithful from death and hell. He entered death’s domain as a conquering hero and preached his gospel, bringing life to those who heeded. Someday, at the Lord’s command, hell will empty itself so that all may stand to be judged.

19 Write the things which thou hast seen, and the things which are, and the things which shall be hereafter;

verse 19 This verse reiterates the commandment for John to write. It also gives the outline of the remainder of the book. John must write “the things which thou hast seen, and the things which are, and the things which shall be hereafter.” What he has seen is the vision of the Son of Man that he recorded in the preceding verses. The “things which are” constitutes his message to the seven churches (chapters 2-3). What “will come hereafter” comprises most of the rest of the book (chapters 4-22).

20 The mystery of the seven stars which thou sawest in my right hand, and the seven golden candlesticks. The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches: and the seven candlesticks which thou sawest are the seven churches

verse 20 “seven stars, seven golden candlesticks, seven angels” The “seven stars” are the “angels” or presiding officers of the seven congregations.

Verse 20 identifies the immediate audience for which he is to write. That audience is symbolized by golden candlesticks and is the seven churches in Asia, that is, Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamos, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea (see Revelation 1:11).

“This is the mystery of the seven stars which thou sawest in my right hand, and the seven golden candlesticks. The seven stars are the servants of the seven churches; and the seven candlesticks which thou sawest are the seven churches.”

Revelation Chapter 2 Letter to the Seven Churches

Chapters 2-3 consist of the letter to the seven churches. John's commission was to publish the vision of God to the churches when apostasy and persecution were about to destroy what remained of the church established by the Master. While John languished on Patmos, counterfeit authorities made their way through the ranks of the church.

Scholars have speculated that the reason the Lord chose these seven churches as recipients of his letter was because they were postal centers all linked by a common road that formed a sort of inner circle around the province, binding together the most populous, wealthy, and influential areas. Once delivered to these churches, the Revelation could easily spread to all the other branches. As attractive as this hypothesis is, it doesn't work. There were other postal cities (Troas, Adramyttium, and Colossae for examples) that lay on this same route. But the Lord selected only seven, probably, as noted in the preceding chapter, because of the symbolic meaning of the number. The letter seems to have been intended for the whole church, but the specific churches mentioned exemplified the problems faced by all. The instruction to each church was universal for it tells "what the Spirit saith unto the churches" — all the churches. Note that this phrase is repeated in Revelation 2:7, 11, 17, 29; 3:6, 13, 22.

The purpose of the letter was to sound a warning to the church as a whole. Apostasy was running full steam, fired by false prophets and apostles. Entire branches were ignorantly or willfully falling into it. The message to the churches sounded a clear warning that God would abandon the churches unless they returned to him. Each congregation was responsible to stop the spread of heresy, to hold on to the truth, and to thereby gain salvation.

John followed a general format in his admonition to each church. There is a complimentary opening introduced by the phrase "I know thy works," followed by a rebuke beginning with "I have something against thee," and ending with a promise "to him that overcometh." The exceptions to this format are Smyrna (2:8-11) and Philadelphia (3:7-13), which receive no condemnation, and Sardis (3:1-6) and Laodicea (3:14-22), which receive no compliments.

From the content of the letters, the church's spiritual life foundered in six areas. Two were external: a willingness to compromise with paganism and a denial of Christianity due to Jewish harassment. Four were internal: the acceptance of unauthorized leaders, approval of false doctrine promulgated by false prophets, halfheartedness and indifference, and a loss of love for the church and her Master. Succumbing to any one of these would have sounded the death knell for the church. And in fact, in some areas the white flag of surrender to the world's ways already flew.

Of the problems listed, the one of greatest concern in the book of Revelation was authority, that is, the question of who had the right to preside and to define the doctrine of the church. The problem was not new. Peter cautioned the church that "there were false prophets also among the [Old Testament] people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily [secretly] shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and

bring upon themselves swift destruction. And many shall follow their pernicious ways; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of [blasphemed]" (2 Peter 2:1-2). Paul warned the saints, "Of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them. Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears" (Acts 20:30-31).

Revelation gives names to some of the doctrines taught by the false prophets and apostles of darkness. There was the doctrine of Balaam and the associated doctrines of the Nicolaitans (see Revelation 2:6, 14). These were coupled with those of a woman whom John branded as Jezebel, who led some into "the depths of Satan" (2:24). The exact aspect of these doctrines is unknown, but we can make some general observations. For instance, we know something of Balaam. This Old Testament prophet-turned-apostate introduced into Israel the worship of Baal with its orgiastic perversions (see Numbers 22:1- 25:9; 31:16). The use of his name suggests that false prophecy was an issue.

Based on Numbers 25:1-2 and 31:16, where the doctrine that Balaam preached is theologically defined, apparently the Nicolaitans and the self-styled prophetess were preaching a form of idolatry that included spiritual fornication. The phrase "to eat meat offered to idols" (verse 20), associated with both the Nicolaitans and Jezebel, referred not only to food consecrated to an idol, but also to participation in pagan feasts with its rites. Therefore, it would seem that Jezebel and the Nicolaitans were part of the same heretical group working within the cloisters of the church to pull people to their salacious ways. Their doctrine probably appealed to spiritual prostitution rather than physical, but the imagery depicting extreme sensuality gives an accurate feel for their allure. The false apostles who appeared at Ephesus may have been migrant missionaries perhaps belonging to the same group.

From their teachings, then, it would appear that the Nicolaitans were spiritual libertines working within the church in Asia Minor. They set up a prophetic tradition standing opposite that of John and those associated with him. They refused to recognize his authority, or that of authorized representatives of the Lord. They presented a real threat to the true church. Many of its members were persuaded by the new seduction, not only leaving the truth, but also fostering the evil. Therefore, the Lord warned them through John, "Repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place" (Revelation 2:5).

Doctrine and Covenants 117:11 warns Newell K. Whitney to "be ashamed of the Nicolaitane band and of all their secret abominations." The language is strong, suggesting that whatever the heresy was, the Lord considered it abhorrent.

To those individuals among the churches who did persist in righteousness, the Lord offers promises of salvation couched in differing terminology. These promises are loaded with allusions to the temple. The promise is that they shall eat of the tree of life in paradise and of the hidden manna (see Revelation 2:7, 17), both considered to be the food of angels. The former allusion had particular significance. In it was the seed of "eternal lives" (D&C 132:24) and immunity to death (see D&C 132:19-22; Genesis 3:12-24). Each will receive "a white

stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it” (Revelation 2:17). According to Doctrine and Covenants 130:10-11, this stone acts as “a Urim and Thummim to each individual who receives one, whereby things pertaining to a higher order of kingdoms will be made known; and a white stone is given to each of those who come into the celestial kingdom, whereon is a new name written. . . The new name is the key word.” Further, the Savior promises, “He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment,” and him “will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out: and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, which is the new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God: and I will write upon him my new name” (Revelation 3:5, 12).

verses 1-7 The letter to the church at Ephesus. This was the “loveless church” — they were abandoning their “first love” which was the Lord Jesus and his gospel. If only they would repent, they were promised: “will I give to eat of the tree of life which is in the midst of paradise of God.” They are promised exaltation.

1 Unto the angel of the church of Ephesus write; These things saith he that holdeth the seven stars in his right hand, who walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks;

verse 1 The “**angel of the church of Ephesus**” is the presiding officer of the church in Ephesus which was a major city in Asia Minor, now called Turkey. The city of approximately 250,000 residents had a theater, library, paved streets (the main road was lined with impressive columns), and baths. Ephesus was the center for the imperial cult, and one of its three temples, the temple of Diana (Artemis to the Greeks), was one of the seven wonders of the world. That temple, which contained an image of the goddess Diana, “whom all Asia and the world worshippeth” (Acts 19:27), was an impressive architectural structure, with intricate ornamentation, the finest Greek art, and one hundred marble columns (fifty-five feet high). The temple stood on a huge platform that covered approximately one hundred thousand square feet, which is the size of two American football fields.

Paul visited Ephesus during his third missionary journey and remained there for two years, preaching the gospel to both Jews and Greeks (Acts 19:8, 10). He later returned to Ephesus and preached repentance, prophesied, and stated, “I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears” (Acts 20:31). One of Paul’s epistles (Ephesians) is addressed to the saints of Ephesus.

“**he that holdeth the seven stars in his right hand, who walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks**” according to John’s vision in chapter one, is the Lord Jesus Christ.

“Unto the servant of the church of Ephesus write; These things saith he that holdeth the seven stars in his right hand, who walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks;”

2 I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil: and thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars:

verse 2 “thou canst not bear them which are evil” The Lord commands the saints for avoiding the wicked.

“thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not” The false apostles mentioned here may be the apostates from within (“of your own selves”) of which Paul had warned the elders of Ephesus: “After my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them” (Acts 20:29-30). Paul encountered false apostles on other occasions (2 Corinthians 11:13-14, 22-28).

3 And hast borne, and hast patience, and for my name’s sake hast laboured, and hast not fainted.

verse 3 “hast borne, and hast patience” The Ephesian saints bore many tribulations and much persecution and yet remained patient, looking forward to victory over evil and eternal life.

4 Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love.

5 Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent.

verses 4-5 “I have somewhat against thee . . . hast left thy first love” The Lord condemns the Church members here because they have abandoned their original love for him and for their sisters and brothers in the gospel. Biblical scholar Krodel writes, “Without love toward God, toward brothers and sisters, a church ceases to be a church in spite of its commendable orthodoxy and brave endurance of hardships” (Krodel, *Revelation*, 108). Because those in the church have left their first love, they are “fallen” and commanded to “repent, and do the first works” by regaining their lost love of Christ and their fellow men.

“or else I will come unto thee quickly” This expression, repeated several times in Revelation (2:16; 3:11; 22:7, 12, 20) and in the Doctrine and Covenants (D&C 33:18; 34:12; 35:27; 39:24; 49:28; 68:35; 88:126), warns us to be prepared always for the coming of the Lord, which will occur unexpectedly.

The expression often accompanies statements of comfort and information, such as these: “I come quickly: blessed is he that keepeth the sayings of . . . this book” (Revelation 22:7); “I come quickly; and my reward is with me” (Revelation 22:12); “the kingdom is yours until I come. Behold, I come quickly” (D&C 35:27) and “I will be your ruler when I come; and behold, I come quickly” (D&C 41:4). Also, it frequently is found with admonitions such as

these: “Be patient in tribulation until I come; and, behold, I come quickly” (D&C 54:10); “Pray always, that ye may not faint, until I come. Behold, and lo, I will come quickly” (D&C 88:126); and “Be faithful until I come, for I come quickly” (D&C 112:34).

“will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent” This candlestick represents the church at Ephesus (Revelation 1:20). If the saints do not repent for leaving their first love (Revelation 1:4), the Lord will remove them from their place. Elder Bruce R. McConkie taught, “Any congregation of saints which is not true and faithful shall lose its place in the true Church” (*Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, 3:446).

6 But this thou hast, that thou hatest the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate.

verse 6 The “Nicolaitans,” are discussed above. This term has come to refer to members of the Church who are trying to maintain their church standing while continuing to live after the manner of the world. They want their names on the records of the Church but do not want to devote themselves to the gospel cause with full purpose of heart (*Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, 3:446).

7 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God.

verse 7 “To him that overcometh” This phrase is directed to each individual who overcomes the world. It is found seven times in the letters to the seven churches (Revelation 2:11, 17, 29; 3:6, 13, 22; 13:9).

verses 8-11 The letter to the church in Smyrna. They are the “persecuted church.” They are counseled to be faithful even “unto death,” and if they are, the Lord will give them “a crown of life” and they “shall not be hurt of the second death.” They also are promised exaltation.

8 And unto the angel of the church in Smyrna write; These things saith the first and the last, which was dead, and is alive;

verse 8 Smyrna, which was a prosperous commercial center thirty-five miles north of Ephesus. It had at least two temples, one dedicated to the goddess Roma and the other built in honor of the Emperor Tiberius. Smyrna is now called Izmir and is a large city in present-day Turkey.

Again, a reminder that John’s message originates with the Savior: “And unto the servant of the church in Smyrna write; These things saith the first and the last, which was dead, and is alive”

9 I know thy works, and tribulation, and poverty, (but thou art rich) and I know the blasphemy of them which say they are Jews, and are not, but are the synagogue of Satan.

verse 9 The “synagogue of Satan” are the Jewish congregations in Smyrna which rejected Christ and fought the saints. They were of the devil.

10 Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.

verse 10 “Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer” In verse 9 the terms “tribulation,” “poverty,” “suffer,” “tried,” “tribulation,” and “death” represent our mortal suffering and experience. The letter to the church in Smyrna contrasts these terms with the promise of life (“crown of life”) in this verse and power over the second death in verse 11.

John gives no hint that the churches could or would survive this crisis of apostasy. Though he offers promises of salvation to most of them, they are not to the body of the Church but to individuals. Indeed, for the most faithful among the branches, the church at Smyrna, the Lord holds no promise of continuance: “Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; . . . be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.”

“the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried” Public authorities, while hearkening to the voice of the devil, will cast some of the saints of Smyrna into prison.

“ye shall have tribulation ten days” The period “ten days” denotes a time of testing or of probation (Daniel 1:12, 14), such as mortality. This number contrasts with such scriptural terms as “eternity,” “everlasting,” and “forever.” The saints will be tested for a short period (ten days) compared to the length of eternity.

11 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death.

verse 11 “the second death” Usually the term “second death” is used to refer to the spiritual death or that separation from God which may be suffered by mortals due to their sins (see the commentary for Alma 12:16).

verses 12-17 The letter to Pergamos, the “over-tolerant church.” If they repent, they are promised “hidden manna” and “a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it” — as are the other churches, they also are promised exaltation.

12 And to the angel of the church in Pergamos write; These things saith he which hath the sharp sword with two edges;

verse 12 Pergamos (or Pergamum) was in Asia Minor, or present-day Turkey. This city housed a world-famous library and several temples built in honor of Augustus, Rome, and other deities. One temple was dedicated to Asclepius, the god of healing, and sick people were presented at this temple with the hope of being healed. Another temple, built in honor of Zeus, stood on a hill overlooking the city, and its altar looked like a huge throne sitting upon a hill. Animal sacrifices were offered there day and night as a reminder to onlookers that the temple was extremely significant to the community.

“He which hath the sharp sword with two edges” is also the Savior.

“And to the servant of the church in Pergamos write; These things saith he which hath the sharp sword with two edges;”

13 I know thy works, and where thou dwellest, even where Satan’s seat is: and thou holdest fast my name, and hast not denied my faith, even in those days wherein Antipas was my faithful martyr, who was slain among you, where Satan dwelleth.

verse 13 “I know . . . where thou dwellest” I know thy heart.

“thou holdest fast my name” Apparently, Christians who were sentenced to prison or death could save themselves by cursing Christ and worshipping at the emperor’s altar. The Lord commands the saints of Pergamos for confessing his name “before men” (Matthew 10:32-33).

We know little about Antipas, other than that he was a martyr from Pergamos who died for the sake of Jesus and his gospel.

John’s references to “Satan” may refer specifically to the enormous altar dedicated to the god Zeus, which had the appearance of a throne and stood on a hill overlooking Pergamos. It may also refer generally to the pagan cults of Athena, Asclepius, Dionysus, and Zeus, in which the power of Satan was manifest through false religious systems that promoted the worship of the emperor as a god. Satan’s throne stands in stark contrast to the exalted and eternal thrones of Christ and God (4:2-4; D&C 76:107-8). It may also refer to the “Synagogues of Satan,” the Jewish congregations which rejected Christ and fought the saints. They were of the devil.

14 But I have a few things against thee, because thou hast there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balac to cast a stumbling block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed unto idols, and to commit fornication.

verse 14 “Balac” The king of Moab (whose name is also spelled Balak) used money to encourage Balaam to curse the children of Israel (Numbers 22-24; Joshua 24:9; Judges 11:25).

“to eat things sacrificed unto idols” For religious and social reasons the saints at Pergamos were encouraged by their fellow citizens to eat the meat sacrificed to the idols of the temples of Zeus, Augustus, and Rome. To do so, however, was to practice Balaam’s doctrine (Numbers 31:16).

15 So hast thou also them that hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, which thing I hate.

16 Repent; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth.

verse 16 “I . . . will fight against them with the sword of my mouth” The sword of God’s mouth is the word of God. One way that God fights against the wicked “with the sword of [his] mouth” is through his judgments, which are decreed and sent by his word (see Leviticus 26:25; Judges 7:20; Isaiah 34:5; Ezekiel 14:21; D&C 101:10).

17 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it.

verse 17 “hidden manna” Manna is the food that Israel received from heaven for forty years while they wandered in the wilderness (Exodus 16:15, 35). The hidden manna refers to Jesus, who is the “true bread from heaven” (John 6:32). Jesus said: “I am [the] bread of life. Your fathers did eat manna in the wilderness, and are dead. This is the bread which cometh down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof, and not die. I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live forever” (John 6:48-51). Jesus is “hidden,” or unseen and unknown by the wicked, but is revealed to him or her who overcomes.

The phrase “hidden manna” may also refer to eternal truths from and about Christ that are revealed only in the temple, “mysteries” given only to those who seek diligently for them (see Matthew 13:11-12; 1 Timothy 3:16; 1 Nephi 2:16; 10:19; Alma 12:9; D&C 76:5- 7).

“will give him a white stone” The white stone is a Urim and Thummim for each individual who enters the celestial kingdom; written upon this white stone will be a new name. D&C 130:8-11 explains: “The place where God resides is a great Urim and Thummim. This earth, in its sanctified and immortal state, will be made like unto crystal and will be a Urim and Thummim to the inhabitants who dwell thereon, whereby all things pertaining to an inferior kingdom, or all kingdoms of a lower order, will be manifest to those who dwell on it; and this earth will be Christ’s. Then the white stone will become a Urim and Thummim to each individual who receives one, whereby things pertaining to a higher order of kingdoms, will be made known; and a white stone is given to each of those who come into the celestial kingdom, whereon is a new name written, which no man knoweth save he that receiveth it. The new name is the key word.”

“new name” In a different context, Abraham (Genesis 17:5), Sarah (Genesis 17:15), and Jacob (Genesis 32:28) were given new names by the Lord. Isaiah prophesied that Israel would “be called by a new name, which the mouth of the Lord shall name” (Isaiah 62:2; 65:15). God revealed to John that “him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God . . . : and I will write upon him the name of my God . . . : and I will write upon him my new name” (Revelation 3:12).

The new name is written on the white stone that is “given to each of those who come into the celestial kingdom. . . The new name is the key word.” The new name, similar to the white robe of Revelation 3:5, 6:11, and 7:9, symbolizes a new existence, or a new life.

verses 18-29 The letter to Thyatira, the “compromising and immoral church.” If they are able to overcome their problems, they shall receive “power over the nations,” “a rod of iron,” and “a morning star” – other ways of referring to exaltation.

18 And unto the angel of the church in Thyatira write; These things saith the Son of God, who hath his eyes like unto a flame of fire, and his feet are like fine brass;

verse 18 Thyatira, a city located in Asia Minor, or modern-day Turkey, was a commercial town of traders and craftsmen who included tanners, potters, bakers, leather workers, metal workers, dyers, and wool workers. A temple named after Tyrimnos, or Apollo, the son of Zeus, was an important religious symbol for this community.

“And unto the servant of the church in Thyatira write; These things saith the Son of God, who hath his eyes like unto a flame of fire, and his feet are like fine brass;”

19 I know thy works, and charity, and service, and faith, and thy patience, and thy works; and the last to be more than the first.

verse 19 “and the last to be more than the first” The Jerusalem Bible reads, “I know how you are still making progress.” The saints’ spiritual lives are improving and they are becoming better people, unlike the saints of Ephesus, who have fallen.

20 Notwithstanding I have a few things against thee, because thou sufferest that woman Jezebel, which calleth herself a prophetess, to teach and to seduce my servants to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed unto idols.

verse 20 This woman was not Jezebel, the wife of king Ahab, who helped lead Israel to idolatry (2 Kings 9:22; 1 Kings 16:31-33), although there are points in common between these two individuals. The Jezebel of the church at Thyatira was a false prophetess, who taught false doctrines, seduced some of the church members to commit fornication, and encouraged them to eat food that was sacrificed to idols. Inasmuch as Jezebel refused to repent of her wickedness, God “cast her into hell” (JST Revelation 2:22).

Jezebel’s activities earned her the sarcastic epithet “woman . . . which calleth herself a prophetess.” We know that Christian women held prophetic power (see Acts 21:8-9). But at Thyatira the gift had been turned to fight against the truth. Based on the conditions of the day, a gentile area would not have had any problem accepting and promoting a prophetess. At that time “sibyls,” women easily excited into an ecstasy, became mediums and spoke as oracles. A number of these found their way into the Church. Out of their responses came a collection of maxims known in apocryphal literature as the Sibylline Books.

“to seduce my servants to commit fornication” This passage may refer both to the sexual sin and to the spiritual sin of idolatry, which is spiritual fornication. Individuals and organizations in all ages act as Jezebel, leading those who will follow “into forbidden paths” where they are “lost” (1 Nephi 8:28; see also Revelation 2:14).

21 And I gave her space to repent of her fornication; and she repented not.

verse 21 The Lord’s true prophets, possibly the apostle Paul or John himself, preached the true gospel and repentance to Jezebel. She had adequate warning to repent of her evil deeds:

“And I gave her space to repent of her fornications; and she repented not.”

22 Behold, I will cast her into hell, and them that commit adultery with her into great tribulation, except they repent of their deeds.

verse 22 JST Revelation 2:22 replaces bed with hell, hence “I will cast her into hell.” Nephi uses similar language, declaring that “all those who preach false doctrines, and all those who commit whoredoms . . . shall be thrust down to hell” (2 Nephi 28:15) he calls hell “that awful hell, which . . . was prepared for the wicked” (1 Nephi 15:29).

“Behold, I will cast her into a bed, and them that commit adultery with her into great tribulation, except they repent of their deeds.”

23 And I will kill her children with death; and all the churches shall know that I am he which searcheth the reins and hearts: and I will give unto every one of you according to your works.

verse 23 “I will kill her children with death” Jezebel and Ahab’s children suffered horrible deaths (2 Kings 10:1, 7), and in a similar manner the children of Jezebel of Thyatira will be destroyed. Another interpretation is that those who follow Jezebel in her sins, the children of her iniquities, will suffer spiritual death.

“I am he which searcheth the reins and hearts” This expression recalls a passage in Psalm 7:9: “for the righteous God trieth the hearts and reins.” God knows every thought and intent of all humans and is therefore able to judge accordingly and to “give unto every one of you according to your works.” The New International Version renders the very literal expression “reins and hearts” as the more understandable “hearts and minds.”

24 But unto you I say, and unto the rest in Thyatira, as many as have not this doctrine, and which have not known the depths of Satan, as they speak; I will put upon you none other burden.

verse 24 “as many as have not this doctrine” Church members of Thyatira who do not accept Jezebel’s false doctrines and seductions will not have the burdens of sin and guilt placed upon them. Fornication and idolatry, two extremely grievous sins, may be described as the “depths of Satan.”

25 But that which ye have already hold fast till I come.

verse 25 “hold fast till I come” This expression means to endure to the end and recalls for us the iron rod. Lehi saw individuals “pressing forward; and they came and caught hold of the end of the rod of iron; and they did press their way forward, continually holding fast to the rod of iron, until they came forth and fell down and partook of the fruit of the tree” (1 Nephi 8:30). Church members who hold fast, or endure to the end, will eventually reach the tree of life and partake of its fruit (2 Nephi 31:20; Revelation 22:2, 14). The iron rod is the word of God, and we are promised that “whoso would hearken unto the word of God, and would hold fast unto it, they would never perish” (1 Nephi 15:24; 1 Thessalonians 5:21).

26 And he that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations.

verse 26 The JST Revelation 2:26 renders the phrase “power over the nations” as “power over many kingdoms.” Those who overcome receive a promise similar to that given to Jesus, as recorded in Psalm 2:6-9, a section that deals with the temple, kingship, and the doctrine of divine sonship. The expression “will I give power over many kingdoms” in Revelation recalls “I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession” (Psalm 2:8) the phrase “he shall rule them with the word of God” parallels “Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron” (Psalm 2:9) and the expression “they shall be in his hands as the vessels of clay in the hands” corresponds with “thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter’s vessel” (Psalm 2:9). Other parallels may also be noted. The implication is that we will receive as Jesus receives, being joint-heirs with him of the gifts and power and dominion of the Father (Romans 8:17).

“**Many kingdoms**” refers to eternal kingdoms, not to temporal kingdoms. The saints are invited to “come up unto the crown prepared for you, and be made rulers over many kingdoms” (D&C 78:15).

“And to him who overcometh, and keepeth my commandments unto the end, will I give power over many kingdoms.”

27 And he shall rule them with a rod of iron; as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers: even as I received of my Father.

verse 27 The JST Revelation 2:27 renders this verse: “**And he shall rule them with the word of God; they shall be in his hands as the vessels of clay in the hands of a potter shall they be broken to shivers: he shall govern them by faith, with equity and justice even as I received of my Father.**”

“**And he shall rule them with the word of God**” Exalted saints will rule “many kingdoms” with God’s word. Perhaps this expression means that the saints will rule by the truth and correct principles that come from God.

“they shall be in his hands as the vessels of clay in the hands of a potter” He who rules over many kingdoms is likened to a potter; the kingdoms are similar to clay vessels. The potter has control and power over his creation made of clay.

“he shall govern them by faith, with equity and justice” The one who overcomes will rule and govern with faith (which is God's power) and with righteousness, having perfect “equity and justice.”

“even as I received of my Father” He who overcomes will receive eternal rewards (such as having “power over many kingdoms, Revelation 2:26), just as Christ received rewards from his Father. Such will be “heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ” (Romans 8:17).

28 And I will give him the morning star.

verse 28 “the morning star” This expression may have at least two meanings. First, Jesus Christ is “the bright and morning star” (Revelation 22:16). The promise of “the morning star” may be the promise of the Second Comforter, which is that “when any man obtains this [Second] Comforter, he will have the personage of Jesus Christ to attend him, or appear unto him from time to time, and even He will manifest the Father unto him, and they will take up their abode with him, and the visions of the heavens will be opened unto him, and the Lord will teach him face to face” (TPJS, 151). Second, God gives eternal life to those who overcome; they will become like Christ, who is the “bright and morning star.”

29 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.

Revelation Chapter 3 Letter to the Seven Churches

verses 1-6 The letter to Sardis, the “spiritually sleeping” or “unwatchful” church. Those who repent shall “walk with me in white [raiment]” and “I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father.” The “book of life” is the book containing the names of those who shall inherit eternal life — those who shall be exalted in the celestial kingdom (D&C 132:19).

1 And unto the angel of the church in Sardis write; These things saith he that hath the seven Spirits of God, and the seven stars; I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead.

verse 1 Once the capital of the ancient kingdom of Lydia, Sardis was a city thirty miles south of Thyatira, in Asia Minor, or present-day Turkey. This commercial city was known for its wealth, which it obtained in part through its trade in clothing.

“And unto the servant of the church in Sardis, write; These things saith he who hath the seven stars, which are the seven servants of God; I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and art not dead.”

“that thou livest, and art not dead” Note that the JST inserts the word *not* into this phrase. The Saints of Sardis were not dead as to the things of the Spirit, although they still had need of repentance (Revelation 3:2-3).

2 Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die: for I have not found thy works perfect before God.

verse 2 The reader should note the improved clarity of the JST version: **“Be watchful therefore, and strengthen those who remain, who are ready to die; for I have not found thy works perfect before God.”**

3 Remember therefore how thou hast received and heard, and hold fast, and repent. If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee.

verse 3 “Remember . . . thou hast received and heard” This phrase may indicate that the saints were to remember that they have received the gospel with all of its blessings; they have heard the word of God.

“If therefore thou shalt not watch” The concluding verse of the parable of the ten virgins contains the command, “Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh” (Matthew 25:13).

“I will come on thee as a thief” This expression is recorded twice in Revelation, here, and again in 16:15. Most scriptural texts state that it is not the Lord but “the day of the Lord” (1 Thessalonians 5:2, 4; 2 Peter 3:10), “desolation” (D&C 45:19), or “the coming of the Lord” (D&C 106:4) that comes as a thief. The Lord himself will come in glory for all to see

(Revelation 19:11-16). A thief secures his goods by stealth, always quickly, unexpectedly, and usually under the cover of night; the second coming of Christ is likened unto such. Modern revelation makes it clear that Christ comes not as a thief to the “children of light” but to the “world” (D&C 106:4-5).

4 Thou hast a few names even in Sardis which have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with me in white: for they are worthy.

verse 4 “Thou hast a few names even in Sardis which have not defiled their garments” White garments signify a holy and undefiled person; defiled garments symbolize one who is evil and bears the stains of sin. In Sardis, there were a “few names,” or individuals, who were pure and undefiled, who had not spotted their garments with sin. Garments in this verse also has application to temples and temple covenants.

5 He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels.

verse 5 “the same shall be clothed in white raiment” These are they who are transformed into new persons by Jesus’s atoning sacrifice and who have no filthy spots created by the blood and sins of the world. Exalted persons are they who “have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb” (Revelation 7:14); they who “have put on Christ” (Galatians 3:27). The white clothing, with the new name, signifies a new state of existence.

“I will not blot out his name out of the book of life” This is the book that figures so prominently in the book of Revelation (13:8; 17:8; 20:12, 15; 21:27; 22:19) which contains the names of those who will receive eternal life. It is the “record which is kept in heaven” (D&C 128:7), which contains the names of the righteous (Alma 5:58). The book belongs to the Lamb (Revelation 21:27), who blots out the names of sinners from it (Exodus 32:32-33) but does not remove the names of those who overcome the world and are clothed in white raiment.

“I will confess his name before my Father” Jesus taught, “Whosoever . . . shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven” (Matthew 10:32).

“before his angels” The angels are heavenly witnesses; they will witness Jesus’s acknowledgment of the names of the righteous before the Father (Luke 12:8-9; 1 Timothy 5:21).

6 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.

verses 7-13 The letter to Philadelphia, the “weak church but the church of opportunity.” If they take advantage of the opportunity to repent, they will receive “thy crown” and they will be made “a pillar in the temple of my God.” Also, “I will write upon him the name of my God,

and the name of the city of my God, which is New Jerusalem . . . and my new name.” It is clear from John’s writings that those who gain eternal life or exaltation become Gods!

“Synagogues of Satan,” again, refers to the Jewish congregations in Philadelphia which rejected Christ and fought the saints. They were of the devil.

7 And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write; These things saith he that is holy, he that is true, he that hath the key of David, he that openeth, and no man shutteth; and shutteth, and no man openeth;

verse 7 Philadelphia was a city in Asia Minor thirty-five miles southeast of Sardis. Philadelphia was likely founded and named after Attalus II Philadelphos, a king of Pergamum. The city was well-known for its religious festivals and temples.

“**he that hath the key of David**” Jesus Christ possesses the “key of David.” Because David was the great king of Israel, to hold the key of David suggests holding the power of government. Christ, who “hath the key of David,” is the rightful, eternal king of Israel (Isaiah 44:6; Jeremiah 23:5; 1 Timothy 6: 14-15; 2 Nephi 10:14) and governor of the entire world (see Psalm 47:7; Alma 5:50; D&C 45:49). Elder Bruce R. McConkie explained: “In ancient Israel, David was a man of blood and battle whose word was law and whose very name was also a symbol of power and authority. Accordingly, when Isaiah sought to convey a realization of the supreme, directive control and power resident in our Lord, the Son of David, he spoke these words in the Lord’s name: ‘And the key of the house of David will I lay upon his shoulder; so he shall open, and none shall shut; and he shall shut, and none shall open’ (Isaiah 22:22) . . . Thus, the key of David is the absolute power resident in Christ whereby his will is expressed in all things both temporal and spiritual” (*Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, 3:457-58).

“**He that is holy . . . and no man openeth,**” again, refers to the Savior. The Savior “openeth” when he extends an invitation to repent. He “shutteth” when he exercises judgment against the sinner. He holds the sealing power.

“And to the servant of the church in Philadelphia write; These things saith he that is holy, he that is true, he that hath the key of David, he that openeth, and no man shutteth; and shutteth, and no man openeth;”

8 I know thy works: behold, I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it: for thou hast a little strength, and hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name.

verse 8 “I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it” I have offered you an opportunity to repent.

9 Behold, I will make them of the synagogue of Satan, which say they are Jews, and are not, but do lie; behold, I will make them to come and worship before thy feet, and to know that I have loved thee.

verse 9 “synagogue of Satan” New Testament scholar Metzger comments: “Since John himself had been born a Jew, we must not take the expression ‘those of the synagogue

of Satan' in an anti-Jewish or anti-Semitic sense. The synagogue at Philadelphia was criticized, not for being Jewish, but for being hostile to Christians" (*Breaking the Code*, 41).

"I will make them to come and worship before thy feet" Those who belong to the synagogue of Satan and who were hostile to faithful Christians will someday acknowledge the truth and know that God loves his saints.

10 Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth.

verse 10 "thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee" The Jerusalem Bible clarifies this challenging wording with this reading: "Because you have kept my commandment to endure trials, I will keep you safe in the time of trial which is going to come for the whole world."

11 Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown.

verse 11 "that no man take thy crown" Joseph Smith said of this verse: "If the saints are not to reign, for what purpose are they crowned? In an exhortation of the Lord to a certain church in Asia, which was built up in the days of the Apostles, unto whom He communicated His word on that occasion by His servant John, He says [quotes Revelation 3:11]" (*HC*, 2:20).

12 Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out: and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, which is new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God: and I will write upon him my new name.

verse 12 "will I make a pillar in the temple of my God" Exalted saints are compared to the pillars of a temple, which are stable, strong, and permanent fixtures of the temple precinct. In a similar manner, the saints will stand forever in the heavenly temple, never to be removed by evil forces. John explains that such individuals will "go no more out" of the temple. Compare Galatians 2:9, in which Peter, James, and John were "pillars" in the church.

"I will write upon him the name of my God" The first of three names that Christ will give the righteous is the name of his God (Revelation 14:1; D&C 133:18), meaning the saints will become like and will belong to their Father in Heaven; thus, those who have God's name upon them are gods (D&C 132:20) (See also Orson Pratt, *JD*, 14:242-43).

"name of the city of my God, which is new Jerusalem" The second of three names that Christ will give the righteous is "New Jerusalem," meaning they will become eternal citizens of God's celestial city.

"I will write upon him my new name" The third of three names that Christ will give the righteous is his own new name. Because an individual's "new name" is kept private – "no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it" (Revelation 2:17) – this suggests that those who receive

Christ's new name will have become one with him. John explains that "his name shall be in their foreheads" (Revelation 22:4; see commentary there).

13 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.

verses 14-22 The letter to the church in Laodicea, the "complacent church" that is neither cold nor hot. To those who overcome this weakness, the Lord promises that they will "sit with me in my throne . . . and with my Father in his throne."

14 And unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write; These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God;

verse 14 Laodicea was a city in Asia Minor, or present-day Turkey. Laodicea was founded by the Syrian king Antiochus II and named after his wife Laodice. It was settled at the junction of important trade highways and subsequently became an important center for commerce, banking, medicine, and industry. Its medical school produced a special ointment, or eye salve, that was exported throughout the land. Its industrial center produced linen and wool garments.

The "Amen" is Jesus Christ – his word is absolute; his promises sure; when he speaks, all controversy ends.

"beginning of the creation of God" Christ is the "firstborn of every creature" (Colossians 1:15). In his own words, he testified, "I was in the beginning with the Father, and am the Firstborn" (D&C 93:21).

"And unto the servant of the church of the Laodiceans write; These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God;"

15 I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot.

16 So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth.

verses 15-16 "thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot" With all of its importance as a city of commerce and trade, Laodicea lacked sufficient fresh water for its inhabitants and visitors, so water was piped to this community from springs located several miles away. By the time the water arrived in Laodicea, it was likely lukewarm, unpleasant to drink, and good only to be "spewed out of the mouth." Hence, the water at Laodicea lacked the cold freshness for weary travelers and the healing elements for the physically ill and afflicted found in hot water.

Lukewarm water is a metaphor for some members of the church in Laodicea (and in any era) who lack gospel zeal (see the command in Revelation 3:19 to "be zealous") and complete faithfulness. These may be the same of whom it is written, "These are they who are not valiant

in the testimony of Jesus; wherefore, they obtain not the crown over the kingdom of our God" (D&C 76:79).

17 Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked:

verse 17 “I am rich, and increased with goods” This phrase may refer to the wealthy conditions of the church members of Laodicea, a prosperous city known for its banking center and clothing factories. The people say, “I am rich,” referring to their silver and gold, but the Lord, referring to their spiritual condition, corrects them, saying, “Thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked.” The people are “naked,” without sacred garments (Revelation 3:4-5), blind to gospel truths, and poor as to spiritual things.

18 I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see.

verse 18 “to buy of me gold tried in the fire” Here the saints are counseled to “buy of me gold,” perhaps meaning they are to pay the price for eternal riches and exaltation through obedience and sacrifice.

“Gold tried in the fire” symbolizes saints who are precious and pure and who, after the resurrection, become incorruptible. The saints become like gold when they pass through the “furnace of affliction” (Isaiah 48:10; 1 Peter 1:7). Zechariah wrote, “And I will bring the third part through the fire, and will refine them as silver is refined, and will try them as gold is tried: they shall call on my name, and I will hear them: I will say, It is my people: and they shall say, The Lord is my God” (Zechariah 13:9). This, “that thou mayest be rich.” He who is spiritually rich is he who “hath eternal life” (D&C 6:7).

“shame of thy nakedness” Shame and nakedness are often used synonymously in the scriptures (Isaiah 47:3; 2 Nephi 9:14). Those who are not clothed in the white garment will be filled with shame.

“anoint thine eyes with eye salve” The medical profession of Laodicea used Phrygian-powdered stone to create an eye salve that was used far and wide for healing. In this verse the Lord does not refer to the manmade eye salve, of course, but to a spiritual eye salve that permits individuals to see with their spiritual eyes (Matthew 6:22). Recall what the Lord said to Enoch: “Anoint thine eyes with clay, and wash them, and thou shalt see. And he did so;” and Enoch then saw things that “were not visible to the natural eye” (Moses 6:35-36; John 9:6).

19 As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent.

20 Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.

verse 20 “I stand at the door, and knock” God makes the initial contact with us by coming to our door and knocking. What is the door? Perhaps the door is our heart, which is the key to who we are and what we desire. It is our hearts that Christ wants to change; it is our hearts that must be broken. How does Christ knock? He sends the Spirit – the light of Christ given to every man – prophets, teachers, and provides us with the scriptures. If we hearken to the voice of the Spirit, he will bring us more fully to Christ – so much so that eventually he will bring us to the Second Comforter, and we will enjoy an intimacy as expressed in the words, “I will sup with him and he with me.” In short, we must open the door and invite Christ into our hearts and our lives (D&C 88:63). The idea of supping with Christ suggests that not only will he visit them and quickly deliver a message but he will also spend time with them, sitting and breaking bread with them.

21 To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne.

verse 21 “will I grant to sit with me in my throne” God empowers those who overcome trial and temptation to become like him; the obedient become exalted beings, sitting as kings upon heavenly thrones. Enoch said to God, “Thou hast made me, and given unto me a right to thy throne, and not of myself, but through thine own grace” (Moses 7:59). Similarly, Jesus promised the Twelve Apostles “twelve thrones” (Matthew 19:28). Joseph Smith defined the expressions “heirs of God” and “joint heirs with Jesus Christ,” saying the obedient are to “inherit the same power, the same glory and the same exaltation, until you arrive at the station of a God, and ascend the throne of eternal power, the same as those who have gone before.” (TPJS, 347.)

“even as I also overcame” How do we overcome the world as Christ overcame it? Christ’s instructions to his apostles have relevance to us: “Ye are they which have continued with me in my temptations. And I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed unto me” (Luke 22:28-29). How did Jesus reach his exalted station? “Why; I do the things I saw my Father do when worlds came rolling into existence. My Father worked out his kingdom with fear and trembling, and I must do the same; and when I get my kingdom, I shall present it to my Father, so that he may obtain kingdom upon kingdom” (TPJS, 347).

“and am set down with my Father in his throne” When Jesus “shall deliver up the kingdom, and present it unto the Father, spotless, saying: I have overcome and have trodden the wine-press alone, even the wine-press of the fierceness of the wrath of Almighty God,” he shall “be crowned with the crown of his glory, to sit on the throne of his power to reign forever and ever” (D&C 76:107-8).

22 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.

By the time John wrote his epistles (the First, Second, and Third Epistles of John), the apostasy foretold in chapters 2 and 3 of Revelation were reality. In sorrow because the time had come, he wrote, “Little children, it is the last time: and as ye have heard that antichrist

shall come, even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time. They went out from us, but they were not of us" (1 John 2:18-19). Note the root of the problem: men and women deliberately perverting the way of God, willing to deny Christ even though they knew differently. These were not ignorant deceivers, but deliberate workers of darkness.

Peter says that they "walk after the flesh in the lust of uncleanness, and despise government [constituted authority]. Presumptuous are they, self-willed, they are not afraid to speak evil of dignities" (2 Peter 2:10).

Well did Paul brand at least some among them as "that man of sin . . . the son of perdition" (2 Thessalonians 2:3), men and women "who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost," who "tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come." These apostates could not be renewed "again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame" (Hebrews 6:4-6). Spurning authority, despising truth, loving error and the glory of men, these hell-inspired anti-Christians, like spiders, carefully spun their web of half-truths, counterfeit ordinances, and false doctrines. Luring and trapping a people no longer willing to follow living prophets and becoming ever more devoid of the Spirit, these spinners of heresy were able to suck out the juice of their spiritual lives.

To the Saints living in the Roman province of Asia, John bequeathed, through the book of Revelation, a strong testimony that God lived and that Jesus was the Messiah. His message was a light that pierced the darkness of the gathering apostasy and told of the eventual triumph of God. It reassured the saints that the present distress was not the end of the war but of a single battle. Though God seemed vanquished, he was not, and would turn seeming defeat into glorious victory. The Revelation showed how. Thus, it became a beacon of hope to the faithful until, one by one, they passed away. With their passing the light of truth dimmed and then went out.

Revelation Chapter 4 Vision of the Majesty of God the Father

Chapter four presents a change of scene and subject. Up to this point only the earth has been in view; now John's vision expands to encompass heaven. In an instant, John leaves behind him the troubles, the apostasies, the dissensions, and the apprehensions of the earthly church and passes into an atmosphere of perfect tranquility and assurance. Everywhere there prevails an infinite harmony of righteousness and power. The might of God thunders, and flashes, and radiates, permeating all heaven with his glory while angelic choirs proclaim the holiness of him whose sovereignty the earth will follow even in its rebellion.

In the great drama and historical struggle between the forces of good and evil, we must first define the forces of good. The forces of good, of course, are God the Father and his son Jesus Christ. Chapter 4 is the vision of the majesty of God the Father.

The question naturally arises whether or not John actually saw the things he describes in this chapter. Apparently, he did indeed. Joseph Smith declared:

There is a grand distinction between the actual meaning of the prophets and the present translation [of the Bible]. The prophets do not declare that they saw a beast or beasts, but that they saw the image or figure of a beast. Daniel did not see an actual bear or a lion, but the images or figures of those beasts. The translation should have been rendered "image" instead of "beast," in every instance where beasts are mentioned by the prophets. But John saw the actual beast in heaven, showing to John that beasts did actually exist there, and not to represent figures of things on the earth. When the prophets speak of seeing beasts in their visions, they mean that they saw the images, they being types to represent certain things. At the same time, they received the interpretation as to what those images or types were designed to represent. (TPJS, 290-91.)

So, in this chapter, John saw actual beasts. However, this is not the case throughout the book. The beasts to which the prophet Joseph Smith referred here are those mentioned in chapter four, not those in chapters twelve and thirteen. The JST specifically states that the beasts in the latter were only images representing earthly beings or conditions.

1 After this I looked, and, behold, a door was opened in heaven: and the first voice which I heard was as it were of a trumpet talking with me; which said, Come up hither, and I will shew thee things which must be hereafter.

verse 1 The phrase "After this I looked, and, behold" is used throughout the revelation to introduce a new vision.

"a door was opened in heaven" This is the door to the "temple of heaven" (see Revelation 14:17; 16:17) or the celestial kingdom. The door actually opens to the throne room of heaven, which may be parallel to the holy of holies in the earthly temple. John, while "in the spirit" (Revelation 4:2), is about to view the most holy place, the place where God sits and rules (Ezekiel 1:1). John's experience perhaps would have been similar to that of Joseph

Smith, who reported, "The heavens were opened upon us, and I beheld the celestial kingdom of God, and the glory thereof, whether in the body or out I cannot tell. I saw the transcendent beauty of the gate through which the heirs of that kingdom will enter, which was like unto circling flames of fire" (D&C 137:1-2).

"first voice" The voice is that of Jesus Christ, first identified in Revelation 1:10-11.

"as it were of a trumpet talking with me" The Savior's voice, carrying the commanding sound of a battle trump, summons John to leave the scene of earthly unrest and worry and to approach a portal of heaven that now stood open. The door is not small. The Greek word *thura* (door), as used here, suggests a double or folding door such as the entry to a Roman manor or Jewish great house. It is the entrance to the dominion of God where his power remains ever unveiled.

"Come up hither" The purpose for John's elevation was for perspective. From this post, he could better see "things which must be hereafter."

"After this I looked, and behold, a door was opened into heaven; and the first voice which I heard was as it were of a trumpet talking with me; which said, Come up hither, and I will show thee things which must be hereafter."

2 And immediately I was in the spirit: and, behold, a throne was set in heaven, and one sat on the throne.

verse 2 "throne was set in heaven" The Jerusalem Bible renders this passage: "a throne was standing in heaven." Heavenly Father possesses and sits upon the throne (Revelation 3:21; 4:2-3, 9-10; 5:7, 13; 6:16; 7:10; 12:5; 19:4; 22:1, 3), which is at the center of activity in the temple in heaven. Twenty-four exalted elders and their thrones (Revelation 4:4); many angels (Revelation 5:11; 7:11, 15); four living creatures (Revelation 4:6); a "great multitude, which no man could number" (Revelation 7:9); seven lamps of fire, signifying the seven servants (Revelation 4:5); and the 144,000 high priests, in whose "mouth was found no guile" and who sing a new song (Revelation 14:1-3, 5), are all "in the midst of," "round about," or "before" the throne of God. Jesus Christ is also "in the midst of the throne" (Revelation 5:6; 7:17), which he shares with his Father (Revelation 3:21; 22:1, 3). The golden altar (Revelation 8:3) and the sea of glass (Revelation 4:6) are before the throne as well. The throne is the source of lightnings, thunderings, and voices (Revelation 4:5).

"one sat on the throne" John refers to God the Father approximately twelve times as the "one seated on the throne," which represents God's kingship and dominion. In Abraham, Facsimile 2:3, God is pictured sitting upon his throne, "clothed with power and authority."

3 And he that sat was to look upon like a jasper and a sardine stone: and there was a rainbow round about the throne, in sight like unto an emerald.

verses 2-3 At this point the vision enters into its second stage and appears to elevate John to an even higher state of ecstasy from that he was already in. John was, of course, already in the Spirit (see Revelation 1:10). Here the time frame is that of heaven. In this

eternal moment, past, present, and future become one. From this perspective, John is given to understand the relationship of the parts to the whole and how God overmasters all. Omnipresence takes on a new meaning. Not only is God everywhere present, he is also every-when present. The context of John's vision seems to rest on the same ground as the statement of Joseph Smith that "the past, the present, and the future were and are, with Him, one eternal 'now.'"

John sees the great Lord of time sitting on his throne, symbol of his absolute omnipotence, in resplendent glory. The description echoes Ezekiel 1:26-28 where the throne appears as a sapphire surrounded by a rainbow. The Greek *thronos*, the term John uses, was reserved for kings and gods – those who were absolute rulers. The heavenly throne is frequently referred to in the Old Testament (see 1 Kings 22:19; Isaiah 6:1; Ezekiel 1:26; Psalm 47:8; Daniel 7:9) and in apocalyptic literature to denote the dominion, sovereignty, and monarchical majesty of God.

John's description, however, keeps the person of God ever hidden. He makes no attempt to portray God's features or form. John focuses on God's splendor and tries to describe and impress this upon his reader: light sparkling, radiating, and scintillating in hues of deep green and blood red – "he that sat was to look upon like a jasper and a sardine stone: and there was a rainbow round about the throne, in sight like unto an emerald." The sardine stone (more popularly known as *sard*) is blood red. The name jasper was given to a number of stones mostly green in color, though there was a red and yellow variety. John combines the colors symbolizing life and death and has them radiating from the one who is the God of both. By this means the mind's eye beholds the unmistakable testimony of divine power – God covered "with light as with a garment" (Psalm 104:2), "dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen, nor can see" (1 Timothy 6:16; cf. John 6:46).

With each new symbolic representation, John deepens our understanding of the majesty and power of God. A rainbow radiates out from and encircles the royal seat, sign of the covenant between God and Noah, suggesting that his judgment does not eclipse his mercy (see Genesis 9:8-17). But John does not give us a prismatic rainbow. It seems significant that emerald, a brilliant color of green, would be used to symbolize the very wellspring of life. The rainbow shimmers of but one hue, green, suggesting that life overarches all God is and all he does (cf. Moses 1:39).

The presence of the rainbow is most important. According to Caird, it suggests that "there is to be no triumph for God's sovereignty at the expense of his mercy, and it warns us not to interpret the visions of disaster that follow as though God had forgotten his promise to Noah." (Revelation, 63.)

4 And round about the throne were four and twenty seats: and upon the seats I saw four and twenty elders sitting, clothed in white raiment; and they had on their heads crowns of gold.

verse 4 “four and twenty elders” Q. What are we to understand by the four and twenty elders, spoken of by John? A. We are to understand that these elders whom John saw, were elders who had been faithful in the work of the ministry and were dead; who belonged to the seven churches, and were then in the paradise of God.

Surrounding the central point of light stands another circle, not vertical like the rainbow, but horizontal. It is composed of twenty-four seats, or more accurately, thrones. Upon these sit, in majesty of their own, Elders. The title John gives them (Greek *presbuteros*, used to designate prominent political and religious leaders) suggests that while mortal they had been men of importance, probably leaders within the congregations.

Each of the elders is “clothed in white raiment,” and each possesses his own crown, throne, harp, and golden bowl of incense (Revelation 4:4; 5:8). The harp and incense are used during their worship of God. The incense represents “the prayers of saints” (Revelation 5:8), and the harps are perhaps played by the elders themselves as they sing the new song (Revelation 5:9-10). The elders praise the Lord: “Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power” (Revelation 4:11), “We give thee thanks, O Lord God Almighty, which art, and wast, and art to come” (Revelation 11:17), and “Amen; Alleluia” (Revelation 19:4). The new song they sing to the Lamb includes the words “thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood” (Revelation 5:9). Four times John witnesses the elders “fall down” to worship God, who “sat on the throne” (Revelation 4:10; 5:14; 11:16; 19:4), and once he observes them as they “fell down before the Lamb” (Revelation 5:8). Each of the elders is a king and priest, who will “reign on the earth” (Revelation 5:10; see also 1:6). One of the elders speaks to John two times, helping him to understand his vision (Revelation 5:5; 7:13).

The twenty-four elders clothed in white sitting with God on his throne are leaders of the seven churches of John’s day who died faithful and are in the “paradise” part of the spirit world awaiting their resurrection and exaltation (D&C 77:5). Actually, the men may have yet been alive as John wrote for what John saw was their future state. These men won the promise God holds out for all: “He will take you up in a cloud, and appoint every man his portion. And he that is a faithful and wise steward shall inherit all things” (D&C 78:21-22).

The number and dress of the Elders suggests that John used them to represent the final reward of all the faithful. The number twelve represents priesthood. Here its multiple is used to suggest fulness. There were twenty-four priestly courses and Levitical orders among the Jews, whose heads were also called Elders (see 1 Chronicles 24:7-18; 25:9-31).

It is suggested that the number “twenty-four” represents total covenant Israel – both old and new covenants combined. According to Hailey, “the number twenty-four suggests a combination of the twelve patriarchs [the kings] of the twelve tribes of Israel and the twelve apostles [the priests], thus representing the redeemed of both covenants now united through Christ.” (Revelation, 169.) The Patriarchs and Apostles will be later linked in the description of the New Jerusalem (see Revelation 21:12, 14), where the names of the apostles are placed on the foundation stones and the names of the patriarchs are inscribed over the gates. Further, there is a certain homogeneity depicted between the Old and the New Covenant for the

redeemed sing the song of Moses and the Lamb (see Revelation 15:3). In John's vision the Elders hold the two patriarchal offices of priest and king. Their white garments represent priestly holiness and their golden crowns and thrones royalty. That they represent all the faithful seems apparent from Revelation 20:6, where those who come forth in the first resurrection are kings and priests.

"And in the midst of the throne were four and twenty seats; and upon the seats I saw four and twenty elders sitting, clothed in white raiment, and they had on their heads crowns like gold."

5 And out of the throne proceeded lightnings and thunderings and voices: and there were seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God.

verse 5 "out of the throne proceeded lightnings and thunderings and voices" In his attempt to capture the power of the rays and currents that flowed from the throne, John adopted the imagery of a great storm. The word translated "voices" (Greek *phn*) in the KJV could well be translated as sounds, tones, or noises. These mighty phenomena symbolize divine power, majesty, and glory that almost overwhelm the beholder. Lightning, thunder, and noises also combine to give another aspect of the authority of God. To Sinai, Jehovah had come in the midst of thunders and lightnings and with the voice of the trump (see Exodus 19:16-19). Thus, they manifest the presence of God. But on later occasions when he manifested himself in this manner, it was in judgment against his enemies (see Revelation 8:5; 11:19; 16:18; Psalm 18:13-14; 144:6). Though God is a God of mercy, he is also a God of judgment. Only when justice is satisfied can mercy claim her own (see Alma 42:22-25).

"seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God" Here again we meet, symbolically, the seven men who presided over the churches. John depicts them as lamps burning before the throne of God, acting, it would appear, as God's witnesses in judgment upon the unfaithful portion of the churches. The burning fires speak of their exalted nature; like God, they dwell in "everlasting burnings in immortal glory." (TPJS, 347.)

"And out of the throne proceeded lightnings and thunderings and voices; and there were seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the seven servants of God."

6 And before the throne there was a sea of glass like unto crystal: and in the midst of the throne, and round about the throne, were four beasts full of eyes before and behind.

verse 6 "a sea of glass like unto crystal" When John the Revelator was taken up to the throne of God in heaven, he saw in front of the throne a sea or lake of glass like rock-crystal. The word sea (Hebrew *ya'm*) refers to both the fresh-water ocean, the source of all life and fertility according to tradition, and to a basin of holy water in the temple. Thus, the "sea of glass" becomes a perfect symbol for the future celestialized earth – the earth "in its sanctified, immortal, and eternal state" (D&C 77:1). In that state, it will be one of the celestial orbs, a

source of the power of life for worlds and a retainer of holiness. The earth is elsewhere described as God's "footstool" (Matthew 5:35) and therefore logically sits "before the throne."

The adjective glass-like (Greek *hualinos*) suggests the idea of clear, calm, shimmering. Crystal has a long association with glory and fire (see Exodus 24:9-10, 17; Ezekiel 1:22, 27). The earth thus becomes in effect a gigantic Urim and Thummim, "whereby all things pertaining to an inferior kingdom, or all kingdoms of a lower order, will be manifest to those who dwell on it" (D&C 130:8-9). D&C 130:6-9 adds further insight: "The angels do not reside on a planet like this earth; but they reside in the presence of God, on a globe like a sea of glass and fire, where all things for their glory are manifest, past, present, and future, and are continually before the Lord. The place where God resides is a great Urim and Thummim. This earth, in its sanctified and immortal state, will be made like unto crystal and will be a Urim and Thummim to the inhabitants who dwell thereon, whereby all things pertaining to an inferior kingdom, or all kingdoms of a lower order, will be manifest to those who dwell on it." Regarding this great Urim and Thummim, Brigham Young explained, "When you wish to know anything, you can look in this earth, and see all the eternities of God" (JD, 8:200).

In a note concerning his activities on February 18, 1843, Joseph Smith further recorded: "While at dinner, I remarked to my family and friends present, that when the earth was sanctified and became like a sea of glass, it would be one great Urim and Thummim, and the saints could look in it and see as they are seen" (HC, 5:279).

The sea of glass is later described as "a sea of glass mingled with fire" (Revelation 15:2), where exalted beings stand with their harps and sing unto God: "Great and marvelous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints. Who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name? for thou only art holy: for all nations shall come and worship before thee; for thy judgments are made manifest" (Revelation 15:3-4).

"round about the throne, were four beasts" Four beasts form the first of the concentric circles around the throne, the Elders the second.

In the book of Revelation, John generally speaks of two types of beasts:

1. He envisions actual living creatures (Greek *zoon*) that exist in heaven (Revelation 4:6-9; 5:6-14; 6:1-7; 7:11; 14:3; 15:7; 19:4). As John saw real Elders, he saw actual beasts. The four beasts in this passage in Revelation are actual beasts that exist in heaven. Some biblical commentators place one of the four beasts at each of the four sides of the throne, where they serve as guardians of the throne. This role is similar to that played by the biblical cherubim (see, for example, Genesis 3:24; Exodus 25:18-22). Expanding this idea, the Prophet Joseph stated "that John's vision [of actual beasts existing in heaven] was very different from Daniel's prophecy – one [Johns vision] referring to things actually existing in heaven; the other [Daniel's vision] being a figure of things which are on earth" (Ehat, *Words*, 189). Like the Elders, the beasts are real but also stand as symbols: "They are figurative [i.e., symbolic] expressions, used by the Revelator, John, in describing [1] heaven, [2] the paradise of God, [3] the happiness of man, and [3 the happiness] of beasts, and of creeping things" (D&C 77:2).

2. Elsewhere in the book of Revelation John speaks of other beasts (Greek *therion*), referring both to wild earthly beasts as well as to symbolic or fantastic beasts (Revelation 6:8; 11:7; 13:1-18; 14:9, 11; 15:2; 16:2, 10, 13; 17:1-18; 19:19-20; 20:4,10). John will later use this term to describe the associates of Satan.

The word *beast* used in this verse could more accurately be translated “living creature.” In fact, the choice of the King James Version translators to use the word beast is particularly unfortunate, since these creatures are living, dynamic beings filled with intelligence and glory.

Joseph Smith suggested that the four beasts “lived on another planet than ours” (Ehat and Cook, *Words of Joseph Smith*, 171). The “four beasts” are actually four animals each representing a particular class or order (see the commentary for verses 7-8). They represent all of God’s animate creations.

This revelation also taught John that animals are among those who enjoy exaltation – the fulness of God’s blessings intended for them in the world to come:

John saw the actual beast in heaven, showing to John that beasts did actually exist there. . .

John saw curious looking beasts in heaven; he saw every creature that was in heaven – all the beasts, fowls and fish in heaven – actually there, giving glory to God. . .

I suppose John saw beings there of a thousand forms, that had been saved from ten thousand times ten thousand earths like this – strange beasts of which we have no conception: all might be seen in heaven. The grand secret was to show John what there was in heaven. John learned that God glorified Himself by saving all that His hands had made, whether beasts, fowls, fishes or men; and He will glorify Himself with them.

Says one, “I cannot believe in the salvation of beasts.” Any man who would tell you that this could not be, would tell you that the revelations are not true. John heard the words of the beasts giving glory to God, and understood them. God who made the beasts could understand every language spoken by them. The four beasts were four of the most noble animals that had filled the measure of their creation, and had been saved from other worlds, because they were perfect: they were like angels in their sphere. We are not told where they came from, and I do not know; but they were seen and heard by John praising and glorifying God (*HC*, 5:343-44).

John informs us that the four beasts are capable of worshipping God (Revelation 4:8; 5:8-10): they invite John to “come and see” the events pertaining to the first four seals (Revelation 6:1-7), and one of the beasts delivers the “seven golden vials full of the wrath of God” to the seven angels (Revelation 15:7). The four beasts may be akin to those spoken of in Isaiah 6:2-3 and Ezekiel 1:5-14.

“full of eyes before and behind” The eyes of the beasts “are a representation of light and knowledge, that is, they are full of knowledge” (*D&C* 77:4).

“And before the throne there was a sea of glass like unto crystal; and in the midst of the throne were the four and twenty elders; and round about the throne, were four beasts full of eyes before and behind.”

7 And the first beast was like a lion, and the second beast like a calf, and the third beast had a face as a man, and the fourth beast was like a flying eagle.

verse 7 The descriptions of the animals with their various faces like a man, an ox, a lion, and an eagle are highly symbolic. John seems to epitomize the orders of beings – mankind, domestic animals, wild animals, and fowl and other living things – through the representation of the creatures' faces.

Ezekiel describes a similar vision (Ezekiel 1:10). One commentator suggests: “The living creatures are symbolic of creation . . . They are what is noblest (lion), strongest (ox), wisest (man), and swiftest (eagle)” (Ford, *Revelation*, 75). Another suggests that the four faces of the beasts correspond to the banners of the “four chief tribes of Israel,” as does still another: “The description of the camp of Israel in Numbers locates the four chief tribes in the following positions: Judah on the east (Numbers 2:3), Reuben on the south (Numbers 2:10), Ephraim on the west (Numbers 2:18), and Dan on the north (Numbers 2:25). The insignias for these tribes were: Judah, lion; Reuben, man; Ephraim, ox; and Dan, eagle” (*Ibid.*, 75).

verses 8-11 Chapter four concludes in a tremendous symphony of worship and praise to God. The act of praise focuses on the life-giving principle in God. The Revelator's frequent reference to the color green has underscored this idea. Because God is the creator of life, mortal and eternal, he is worthy of all honor and glory.

8 And the four beasts had each of them six wings about him; and they were full of eyes within: and they rest not day and night, saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come.

verse 8 Their wings and eyes are also symbolic: Q. What are we to understand by the eyes and wings, which the beasts had? A. Their eyes are a representation of light and knowledge, that is, they are full of knowledge; and their wings are a representation of power, to move, to act, etc. (D&C 77:4).

In the previous verse, John explained that the beasts had eyes both “before and behind.” Now we learn that they have eyes inside as well. Other translations make this clear: “eyes all over, inside and out” (New English Bible), and “eyes all the way around as well as inside” (Jerusalem Bible). The symbolism of “light and knowledge” is reinforced by the presence of eyes inside as well as outside, back as well as front.

“they rest not day and night” It is the unceasing disposition of the four living creatures to worship God at all times.

John portrays these beasts as honoring and reverencing God.

“Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty” Similarly, when Isaiah envisions the heavenly temple, he witnesses the seraphim honoring God with the threefold repetition “Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts” (Isaiah 6:3). The threefold repetition emphasizes the superlative degree: God is the holiest of all creatures in the universe. Holy speaks concerning the wonderful separateness of God, his distinctiveness in perfection and power.

9 And when those beasts give glory and honour and thanks to him that sat on the throne, who liveth for ever and ever,

verse 9 “beasts give glory and honour and thanks” The living creatures worship alongside the twenty-four elders by rendering “both vocal (Revelation 4:8-9; 5:9-10) and instrumental adoration (Revelation 5:8)” of God.

Besides praising God, these living creatures may have another important function. In other apocalyptic literature, such creatures, called cherubim, act as guardians of the throne of God and at times as guides. Cherubs are always associated with God but more especially in two capacities: as his steeds or chariots, as in Ezekiel 1, and as guardian figures keeping safe the way of God, as here in Revelation. They seem to work with John particularly in the capacity of guides. At specific points, they open up portions of the vision for him to view.

“who liveth for ever and ever” Elsewhere in scripture, it is written, “Behold, I am the Lord God Almighty, and Endless is my name, for I am without beginning of days or end of years; and is not this endless?” (Moses 1:3; 7:35).

“And when those beasts give glory and honor and thanks to him that sits on the throne, who liveth forever and ever,”

10 The four and twenty elders fall down before him that sat on the throne, and worship him that liveth for ever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying,

verse 10 “four and twenty elders fall down before him that sat on the throne” The elders prostrate themselves before God in an act of worship and as a posture of exceptional reverence.

“cast their crowns before the throne” The crowns are gifts from God to the twenty-four elders (Revelation 2:10; 4:4). By casting their crowns before the throne, perhaps as a gesture or symbol of humility, the elders submit themselves to God and give homage and honor to him who is the King of kings. In this way, they acknowledge that their authority is delegated from God. The act of casting the crowns before the throne of God symbolizes the full devotion of the Elders to the law of consecration and stewardship. They act as stewards over their domain but consecrate all back to him.

“The four and twenty elders fall down before him that sits on the throne, and worship him that liveth forever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying,”

11 Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created.

verse 11 “for thy pleasure they are and were created” This phrase may be better translated “by thy will, they have their being” (translation by Richard D. Draper). There is another dimension. Not only did God give life – “thou hast created all things” – but “by your will, they have their being.” He, at every moment, sustains all life. John saw streaming from the throne light – green light (Revelation 4:3). It is this “which giveth life to all things, which is the law by which all things are governed, even the power of God who sitteth upon his throne, who is in the bosom of eternity, who is in the midst of all things” (D&C 88:13). Thus, he generates all life everywhere, even in the heavens.

The vision in this chapter marks a transition from John’s present to “things which shall come hereafter.” Thus, the vision has appropriately looked to the future celestial kingdom when God will have fully wrought his designs for this world that will be fully restored into his presence. The vision also serves as the introduction to the rest of the revelation through which John comes to understand how God executes his will.

Revelation Chapter 5 The Book Sealed with Seven Seals

Chapter 5 contains a description of a book sealed with seven seals.

The book represents the history and destiny of the earth. Each seal represents a thousand years of its temporal existence. The book is sealed because no man is worthy to open and read it. The book is taken out of the Father's hand by the Lion and the Lamb – who is Jesus Christ, who is worthy to open the book and who does know the destiny of this world, and in fact is God of this world.

verses 1-5 As the revelation of the eternal throne room continues, John sees on the right hand of God a scroll of unparalleled significance, “written within and on the backside, sealed with seven seals.” John notes that the scroll is full, both on the front and the back, which parallels Ezekiel 2:10. Nothing had been left out, and no more could be added. It was the scroll of destiny. John’s imagery bears a mind-set frequently found in apocalyptic literature that from the beginning God has determined the end of history.

We need to clarify here the difference between the view point of Revelation – that God has ordained future events – and the false idea that individual salvation is predetermined and that therefore there is no individual agency. One of the powers ascribed to God is expressed by the Greek words *prognosis*, and *proginosk*. These words are respectively translated “foreknowledge” and “predestination” and catch the idea not only of knowing something beforehand, but of choosing someone beforehand. Paul understood that God, because of his foreknowledge, had marked or set the course of history through the use of individuals who would bring about his will (see Romans 8-9). That is, God ordered things through the means of sending down spirits when and where he chose. These spirits, without any other manipulation on the part of God, act in ways he knows. Thus, by selection of these souls, God can order the course of history while still maintaining agency.

A major thesis of Revelation is that God set the path of all things and nothing will stray from his design. This idea is symbolized in the scroll where the sovereign will of God has been recorded, where all history has been foretold. Though the idea that God has determined the course of world events may grate on some, it was a source of comfort and hope for those to whom John wrote.

1 And I saw in the right hand of him that sat on the throne a book written within and on the backside, sealed with seven seals.

verse 1 “I saw in the right hand” The book with seven seals is in Heavenly Father’s right hand, which is the hand “associated with righteousness (Psalm 48:10; Isaiah 41:10), power (Exodus 15:6, 12; Psalm 89:13), and covenant making (Isaiah 62:8). With his right hand, the Lord executes justice (3 Nephi 29:4, 9), dispenses the law (Deuteronomy 33:2), and saves his people (Psalm 17:7; 20:6) with his right hand he created the heavens and the earth (Isaiah 48:13). ”

“him that sat on the throne” Again, this is God the Father.

“written within and on the backside” The technical term for this book is an opistographi, which is a scroll that has writing on both sides. Ezekiel’s scroll is similarly described: “I looked, . . . and [the scroll] was written within and without: and there was written therein lamentations, and mourning, and woe” (Ezekiel 2:9-10). The book in God’s right hand overflows with his “revealed will, mysteries, and . . . works” (D&C 77:6).

Orson F. Whitney explained the contents of the book: “The book which John saw represented the real history of the world – what the eye of God has seen, what the recording angel has written; and the seven thousand years, corresponding to the seven seals of the Apocalyptic volume, are as seven great days during which Mother Earth will fulfill her mortal mission, laboring six days and resting upon the seventh, her period of sanctification. These seven days do not include the period of our planet’s creation and preparation as a dwelling place for man. They are limited to Earths ‘temporal existence,’ that is, to Time, considered as distinct from Eternity” (Whitney, *Saturday Night Thoughts*, 11).

“sealed with seven seals” The document is sealed with seven seals. The use of seals was common during ancient times to prevent adulteration of important papers and, more importantly, to prove their authenticity. The verb *sphragiz*, to provide with a seal, carried the idea of assured content and authenticity. But the idea of ownership was important because the owner protected the document. In John’s day, seals carried the mark of the owner who guaranteed the contents and was responsible for carrying out the agreements, if any, contained therein. Out of this grew the association of the seal with the idea of protection and safety. This forms the symbolic base of the use of the term by the early Christians. To be sealed by the Holy Spirit (see Ephesians 1:13) meant more than being provided with a means of identification. It assured that an individual could endure to an eternal reward because, belonging to God, protective power would be given from above. See the commentary on the phrase “the seal of the living God” in Revelation 7:2- 3.

Archaeologists found in Israel a document such as John describes, dating from about the time the apocalypse was written. It was an important legal contract. (Ford, *Revelation*, 92-93.) Its discovery confirmed the belief that John was making symbolic reference to a binding agreement or covenant. One such type of covenant was the Roman will, which also bore seven seals. Such testaments could not be administered until all the seals were broken. Only a person of authority could break the seals and execute the will.

Working from this imagery, in the following verse John describes the heavenly search for the person with power to open the scroll and execute the demands contained therein. In this case the scroll is the primary symbol for the fulness of time, containing as it does the aggregate of God’s will concerning this earth. Unless someone is found who can minister the will of God, the purposes of this earth will fail.

“And I saw in the right hand of him that sits on the throne a book written within and on the back side, sealed with seven seals.”

2 And I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice, Who is worthy to open the book, and to loose the seals thereof?

verse 2 A “strong angel” conducted the search. Just what John meant by the adjective strong is not known. The Greek term is *ischuros* and can be translated as strong, mighty, or powerful. The expression often applies to gods and angels. John’s use of it suggests that there exists rank among the ministers of heaven. Possibly the angel John had in mind was Gabriel, Hebrew for “God is my strength,” but Michael, the commander of the forces of the Lord of Hosts and the angel of top rank, also fits the description. John may have had him in mind. Whatever the case, this mighty being cried forth the fateful question: “Who is worthy to open the book [scroll] and to loose the seals thereof?”

John later witnesses “a mighty angel” performing sacred work (Revelation 10:1; 18:1). The angel proclaims with a loud voice so that all the millions in heaven who are witnessing these events will hear him. The expression “loud voice” is used twelve times in Revelation (5:12; 6:10; 7:2, 10; 8:13; 10:3; 12:10; 14:7, 9, 15; 19:17).

“Who is worthy to open the book” The strong angel asks the hosts of heaven this question. We learn in Revelation 5:3 and 5 that Jesus Christ is the only one in heaven or on earth who is worthy to open the book. Why? Perhaps because Jesus Christ is the only one qualified to bring about the eternal and infinite atonement for the inhabitants of this world, the history of which is contained in the book to be opened.

“And I saw a strong angel, and heard him proclaiming with a loud voice, Who is worthy to open the book, and loose the seals thereof?”

3 And no man in heaven, nor in earth, neither under the earth, was able to open the book, neither to look thereon.

verse 3 He could find no one in the entire cosmos to open the scroll, or even “to look thereon.” To look meant more than just to view. John could clearly see the scroll from where he was. To open and look meant to comprehend, disclose, and execute the contents of the document. No one responded because no one “was able.” The Greek (*dunamai*) suggests that no one had the power or ability in or of himself to do the task, not even the mighty angel who was asking the question.

4 And I wept much, because no man was found worthy to open and to read the book, neither to look thereon.

verse 4 This failure brought an instant and sorrowful response from John: “and I mourned deeply.” The Greek word *klai*, literally “wailing,” denotes deep mourning. Its biblical use frequently refers to the wailing of professional mourners hired for the purpose.

5 And one of the elders saith unto me, Weep not: behold, the Lion of the tribe of Juda, the Root of David, hath prevailed to open the book, and to loose the seven seals thereof.

verse 5 However, John's pathos did not last long. One of the Elders reassured him that "the Lion of the tribe of Juda" and "the Root of David" "hath prevailed" and could therefore open the scroll. Both of these titles come directly out of Jewish messianism. The first echoes Genesis 49:9-10 in which Judah is called a "lion's whelp" and Judah is promised that the scepter of leadership would not depart from him "until Shiloh [i.e., the Messiah] come." In Revelation 5:6 Christ is called "Lamb," but here he is called "Lion," a creature hostile and adverse to the Lamb. Christ as the Lamb portrays one who is submissive, as a sacrificial victim who is "brought as a lamb to the slaughter" (Isaiah 53:7), or one who condescended to descend below all things. Christ as the Lion depicts one who has power over all creatures and is a majestic, fearless king (as a lion is "king of the beasts") who possesses great strength. In this context, the title is especially appropriate, because just as a lion prevails over other creatures, so Christ "prevailed to open the book" with seven seals (or, according to RSV, Christ "has conquered, so that he can open the scroll and its seven seals").

The second title suggests Isaiah 11:1, which refers to the root of Jesse, the future ideal king of David's line, who was to usher in the period of peace.

Jesus is a member "of the tribe of Juda" whose emblem is the lion (Genesis 49:9). Paul stated that Jesus "sprang out of Juda" (Hebrews 7:14), and Christ himself declared, "I am the root and the offspring of David" (Revelation 22:16). Christ as the "Root" provides spiritual water, nourishment, and life to his people (Isaiah 11:1, 10; 53:2; John 15:1-7).

verses 6-14 The Savior executes the will.

6 And I beheld, and, lo, in the midst of the throne and of the four beasts, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent forth into all the earth.

verse 6 "in the midst of the throne . . . stood a Lamb as it had been slain" The elder instructs John to "weep not" and to "behold the Lion," but unexpectedly John sees a Lamb that possesses the marks of one who was slain. Through this powerful symbol, Revelation underscores a central theme of the New Testament: victory through sacrifice. The Lamb prevails (see John 16:33) not by sovereign might but by sacrifice grounded in love. He is worthy because he purchases God's people with his own blood. John sees Christ who, though slain for the sins of the world, now stands in great majesty as a lion stands as the king of all creatures. Christ stands now in the inner circle of the multitudes in heaven. He is standing near his Father's throne, which is surrounded by the four beasts and the twenty-four elders.

Christ is called Lamb twenty-seven times in Revelation. Elsewhere the prophets write of the Lamb: "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world" (John 1:29); "Christ our passover is sacrificed for us" (1 Corinthians 5:7); and "ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold . . . but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot" (1 Peter 1:18-19).

The expression “as it had been slain” indicates that the Lamb, although risen from the dead and possessing eternal life, in this vision to John carried the marks of his sacrifice in his hands, feet, and side. The Book of Mormon testifies that the Nephite saints at the temple in Bountiful “went forth, and thrust their hands into his side, and did feel the prints of the nails in his hands and in his feet; and this they did do, going forth one by one until they had all gone forth, and did see with their eyes and did feel with their hands, and did know of a surety and did bear record, that it was he, of whom it was written by the prophets, that should come” (3 Nephi 11:15; see also John 20:25, 27).

“And I beheld, and, lo, in the midst of the throne and of the four beasts, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as it had been slain, having twelve horns and twelve eyes, which are the twelve servants of God, sent forth into all the earth.”

“having twelve horns and twelve eyes, which are the twelve servants of God” The Lamb’s twelve horns and twelve eyes are figurative, representing the twelve Apostles, who are empowered by the Lamb to administer his gospel throughout the earth. The horns represent power (1 Samuel 2:10; Jeremiah 48:25; Psalm 75:10) the “eyes” may refer to the powers of seership held by apostles.

“sent forth into all the earth” The Greek word *apostell* is translated “sent forth,” and from this the noun *apostolos*, or apostle,” is derived – thus, “one sent forth.”

7 And he came and took the book out of the right hand of him that sat upon the throne.

verse 7 “he came and took the book” God remains seated on the throne as Jesus Christ comes and takes the book from his right hand.

8 And when he had taken the book, the four beasts and four and twenty elders fell down before the Lamb, having every one of them harps, and golden vials full of odours, which are the prayers of saints.

verse 8 “when he had taken the book” The moment that Christ takes the book from God, the beasts and elders, with their harps and golden bowls, fall down to worship Christ.

“four beasts and four and twenty elders fell down before the Lamb” Previously the beasts and elders had fallen down to worship God the Father (Revelation 4:10); now they prostrate themselves before Jesus Christ. Three more times they will fall down before the Father (Revelation 5:14; 11:16; 19:4).

“having every one of them harps” Biblical scholars Bratcher and Hatton explain: “This seems to say that every one of the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders had a harp and golden bowls filled with incense, although some would restrict it to the twenty-four elders” (Handbook on the Revelation of John, 102). Worship in heaven evidently includes music from harps. In this verse, there are twenty-eight harps; in Revelation 14:1-3 it appears that each of the 144,000 high priests has a harp; and in Revelation 15:2 all exalted saints possess “harps of God.”

“golden vials full of odours” A better translation is “golden bowls full of incense.” (New International Version.) These bowls of incense recall those used during the ancient Israelite temple service by priestly officiants (1 Kings 7:50).

John informs us that the incense represents “the prayers of the saints” (see also Psalm 141:2). As the priestly ministrants offered incense upon the altar in the earthly temple twice daily, the saints prayed in the courtyard of the temple (Luke 1:10). The twenty-four elders present the prayers, represented by incense, to God. Later in Revelation we read: “And another angel came and stood at the altar, having a golden censer; and there was given unto him much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne. And the smoke of the incense, which came with the prayers of the saints, ascended up before God out of the angel’s hand” (Revelation 8:3-4). An apocryphal source adds, “I am Raphael, one of the seven holy angels, who present the prayers of the saints, and who go in and out before the glory of the Holy One” (Tobit 12:15; see also 3 Baruch 11).

9 And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation;

verse 9 “they sung a new song” The words of this “new song,” sung by the twenty-four elders and the four beasts, are addressed to Jesus (note the second-person pronouns thou and thy). The song emphasizes Christ’s atoning sacrifice (“thou wast slain,” “by thy blood”) and the resultant benefits for humankind (“hast redeemed us,” “hast made us . . . kings and priests”). Compare also D&C 88:98-102, which contains the words to another “new song.”

A new song is necessary because the death of the Lamb established a new covenant. This covenant is not new merely in point of time, but more important, it is new and distinctive in its superiority to the old one.

“Thou art worthy to take the book” The verse explains why Jesus is worthy to take the book from God’s right hand: he wrought the eternal and infinite atonement, a fact expressed as “thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood.”

“for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood” These words are the foundation of the song, because Christ’s sacrifice made him worthy to take the book and will allow the saints to become kings and priests and reign on the earth. Mormon taught that the redeemed will “dwell in the presence of God in his kingdom, to sing ceaseless praises with the choirs above, unto the Father, and unto the Son, and unto the Holy Ghost” (Mormon 7:7).

“every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation” John uses this phraseology in Revelation seven times to represent a great host of people from all lands and nations as well as every language and extended family. Five times the phrase refers to peoples upon the earth (Revelation 10:11; 11:9; 13:7; 14:6; 17:15), and twice it refers to redeemed saints who dwell in heaven (Revelation 5:9; 7:9). It is clear that the exalted souls will include individuals

from all lands, peoples, and languages. Truly, as Nephi taught, “there is one God and one Shepherd over all the earth” (1 Nephi 13:41).

10 And hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth.

verse 10 “made us unto our God Kings and priests” Through his atonement Jesus Christ “made us . . . kings and priests;” individuals cannot become kings and priests on their own but become such in God’s temples. That God’s kings and priests are from “every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation” suggests that the gospel will be preached to all peoples throughout the world and those who accept the gospel will worship in the temples of the Lord that are now being established throughout the earth.

“we shall reign on the earth” Our earth will become a celestial kingdom, and exalted saints who have become kings and queens unto God will reign there. A modern revelation states: “The poor and the meek of the earth shall inherit it. Therefore, it must needs be sanctified from all unrighteousness, that it may be prepared for the celestial glory; for after it hath filled the measure of its creation, it shall be crowned with glory, even with the presence of God the Father” (D&C 88:17-19).

11 And I beheld, and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne and the beasts and the elders: and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, 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 strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing.

verses 11-12 “ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands” One hundred million (ten thousand times ten thousand equals one hundred million), and “thousands of thousands” of angels near God’s throne revere the Lamb. The number may be taken literally, or it may signify a great, indefinite number. In any case, John witnesses a great number of angels praising the Lamb and singing a second anthem. It too proclaims the Lamb’s worthiness to open the book.

“to receive power / riches / wisdom / strength / honour / glory / blessing” “The angels repeat three of the elders’ terms of praise: glory, honor, and power, and add wealth, wisdom, might, and blessing. The seven terms symbolize the fulness of the praise” (Metzger, *Breaking the Code*, 54).

13 And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever.

verse 13 No sooner do the strains of the second hymn die than the climax begins, uniting in one grand closing hymn all creation, the very cosmos. Nature itself – all creatures of

the earth and sea – praise God and the Lamb, “saying, Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever.” One is reminded of a passage in modern revelation: “Let the mountains shout for joy, and all ye valleys cry aloud; and all ye seas and dry lands tell the wonders of your Eternal King! And ye rivers, and brooks, and rills, flow down with gladness. Let the woods and all the trees of the field praise the Lord; and ye solid rocks weep for joy! And let the sun, moon, and the morning stars sing together, and let all the sons of God shout for joy! And let the eternal creations declare his name forever and ever!” (D&C 128:23).

Joseph Smith said: “Revelation 5:13 proves that John saw beasts in heaven and heard them speak praise to God. [I] do not know what language they speak.” (Ehat and Cook, Words of Joseph Smith, 190.)

“unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb” The sacred praise of every creature is directed to God the Father, who sits upon his throne, and to Jesus Christ.

14 And the four beasts said, Amen. And the four and twenty elders fell down and worshipped him that liveth for ever and ever.

verse 14 “four beasts said, Amen” After the elders have sung a new song (Revelation 5:9-10); after the angels have praised the Lamb (Revelation 5:12), and after every creature has glorified God and the Lamb, the four beasts then close these threefold praises by saying “Amen.”

“four and twenty elders fell down and worshipped him that liveth for ever and ever” This is the third of five occasions in which the elders fall down and worship Deity (Revelation 4:10; 5:8; 11:16; 19:4).

The point of the chapter is that the Lamb was able to do what no one else could: execute the will of the Father. The vision specifies why the Lamb was able to open the book: he was slain. He, the Son of God, gave himself as sacrifice to appease the demands of justice and allow the twin powers of mercy and grace to flow. Victory grew out of death, redemption out of blood. This allowed the will of the Father to operate.

Revelation Chapter 6

As the songs of adoration cease, the Lamb begins the task only he can do. One by one he breaks or opens the seven seals on the scroll of destiny. As he does so, John is allowed to behold in vision the dramatic events associated with each seal. Each seal symbolizes a thousand years of earth's history: "The first seal contains the things of the first thousand years, and the second also of the second thousand years, and so on until the seventh" (D&C 77:7).

In verses 1-8, John describes the Lamb's opening of the first four seals, which contain brief information about the first four thousand years of the earth's "temporal existence" (D&C 77:6). Comparatively little attention is given in Revelation to these and the fifth seal (verses 9-11), for only eleven verses are dedicated to them. One commentator points out that John's entire revelation "from beginning to end takes 317 verses, and yet John spends only eleven verses (or about 3.5 percent) on the first five thousand years of history (Lund, "Seeing the Book of Revelation," 51).

At the opening of each seal, one of the four beasts invites John to "come and see." John responds with "and I saw," "and I beheld," "and I looked," followed by a brief description of what he sees: four horses and their riders. Each horse is a different color (white, red, black, and pale), and each is interpreted symbolically. Three of the four horsemen possess objects: the first has a bow and a crown, the second a sword, and the third a pair of balances. The fourth horseman does not possess an object, but he is named "Death" (the first three horsemen are not named). Each of the four horses, horsemen, and the objects or name attached to them tells us something about the thousand years that each represents.

Beyond what is mentioned in Revelation 6:1-8, we know very little about the four horsemen. Are they destroying angels from God executing his divine plan to destroy the wicked, or are they evil men from hell who are asserting their agency to kill and cause wars and famines upon the earth? Are the four horsemen related to the four destroying angels described in Revelation 7? Do they correspond in some manner with the four horses of Zechariah 1:8-11; 6:2? Do the four horsemen and their horses pertain only to the first four thousand years, or are they also types of things to come?

The number four has symbolic importance in Revelation, where we read about the four living creatures (Revelation 4:6, 8; 5:6, 8,14), the four horses, and the four horsemen who correspond with the first four seals (announced by the four beasts; Revelation 6:1-8), the "four angels standing on the four corners of the earth, holding the four winds of the earth" (Revelation 7:1), and the "four quarters of the earth" (Revelation 20:8).

The first seals are linked together into a unified group of four (four seals, four horses, four horsemen, four statements from four beasts), while the final three seals belong to a second group. This pattern of one group of four and one group of three parallels that pattern set forth for the seven trumpets (Revelation 8-9) and the seven vials (Revelation 16).

According to one scholar, the number four "has its origin in the orientation to four sides which, as before, behind and to right and left, are suggested by man's physical constitution.

The four corners of heaven or the world embrace the whole of man's horizon." (Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, 8:128, s.v. "four;" see also Bullinger, Number in Scripture, 123-34.) The following table sets forth the structure of Revelation 6:1-8.

Four Horses	White (6:1-2)	Red (6:3-4)	Black (6:5-6)	Pale (6:7-8)
Lamb opens a seal	Lamb opened one of the seals	when he had opened the second seal	when he had opened the third seal	when he had opened the fourth seal
four beasts say	noise of thunder . . . saying	I heard the second beast say	I heard the third beast say	I heard the voice of the fourth beast say
Words of the four beasts	Come and see	Come and see	Come and see	Come and see
John beholds	And I saw		And I beheld	And I looked
Objects or description of the four horsemen	he that sat on him had a bow; and a crown was given unto him	there was given unto him a great sword	he that sat on him had a pair of balances in his hand	his name that sat on him was Death
Significance of the four horsemen	he went forth conquering, and to conquer	power was given to him that sat thereon to take peace from the earth and that they should kill one another	a measure of wheat for a penny, and three measures of barley for a penny; and see thou hurt not the oil and the wine	Hell followed with him. And power was given unto them over the fourth part of the earth to kill with sword, and with hunger and with death, and with the beasts of the earth

Apparently, John is seeing in vision an actual event which will happen in the future, that is the opening of the seven seals. According to the Doctrine and Covenants, the seals will be opened in connection with the Second Coming:

Then shall the first angel again sound his trump in the ears of all living, and reveal the secret acts of men, and the mighty works of God in the first thousand years. And then shall the second angel sound his trump, and reveal the secret acts of men, and the thoughts and intents of their hearts, and the mighty works of God in the second thousand years – and so on, until the seventh angel shall sound his trump; and he shall stand forth upon the land and upon the sea, and swear in the name of him who sitteth upon the throne, that there shall be time no longer; and Satan shall be bound (88:108-110).

The breaking of the seals does not actually open any portion of the scroll or book. The scroll will not open until the seventh seal breaks. All must wait until then for the will of God to be fully executed. Before that day, evil will rule. But judgment, fully fueled by the indignation and wrath of God, will be executed when the seventh seal is broken.

John uses horses and their riders to symbolize the events of the first four thousand years. These are the “four horses of the Apocalypse” (white, red, black, and pale). The traditional symbolic significance of these horses is death, hell, pestilence, and famine. It seems likely that they have additional significance which will be discussed in the verse commentary below.

The fifth seal represents John’s own time, and he sees the persecution of his contemporary fellow Christians – “them that were slain for the word of God, and for their testimony which they held.” On opening the sixth seal, which represents the period of time in which we are now living, he sees some of the “signs of the times.”

1 And I saw when the Lamb opened one of the seals, and I heard, as it were the noise of thunder, one of the four beasts saying, Come and see.

verse 1 “the Lamb opened one of the seals” The Lamb, who now has the sealed book in his own hand, opens the first seal, which “contains the revealed will, mysteries, and the works of God” (D&C 77:6) for the first one thousand years of the earth’s temporal existence. The time frame here, according to one estimate, is approximately 4000 to 3000 BC. Elder Orson F. Whitney wrote, “According to received chronology – admittedly imperfect, yet approximately correct – four thousand years, or four of the seven great days given to this planet as the period of its ‘temporal existence,’ had passed before Christ was crucified; while nearly two thousand years have gone by since” (Whitney, *Saturday Night Thoughts*, 12; see also McConkie, *Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, 3:476; “Book of Revelation Overview,” 50-53).

By virtue of his supreme, divine, and infinite sacrifice, Jesus Christ is worthy to open the seals. Only he can open the view of the earth’s temporal existence that is the history of humankind upon the earth.

“noise of thunder” This sound probably denotes the powerful voice of the beast. Heavenly voices, including that of the Father (John 12:29), are often likened to thunder (Revelation 10:3; 14:2; 19:6).

“one of the four beasts . . . saying, Come and see” The beast guides John; this may be the first beast, which “was like a lion” (Revelation 4:7).

“And I saw when the Lamb opened one of the seals, one of the four beasts, and I heard, as it were, the noise of thunder, saying, Come and see.”

2 And I saw, and behold a white horse; and he that sat on him had a bow; and a crown was given unto him; and he went forth conquering; and to conquer.

verse 2 “white horse . . . he that sat on him had a bow” The first vision opens and the first rider appears on a white horse. The color suggests two things: purity and victory or conquest. It was the Near Eastern custom for conquerors to ride white horses in their triumphs. The color reflects the nature of the horseman. He is one of God's own, a prophet of power and light. He carries the bow, a symbol of war, suggesting a period in which righteousness was on the offensive. The rider receives “a crown,” not the sign of political rule (Greek *diadma*) but of victory (Greek *stephanos*, the laurel crown won through athletic achievement). Thus, victory goes to the one sitting on the white horse who conquers and receives commission to continue his conquests.

The use of the passive voice, “a crown was given unto him” is instructive. John uses this voice continuously throughout Revelation. By doing so, he indicates that an unseen power operates behind history, shaping it, molding it, making it conform to a specific will. That power is God, as John has already indicated, working through the Lamb.

Elder Bruce R. McConkie identifies the rider of the “white horse” as Enoch. The first thousand years of earth's history saw the beginning of wickedness, apostasy, and war but saw also what could be considered the greatest triumph for good yet achieved. During this period, Enoch and his people laid the foundations of Zion, and righteousness truly was on the offensive. Note “that what John saw was not the establishment of Zion and its removal to heavenly spheres, but the unparalleled wars in which Enoch, as general over the armies of the saints, ‘went forth conquering and to conquer’” (McConkie, *Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, 3:477).

They waged battles in ways never seen before or after. The primary weapons of the righteous were faith and the word of God: “So great was the faith of Enoch that he led the people of God, and their enemies came to battle against them; and he spake the word of the Lord, and the earth trembled, and the mountains fled, even according to his command; and the rivers of water were turned out of their course” (Moses 7:13). Having subdued earthly enemies, the people of Zion subdued earthly appetites, passions, sickness and pain, and eventually even death. Truly, righteous conquest was the highlight of the era.

3 And when he had opened the second seal, I heard the second beast say, Come and see.

verse 3 “when he had opened the second seal” John sees Christ open the second seal, which “contains the revealed will, mysteries, and the works of God” (D&C 77:6), for the second thousand years of the earth's temporal existence. The time frame here, according to one estimate, is approximately 3000 to 2000 BC.

The beast, which may be the second beast identified earlier that was “like a calf” (Revelation 4:7).

4 And there went out another horse that was red; and power was given to him that sat thereon to take peace from the earth, and that they should kill one another; and there was given unto him a great sword.

verses 3-4 “there went out another horse that was red” The time represented by the second seal was an era of war and bloodshed. John describes the horse as *purros* in color. The word means literally red as fire (the dragon in chapter twelve has the same color). The color suggests death by violent means, usually by bloodshed. But it also represents sin, especially the sin that moves against humanity. The horse, according to prophetic symbolism, represents a means of transport in war (Job 39:19-24). The rider of the horse carries a large, or “great sword,” a symbol of war (3 Nephi 2:19; D&C 45:33) and a weapon designed expressly to take human lives.

Of those living early in the second millennium, the Lord said:

For these many generations, ever since the day that I created them, have they gone astray, and have denied me, and have sought their own counsels in the dark; and in their own abominations have they devised murder, and have not kept the commandments, which I gave unto their father, Adam. Wherefore, they have foresworn themselves, and, by their oaths, they have brought upon themselves death; and a hell I have prepared for them, if they repent not (Moses 6:28-29).

Enoch saw the result. To him the Lord said, “Look, and I will show unto thee the world for the space of many generations” (Moses 7:4). Enoch describes what happened:

I beheld in the valley of Shum, and lo, a great people which dwelt in tents, which were the people of Shum. And again the Lord said unto me: Look; and I looked towards the north, and I beheld the people of Canaan, which dwelt in tents. And the Lord said unto me: Prophesy; and I prophesied, saying: Behold the people of Canaan, which are numerous, shall go forth in battle array against the people of Shum, and shall slay them that they shall utterly be destroyed (Moses 7:5-7).

The second millennium saw the advent of organized warfare with the objective of genocide. Clearly, the red horse galloped supreme.

In addition, the rider is empowered to “take peace from the earth, and that they should kill one another” (Revelation 6:4). John does not identify the rider; it is possible that the rider symbolizes all wicked and bloodthirsty men who murder and make war. The rider could also easily be the devil himself, reigning supreme during this period of gross wickedness.

Moses identifies this era as a time when “the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. . . The earth also was corrupt before God, and the earth was filled with violence. And God looked upon the earth, and, behold, it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted his way upon the earth. And God said unto Noah, The end of all flesh is come before me; for the earth is filled with violence through them; and, behold, I will destroy them with the earth. Make thee an ark” (Genesis 6:5,

11-14). So great was the violence and wickedness during the period of this seal that God destroyed all flesh, except the eight souls who were aboard the ark.

“to take peace from the earth” A similar phrase is used in a modern revelation: “The day speedily cometh; the hour is not yet, but is nigh at hand, when peace shall be taken from the earth, and the devil shall have power over his own dominion” (D&C 1:35; emphasis added).

5 And when he had opened the third seal, I heard the third beast say, Come and see. And I beheld, and lo a black horse; and he that sat on him had a pair of balances in his hand.

verse 5 “when he had opened the third seal” John witnesses Christ open the third seal, which “contains the revealed will, mysteries, and the works of God” (D&C 77:6), for the third thousand years of the earth’s temporal existence. The time frame here, according to one estimate, is approximately 2000 to 1000 BC (Whitney, *Saturday Night Thoughts*, 12; McConkie, *Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, 3:479).

“I heard the third beast say, Come and see” The beast, which may be the third beast identified earlier who “had a face as a man” (Revelation 4:7), guides John.

“black horse” The time represented by the third seal was an era of great famine. John sees a black horse, black being the color of extreme hunger and famine (Lamentations 4:8-9). In the hand of the rider he sees a pair of balances, which are used to measure the food during the famine, a practice known from earlier times (Leviticus 26:26). For instance, on one occasion the Lord prophesied through Ezekiel that he would cause a famine by [“break[ing] the staff of bread in Jerusalem;” the Jerusalemites, he explained, would “eat bread by weight, and with care; and they shall drink water by measure” (Ezekiel 4:16)].

During this thousand-year time span, Abraham records, “a famine prevailed throughout all the land of Chaldea, and my father was sorely tormented because of the famine. . . Now the Lord God caused the famine to wax sore in the land of Ur, insomuch that Haran, my brother, died” (Abraham 1:30; 2:1). As Abraham and Sarai traveled through the land, he stopped and “built an altar in the land of Jershon, and made an offering unto the Lord, and prayed that the famine might be turned away from my father’s house, that they might not perish. . . And I, Abraham, concluded to go down into Egypt, to sojourn there, for the famine became very grievous” (Abraham 2:17, 21).

We recall that Joseph, the great-grandson of Abraham, interpreted Pharaoh’s dream of a famine that would last seven years and would “consume the land” (Genesis 41:30). The famine existed in Egypt as well as other lands. Genesis 41 relates: “And the famine was over all the face of the face of the earth . . . and the famine waxed sore in the land of Egypt. And all countries came into Egypt to Joseph for to buy corn; because that the famine was so sore in all lands” (Genesis 41:56-57). Jacob, Joseph’s father, also experienced the famine while dwelling in Canaan, and he sent ten of his sons to Egypt to buy corn (Genesis 42:1-5).

6 And I heard a voice in the midst of the four beasts say, A measure of wheat for a penny, and three measures of barley for a penny; and hurt not thou the oil and the wine.

verse 6 “I heard a voice in the midst of the four beasts” Again, one of the “beasts” interprets for John.

“A measure of wheat [flour] for a penny, and three measures of barley [meal] for a penny.” A measure, Greek *choinix*, was equal to about a U.S. quart. The silver “penny” or denarius was the daily wage for a common laborer (see Matthew 20:2). Ordinarily, a penny or denarius would buy between ten and sixteen quarts of wheat flour or twice that of barley meal. Here, under famine conditions, a day’s work supplied only enough flour to keep a person alive for one day, or enough meal for three.

“and hurt not thou the oil and the wine” The warning against hurting the oil and the wine follows John’s principle of showing that God is in charge. Limits are set on how far the famine could go. It is unlikely that only wine and oil are meant. The terms were used as a standing formula designating the nutritive products of the earth in both times of plenty and want (see, e.g., Deuteronomy 7:13; 11:14; 28:51; 2 Chronicles 32:28; Nehemiah 5:11; Hosea 2:8; Joel 2:19). The point is that God controlled the breadth of the famine. Though much could be taken, the world would not succumb to the dearth. Further, the Lord had prepared a way of escape for his faithful people.

There is an aspect of this that is interesting. In the Temple Scroll (one of the Qumran scrolls), two previously unknown Jewish feasts are mentioned: the Feast of Oil and the Feast of New Wine. Both products were closely associated with the burnt offering of the temple in which they acted as sacrificial elements along with the animal. They were stored in a special place and handled only by the priests. Josephus described the horror stemming from sacrilege as the temple was plundered by troops who drew every drop of sacred wine and oil and anointed themselves and drank freely. He concluded this alone warranted the destruction of Jerusalem. John may have been suggesting that the temple would survive the famine – “hurt not thou the oil and the wine.”

7 And when he had opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth beast say, Come and see.

verse 7 “when he had opened the fourth seal” John sees Christ open the fourth seal, which “contains the revealed will, mysteries, and the works of God” (D&C 77:6) for the fourth thousand years of the earth’s temporal existence. The time frame here, according to one estimate, is approximately 1000 B.C. to AD 1.

“I heard the voice of the fourth beast say, Come and see” The beast, perhaps the fourth beast identified earlier that “was like a flying eagle” (Revelation 4:7), guides John.

8 And I looked, and behold a pale horse; and his name that sat on him was Death, and Hell followed with him. And power was given unto them over the fourth part of the

earth, to kill with sword, and with hunger, and with death, and with the beasts of the earth.

verse 8 “pale horse” The color described here (Greek, *chlros*) reminds us of a corpse and of death. The rider’s name is Death, and one named Hell follows after him to receive the dead. We are not told how Hell travels, whether by horse or on foot. John informs us that Death will kill one-fourth of earth’s inhabitants by sword, famine, plague, and wild beasts. Ezekiel calls these four ways to die (sword, famine, plague, and wild beasts) the “four sore judgments” (Ezekiel 14:21) that God sends upon the wicked.

Certainly, the millennium of the fourth seal was an era of numerous wars. In the biblical world alone we are aware of wars between the Northern Kingdom of Israel and the Southern Kingdom of Judah; there were also wars among other Near Eastern groups, including the Assyrians, Persians, Babylonians, Syrians, and Egyptians.

“Hell followed with him” The horseman named Death and his companion Hell (signifying spirit prison) are given power over a quarter of the people of earth. The verse in Revelation recalls a prophecy of Isaiah: “Hell hath enlarged herself, and opened her mouth without measure: and their glory, and their multitude, and their pomp, and he that rejoiceth, shall descend into it” (Isaiah 5:14).

“power was given unto them over the fourth part of the earth” During the time period of the fourth seal Death (followed by Hell) destroys one quarter of the earth’s inhabitants.

verses 9-11 At the opening of the fifth seal, John sees individuals who were slain because of their testimonies of Christ. After listening to their prayers offered unto God “with a loud voice,” he then witnesses that each of the martyrs is given the white robes of salvation.

9 And when he had opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held;

verse 9 “when he had opened the fifth seal” The Lamb opens the fifth seal, which “contains the revealed will, mysteries, and the works of God” (D&C 77:6), for the fifth thousand years of the earth’s temporal existence. The time frame here, according to one estimate, is approximately AD 1 to 1000.

At the breaking of the fifth seal, no horse thunders forth. Instead the Revelator sees the fulfillment of a prophecy given for his own day. The fifth seal represents John’s era, the era in which the Son of God was born, ministered, and atoned for all mankind. It was the era during which the new covenant was established and the keys of resurrection were first manifested. Interestingly, John depicts none of these things. The event on which the vision focuses is the deliberate destruction of those who stood as witnesses of Jesus Christ.

“under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony” John sees those who have suffered or would suffer martyrdom for the sake of Christ and his gospel, such as Antipas of Pergamos (Revelation 2:13). He sees the souls of

the righteous under the altar of heaven. The image of the altar suggests sacrifice. The direct association of these saints with the altar implies that their lives had been given in sacrifice because of their loyalty to God. Their position under the altar suggests that they were martyrs, their souls resting there only because their lives had been offered, as it were, upon it. During sacrificial rites, the blood of the victim, symbolic of its life, was poured out at the altar's base, seeping beneath it (see Leviticus 4:7; 17:11). John's view of the life, or soul, of the martyr as under the altar probably echoes this practice.

John may have seen the martyrs Joseph Smith and Hyrum Smith under the altar. John Taylor wrote that the "innocent blood" of Joseph and Hyrum, "with the innocent blood of all the martyrs under the altar that John saw, will cry unto the Lord of Hosts till he avenges that blood on the earth" (D&C 135:7).

Elder McConkie wrote:

Martyrs of religion are found in every age in which there have been both righteous and wicked people on earth. Christ himself was a martyr who voluntarily laid down his life, according to the Father's plan, that immortality and eternal life might become available for his brethren (John 10:10-18). 'Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends' (John 15:13). . . True martyrs of religion receive eternal life. 'Whoso layeth down his life in my cause, for my name's sake, shall find it again, even life eternal' (D&C 98:13; Mark 8:35; John 12:25; Rev. 2:10). But the mere laying down of one's life standing alone is not gospel martyrdom. Both the righteous and the wicked have and do sacrifice their lives for friends or country without gaining thereby any hope or assurance of exaltation. Those on the other hand who have the truth and who could escape death by denying it are the martyrs who shall receive a martyr's reward – eternal life. When they seal their testimony with their blood, they are honored and their murderers are condemned (D&C 136:39) (*Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, 483-84).

John already knew the way his dispensation would end. The Lord had made this abundantly clear. He told his disciples that after he departed, "then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you: and ye shall be hated of all nations for my name's sake. And then shall many be offended, and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another" (Matthew 24:9-10). John viewed the terrible fulfillment of that dire prophecy. Those men and women he saw in vision who had died for the Savior's sake were in reality yet giving up their lives. The martyrs were slain for two reasons: for preaching the word of God and for their testimonies of Christ. John was exiled to the Isle of Patmos for identical reasons.

10 And they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?

verse 10 "they cried with a loud voice" The prayer of the martyrs is loud because of their great number and their anguish (Revelation 5:12).

“how long . . . dost thou not judge and avenge our blood” From the martyrdom of Abel, whose “blood crieth unto [God] from the ground” (Genesis 4:10; Luke 11:50-51), to the deaths of Joseph and Hyrum Smith, whose “innocent blood” spilled “on the floor of Carthage jail” (D&C 135:7), martyrs for Jesus Christ cry out to God, “How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?” Similarly, the psalmist prayed, “Lord, how long shall the wicked, how long shall the wicked triumph?” (Psalm 94:3), and Habakkuk cried, “O Lord, how long shall I cry, and thou wilt not hear!” (Habakkuk 1:2). But Jesus assures us, “Shall not God avenge his own elect, which cry day and night unto him, though he bear long with men?” (JST Luke 18:7). The martyrs will not stop petitioning the Lord “till he avenges that blood on the earth” (D&C 135:7).

When will God “judge and avenge” the innocent blood of the martyrs? That judgment and avenging may begin when he sends the judgments of the seven trumpets and seven bowls, as set forth in Revelation.

11 And white robes were given unto every one of them; and it was said unto them, that they should rest yet for a little season, until their fellow servants also and their brethren, that should be killed as they were, should be fulfilled.

verse 11 “white robes were given unto every one of them” A white robe is the dress of the glorified Christ (3 Nephi 11:8; see also “robe of righteousness,” 2 Nephi 4:33), heavenly messengers (1 Nephi 8:5; 14:19; JS-H 1:32), and exalted saints (Revelation 3:4-5; 7:9; 2 Nephi 9:14; D&C 109:76). Here the martyrs are given white robes, signifying that they have made the atonement effective in their lives and have “washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb” (Revelation 7:14). Jesus taught how one should wash his robes: “And no unclean thing can enter into his kingdom; therefore nothing entereth into his rest save it be those who have washed their garments in my blood, because of their faith, and the repentance of all their sins, and their faithfulness unto the end” (3 Nephi 27:19; 1 Nephi 12:10).

Garments and robes are images often used to symbolize the inner state of the persons wearing them (Mormon 9:35; Ether 13:10). For example, the wearing of white robes represents an individual becoming an immortal, celestial person with a celestial body. Hence, the white robes identified in this passage refer to the celestial bodies of glory and light possessed by the martyrs.

“rest yet for a little season” The martyrs are instructed to wait until after the martyrdom of other saints. The prophet Joseph Smith, his brother Hyrum, and the two prophets of Revelation 11 may be included in this group of individuals who would “be killed as they were.” The martyrs were to rest until the allotted number of those who were to join them in martyrdom was complete.

verses 12-17 This section sets forth seven signs of the times that will occur after the opening of the sixth seal but before the second coming of the Lord. The seven signs are the

earthquake, the darkened sun, the blood-red moon, falling stars, the heavens opening as a scroll, the movement of mountains and islands, and fear coming upon humanity. Many passages of scripture parallel this section.

These signs of the times warn the earth's inhabitants that the end of the earth is near. They are designed, in part, to encourage the wicked to repent of their sins. In fact, many will misinterpret these signs, believing that the time of the second coming has actually arrived. They will say, "The great day of his wrath is come, and who shall be able to stand?" (Revelation 6:17). But the scriptures inform us that Jesus will not make his great appearance until sometime after the opening of the seventh seal (D&C 77:12-13).

These signs are imminent. On 27 December 1832, the Lord revealed, "Not many days hence and the earth shall tremble and reel to and fro as a drunken man; and the sun shall hide his face, and shall refuse to give light; and the moon shall be bathed in blood; and the stars shall become exceedingly angry, and shall cast themselves down as a fig that falleth from off a fig-tree" (D&C 88:87).

12 And I beheld when he had opened the sixth seal, and, lo, there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became as blood;

verse 12 "he . . . opened the sixth seal" Christ opens the sixth seal, which "contains the revealed will, mysteries, and the works of God" (D&C 77:6), for the sixth thousand years of the earth's temporal existence. The time frame here is approximately AD 1000 to 2000.

"there was a great earthquake" Earthquakes, along with other catastrophic events, signify "great and terrible judgments of the Lord" (1 Nephi 12:4-5; Isaiah 29:6; Ezekiel 38:19-20). Before the second coming, God sends earthquakes to those who do not believe in Jesus Christ, for "they that believe not in him [the Messiah] shall be destroyed, both by fire, and by tempest, and by earthquakes, and by bloodsheds, and by pestilence, and by famine" (2 Nephi 6:15).

Earthquakes also serve as warning voices to earth's wicked inhabitants: "The Lord shall utter his voice out of heaven, saying: Hearken, O ye nations of the earth. . . How oft have I called upon you by the mouth of my servants, and by the ministering of angels, and by mine own voice, and by the voice of thunderings, and by the voice of lightnings, and by the voice of tempests, and by the voice of earthquakes, and great hailstorms, and by the voice of famines and pestilences of every kind, and by the great sound of a trump, and by the voice of judgment" (D&C 43:23-25).

D&C 87:6 teaches: "With famine, and plague, and earthquake, and the thunder of heaven, and the fierce and vivid lightning also, shall the inhabitants of the earth be made to feel the wrath, and indignation, and chastening hand of an Almighty God, until the consumption decreed hath made a full end of all nations."

And again, the Lord has revealed that "after your [the Lord's servants] testimony cometh wrath and indignation upon the people. For after your testimony cometh the testimony of

earthquakes, that shall cause groanings in the midst of her, and men shall fall upon the ground and shall not be able to stand. And also cometh the testimony of the voice of thunderings, and the voice of lightnings, and the voice of tempests" (D&C 88:88- 90).

The great earthquake identified in Revelation 6:12 will serve as a testimony and a warning voice to earth's people that the Lord is God. It may cause the sun to become black and the moon to look like blood. Other earthquakes are identified in Revelation 11:13; 16:17-20.

"sun became black as sackcloth" The sun will look as if it is covered with black sackcloth, which is made from the hair of black goats. Sackcloth symbolizes mourning and its connection with darkening the sun implies that all God's creations are in mourning over the wickedness of the world. As seen by the inhabitants of the earth, the sun may appear to be darkened on account of volcanic ash, dust, smoke, or other such things. This darkening may be a result of the "great earthquake," or some other cause. We must remember that "the events of that day shall be so unprecedented and so beyond human experience, that the prophets are and have been at an almost total loss for words to describe those realities pressed in upon them by the spirit of revelation" (McConkie, *Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, 3:486).

Many prophecies have testified of this great event: "the sun shall be turned into darkness" (Joel 2:31); "shall the sun be darkened" (Matthew 24:29; JS-M 1:33); "the sun shall be darkened" (D&C 29:14; 34:9; 45:41); and "the sun shall hide his face, and shall refuse to give light" (D&C 88:87).

"moon became as blood" The moon does not become actual blood but becomes "as blood," probably meaning that it will look red to the inhabitants of the earth. This change in the appearance of the moon may be the result of the earthquake spoken of in this same verse, which would send a great amount of dust and debris into the atmosphere, which could make the moon appear red "as blood." Many prophets have foretold this event, using such phrases as "the moon into blood" (Joel 2:31; Acts 2:20); "the moon shall be turned into blood" (D&C 29:14); "and the moon be turned into blood" (D&C 34:9; 45:42), and "the moon shall be bathed in blood" (D&C 88:87).

13 And the stars of heaven fell unto the earth, even as a fig tree casteth her untimely figs, when she is shaken of a mighty wind.

verse 13 "stars of heaven fell unto the earth" Many of the stars that we see in the sky are much larger than our sun, and their size alone, not to mention their extreme heat, would pulverize and melt the earth. Elder Bruce R. McConkie explained: "Such an earthquake has never before been known (Revelation 16:17-21), and it shall appear to man on earth as though the stars in the sidereal heavens are falling. And in addition, as here recorded, some heavenly meteors or other objects, appearing as stars, will fall 'unto the earth'" (McConkie, *Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, 3:486).

Other prophets besides John have foreseen this event. They write: “the stars shall fall from heaven” (Matthew 24:29; JS -M 1:33; D&C 29:14); “the stars shall refuse their shining, and some shall fall” (D&C 34:9); “the stars fall from heaven” (D&C 45:42); and “the stars shall become exceedingly angry, and shall cast themselves down as a fig that falleth from off a fig-tree” (D&C 88:87).

“as a fig tree casteth her untimely figs” “Untimely figs” should read “unripe figs,” referring to winter figs that frequently fall off the tree during a great storm or a great gust of wind. Isaiah’s words are similar: “And the heavens shall be rolled together as a scroll: and all their host shall fall down, as the leaf falleth off from the vine, and as a falling fig from the fig tree” (Isaiah 34:4).

14 And the heaven departed as a scroll when it is rolled together; and every mountain and island were moved out of their places.

verse 14 “the heaven departed [heavens opened] as a scroll” This difficult expression parallels a similar one in Isaiah 34:4: there, however, the heavens are “rolled together as a scroll,” whereas here they are “opened as a scroll.”

The expression “heavens opened as a scroll” may correspond with an experience described by Wilford Woodruff during the Zion’s camp experience. “When the five men entered the camp, there was not a cloud to be seen in the whole heavens, but as the men left the camp there was a small cloud like a black spot appeared in the north west, and it began to unroll itself like a scroll, and in a few minutes the whole heavens were covered with a pall as black as ink. This indicated a sudden storm which soon broke upon us” (HC, 2:104).

“every mountain and island [was] moved out of [its place]” This movement may be the result of the “great earthquake” spoken of in Revelation 6:12. In the following verse we learn that fearful individuals also hide in the “rocks of the mountains.”

“And the heavens opened as a scroll is opened when it is rolled together; and every mountain, and island, was moved out of its place.”

15 And the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bondman, and every free man, hid themselves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountain;

verse 15 “kings of the earth . . . and every free man, hid themselves” John lists seven categories of individuals here, the number seven denoting completeness. The list includes individuals belonging to the upper social class (kings; great, rich, and mighty men; and chief captains), middle class (free men), and lower class (bondmen) – all of whom will be affected by these cataclysmic events. Children are not included in this list, perhaps because of their innocence before God.

Why will people attempt to hide themselves from God? Three times Isaiah states that they will do so because of their “fear of the Lord” (Isaiah 2:10, 19, 21), which fear is due to their

wickedness and its consequences. Similarly, after their transgression, Adam and Eve also “hid themselves” from God (Genesis 3:8-10).

According to D&C 29:15, these signs of the times will cause “weeping and wailing among the hosts of men.” Meanwhile the righteous, or those who worship the Lord in his sacred temples, will receive deliverance. The prophet Joel stated, “Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be delivered: for in mount Zion and in Jerusalem shall be deliverance” (Joel 2:32). A modern revelation, speaking of the same events, commands us to “be not troubled” (D&C 45:35).

16 And said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb;

verse 16 “said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us” Jesus Christ prophesied of these events to “a great company of people” who followed him as he walked to Calvary: “Then shall they begin to say to the mountains, Fall on us; and to the hills, Cover us” (Luke 23:27-30; Hosea 10:8).

“face of him that sitteth on the throne” This expression is a reference to God the Father.

“wrath of the Lamb” This phrase speaks of Jesus’s righteous indignation.

17 For the great day of his wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?

verse 17 “great day of his wrath is come” It is the wicked who, as they hide themselves in the rocks, make this statement because of their fear. Because of the extraordinary events described in verses 12 through 14, the wicked will believe it is the end of the world. Though these events are certainly signs of the times, they do not occur at the second coming, for the revelations state explicitly that Christ will not come until after the opening of the seventh seal (see, for example, D&C 77:12-13). In John’s book of Revelation, Christ does not make his great appearance until Revelation 19.

Further, the same prophetic writers who prophesied of the darkening of the sun, the moon becoming as blood, and stars falling from heaven record that those events would occur before the second coming, not at the second coming: “The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and terrible day of the Lord come” (Joel 2:31; emphasis added; see also Acts 2:20); “but behold, I say unto you that before this great day shall come the sun shall be darkened” (D&C 29:14; emphasis added); “but before that great day shall come, the sun shall be darkened” (D&C 34:9; emphasis added); and “before the day of the Lord shall come, the sun shall be darkened (D&C 45:42; emphasis added). D&C 88:87 notes that these events will occur “not many days hence.”

“who shall be able to stand?” The psalmist asked, “Thou, even thou, art to be feared: and who may stand in thy sight when once thou art angry?” (Psalm 76:7).

Revelation Chapter 7 Who Shall Be Able to Stand?

John has prepared his reader for the crushing judgment of God upon the world as the Lamb breaks the last seal. Chapter six had concluded with “the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bondman, and every free man, [hiding] themselves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains,” crying in terror against the face of God and the Lamb, “for the great day of his wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?” (Revelation 6:15, 17). But that wrath does not explode from the outset of chapter seven. Just at the moment of greatest crisis, an interruption occurs; the vision changes, and an interlude begins, bringing a moment of quiet and explanation to the reader.

Such a break in flow characterizes the John’s pattern. At each turning point, as events are about to get ugly, he pauses to give encouragement and hope through explanation. Chapters four and five do this for the six seals, chapter ten for the third woe, chapter fourteen for the seven vials, and chapter 20:1-6 for the battle of Gog and Magog. This is exactly the case here.

Chapter seven answers the question posed in 6:17: “Who shall be able to stand?” when the Lord sends his great judgments upon the earth? The answer is those who possess the seal of the living God. This sealing secures and protects the righteous from the great destructions that will be poured out upon the earth’s inhabitants, including the desolations that accompany the blowing of the seven trumpets and the pouring out of the seven vials (bowls) in Revelation 8, 9, and 16. Joseph Smith taught that the sealing mentioned here “signifies sealing the blessing upon their heads, meaning the everlasting covenant, thereby making their calling and election sure.” (TPJS, 321.) The number of those sealed are 144,000; they are all high priests.

The events portrayed in this section will occur during our dispensation; they continue the events surrounding the opening of the sixth seal, which is discussed in Revelation 6:12 and in Doctrine and Covenants 77: 10: “Q. What time are the things spoken of in this chapter [Revelation 7] to be accomplished? A. They are to be accomplished in the sixth thousand years, or the opening of the sixth seal.”

verses 1-8 The sealing up of the saints of God against the wrath that is to come forth.

1 And after these things I saw four angels standing on the four corners of the earth, holding the four winds of the earth, that the wind should not blow on the earth, nor on the sea, nor on any tree.

verse 1 “after these things” After the events recorded in Revelation 6.

“four angels” As the new vision opens, John sees four angels standing on the four corners of the earth. The repetition of the number four suggests geographical fulness – all the world will be involved in the events of chapter seven. These angels hold in check the wind so

that it “should not blow on the earth.” The Greek word *anemos*, translated “wind,” indicates a storm wind, sometimes almost hurricane-like. Such winds brought drought, heat, insect plagues, and desolation. The mention of sun and withering heat in verse sixteen suggests that John had in mind the sirocco, a scorching wind that burnt up vegetation and left the land dust dry. Biblical people viewed such winds as displays of divine wrath (cf. Hosea 3:5; Revelation 16:9, “great heat” being from a scorching wind). In this light, the angels play the role of divine executioners with power to destroy the whole earth.

Modern revelation confirms this view and adds depth: “Q. What are we to understand by the four angels, spoken of in the 7th chapter and 1st verse of Revelation? A. We are to understand that they are four angels sent forth from God, to whom is given power over the four parts of the earth, to save life and to destroy; these are they who have the everlasting gospel to commit to every nation, kindred, tongue, and people; having power to shut up the heavens, to seal up unto life, or to cast down to the regions of darkness” (D&C 77:8). We thus learn that God commissioned these four angels and gave them power to both destroy life and to save it. They have power over the process of condemning judgment and the spreading of the gospel. They have, as it were, two faces. They are not only destroying angels, but saving angels as well. What makes the difference is how men respond to the message they dispense. These four angels may be the same angels referred to in the parable of the wheat and the tares (see D&C 86:5-7; Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43). In both cases, the angels with the power to save or to destroy were instructed by their leader to wait until the wheat has been gathered (see Matthew 13) or until the saints have been sealed (see Revelation 7). In the meantime, their work is to prepare the nations of the world to receive the restored gospel and to bring the world to repentance, even by the use of natural disasters if need be.

The angels have long since left their home in heaven and are now on the earth. These angels are those who in 1831 were “waiting the great command to reap down the earth, to gather the tares that they may be burned” (D&C 38:12). President Wilford Woodruff stated that these angels have been loosed and are at work here. (“Temple Worker’s Excursion,” 512.) However, their job is not just to destroy but to commit the gospel as well. (Joseph Fielding Smith, Church History and Modern Revelation, 1:300-01.) Their main period of operation is the sixth seal, or the period just preceding the Millennium. Thus, in this dispensation angelic administration is combining with mortal efforts to assure the world-wide preaching of the gospel during that time (see D&C 77:10). Only after they fulfill that commission will they unleash the winds of destruction.

The signs associated with the sixth seal – the earthquake, the darkened sun, the blood-red moon, falling stars, the heavens opening as a scroll, the movement of mountains and islands, and fear coming upon humanity – play a major role in the objectives of the sixth seal. Their function is not primarily destruction. They represent additional effort on the part of God to bring all men to him. The four angels symbolize the spiritual forces that oversee and assist in fulfilling this objective. During the sixth seal, the fulness of his gospel will be restored to the earth and both natural and supernatural forces will combine to see that it spreads to all lands

and cultures. Those who respond with fulness of heart will enter into the rest of the Lord and find peace and safety. Those who reject it will find vexation and misery.

The world has already rejected the gospel many times, but during the sixth seal conditions are such that one more rejection will assure its doom. This is because the gospel, preached with tremendous power, will not be easily ignored. Those who reject it will not do so out of ignorance. Therefore, events during the sixth seal will heighten the ideological conflict between the forces of good and evil. The conflict will not be resolved during the sixth seal, but the battle lines will be clearly drawn.

The battle lines will fall between the church of the devil and the Church of Jesus Christ. The mortal perspective may not perceive and report it that way, but from a spiritual standpoint the issue is clear.

The armor of the saints – righteousness and tremendous power from God – will protect them from the world-embracing colossus of wickedness, pride, and spiritual apathy while the destroying angels prepare to move against it. As noted above, the primary preparation will be the preaching of the gospel. Pure testimony will flow through the nations during the sixth seal. Many will respond. Those who do not, who willfully rebel against the light and who seek to destroy God's work, will face the wrath of the seventh seal.

2 And I saw another angel ascending from the east, having the seal of the living God: and he cried with a loud voice to the four angels, to whom it was given to hurt the earth and the sea,

verse 2 “an angel from the east” In concert with the four angels, John sees another angel ascending from the east. The imagery used in these verses reminds one of the rising sun, which recalls the glory of God, spreading light and life. The idea is reminiscent of Ezekiel 43:4, where the glory of Jehovah comes out of the east. This angel “is he to whom is given the seal of the living God over the twelve tribes of Israel; . . . and, if you will receive it, this is Elias which was to come to gather together the tribes of Israel and restore all things” (D&C 77:9).

Speaking of this Elias, Elder Bruce R. McConkie has said:

Correcting the Bible by the spirit of revelation, the Prophet restored a statement of John the Baptist which says that Christ is the Elias who was to restore all things (JST, John 1:21-28). By revelation we are also informed that the Elias who was to restore all things is the angel Gabriel who was known in mortality as Noah (D&C 27:6-7; Luke 1:5-25; TPJS, 157). From the same authentic source, we also learn that the promised Elias is John the Revelator (D&C 77:9, 14). Thus, there are three different revelations which name Elias as being three different persons. What are we to conclude?

By finding answer to the question, by whom has the restoration been effected, we shall find who Elias is and find there is no problem in harmonizing these apparently contradictory revelations. Who has restored all things? Was it one man? Certainly not. Many angelic ministrants have been sent from the

courts of glory to confer keys and powers, to commit their dispensations and glories again to men on earth. At least the following have come: Moroni, John the Baptist, Peter, James and John, Moses, Elijah, Elias, Gabriel, Raphael, and Michael (D&C 13; 110; 128:19-21). Since it is apparent that no one messenger has carried the whole burden of the restoration, but rather that each has come with a specific endowment from on high, it becomes clear that Elias is a composite personage. The expression must be understood to be a name and a title for those whose mission it was to commit keys and powers to men in this final dispensation (McConkie, *Commentary*, 3:491-92. See also Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation*, 1:170-174).

“seal of the living God” This seal pertains to the Abrahamic covenant and making one’s calling and election sure, as Joseph Smith explained: “Four destroying angels holding power over the four quarters of the earth until the servants of God are sealed in their foreheads, which signifies sealing the blessing upon their heads, meaning the everlasting covenant, thereby making their calling and election sure. When a seal is put upon the father and mother, it secures their posterity, so that they cannot be lost, but will be saved by virtue of the covenant of their father and mother” (*TPJS*, 321).

In another setting, Ezekiel envisioned the sealing, or marking, on the foreheads of the righteous and the subsequent destruction of the wicked as prefiguring the events recorded in Revelation 7:1-8: “And the Lord said unto him, Go through the midst of the city, through the midst of Jerusalem, and set a mark upon the foreheads of the man that sigh and that cry for all the abominations that be done in the midst thereof. And to the others he said in mine hearing, Go ye after him through the city, and smite: let not your eye spare, neither have ye pity: Slay utterly old and young, both maids, and little children, and women: but come not near any man upon whom is the mark” (*Ezekiel* 9:4-6).

The seal of the righteous recalls the mark of blood at Passover (*Exodus* 12:13). At that time those who possessed the mark of lamb’s blood – that is, those who desired to make Christ’s atonement effective in their lives – were spared the plague of God (*Isaiah* 44:5; *Galatians* 6:17).

In short, God marks and seals the righteous with his seal, making them his and placing them under his protection. In the last days, those who possess God’s seal on their foreheads will not be destroyed by the “four winds of the earth” (*Revelation* 7:1-3). Joseph Smith explained: “Then, having this promise [of one’s calling and election made sure] sealed unto them, it was an anchor to the soul, sure and steadfast. Though the thunders might roll and lightnings flash, and earthquakes bellow, and war gather thick around, yet this hope and knowledge would support the soul in every hour of trial, trouble and tribulation” (*TPJS*, 298).

As a counterfeit to the true and sacred things of God, Satan places a mark on the forehead or the right hand of his followers (*Revelation* 13:16; 14:9). These followers, however, will not be protected from God’s “four winds,” and they eventually will be destroyed by God (see commentary on *Revelation* 13:16; see also *Revelation* 16:2; 19:20).

“And I saw another angel ascending from the east, having the seal of the living God; and I heard him cry with a loud voice to the four angels, to whom it was given to hurt the earth and the sea”

3 Saying, Hurt not the earth, neither the sea, nor the trees, till we have sealed the servants of our God in their foreheads.

verses 4-8 John states that the number of those sealed is 144,000. The number need not be taken literally. The Doctrine and Covenants states “that those who are sealed are high priests, ordained unto the holy order of God, to administer the everlasting gospel; for they are they who are ordained out of every nation, kindred, tongue, and people, by the angels to whom is given power over the nations of the earth, to bring as many as will come to the church of the Firstborn” (77:11). Note that this scripture does not specify a number. Instead it notes that the group is composed of high priests who have a special calling “to administer the everlasting gospel” and “to bring as many as will come to the church of the Firstborn.”

Joseph Smith associated them with the temple (HC, 6:365). The symbolic meaning of the number supports this association. Twelve represents the priesthood. Biblical people squared a number to amplify its symbolic meaning. Thus, 144 suggests a fulness of priesthood authority. But John is not satisfied with that. He gives the image a superlative quality by multiplying 1,000, representing completeness. In this way, he shows the strength and breadth of the priesthood in the latter days, in this dispensation that is, indeed, the dispensation of the fulness of times. During this period that complete priesthood authority will operate.

The attachment to the temple fits perfectly since only there can one receive the fulness of the priesthood (D&C 124:25-30). Elder McConkie states that the 144,000 are kings and priests “converted, baptized, endowed, married for eternity, and finally sealed up unto eternal life” (*Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, 3:491). Their mission is not merely to bring people into The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. It goes beyond that. They will have “general authority” status. Their special assignment centers in getting people sealed into the church of the Firstborn through the administration of the fulness of the endowment (on the church of the Firstborn, see D&C 76:50-70; 93:21-23).

John indicates that the 144,000 will be those sealed from all the tribes of Israel. Curiously, he leaves out Dan and adds Manasses (Manasseh, the son of Joseph) to get twelve tribes. John gives no hint why he left out Dan. Some early Christians believed that John dropped the tribal name because of a tradition that the Antichrist would arise from there. The disfavor into which Dan fell goes all the way back to 1 Chronicles 7, which also omits Dan from the list of tribes. It may be that Dan’s association with idolatry marked the tribe for omission since Jeroboam set up his idols in that tribal territory (see Judges 18:30; 1 Kings 12:29). Since John was writing in part against the influences of idolatry invading the church, he may have omitted Dan as a warning.

4 And I heard the number of them which were sealed: and there were sealed an hundred and forty and four thousand of all the tribes of the children of Israel.

“And the number of them who were sealed, were an hundred and forty and four thousand of all the tribes of the children of Israel.”

5 Of the tribe of Juda were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Reuben were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Gad were sealed twelve thousand.

6 Of the tribe of Aser were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Nephthalim were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Manasses were sealed twelve thousand.

7 Of the tribe of Simeon were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Levi were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Issachar were sealed twelve thousand.

8 Of the tribe of Zabulon were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Joseph were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Benjamin were sealed twelve thousand.

verses 9-17 The vision of the great triumphant multitude of the saved

9 After this I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands;

verse 9 “great multitude, which no man could number” John’s vision expands beyond the 144,000 to include a vast congregation “which no man could number,” composed of those saved from all nations and peoples. In Revelation 5:11 John saw that there were one hundred million, plus “thousands of thousands,” of angels around God’s throne. Here John witnesses innumerable exalted saints from all nations, extended families, and languages standing before God and Jesus Christ in heaven.

“clothed with white robes” Exalted saints wear white robes, signifying that they have overcome Satan and made the atonement of Christ effective in their lives (Revelation 7:14).

“palms in their hands” “Palms,” or palm branches, symbolize victory and joy (D&C 109:76; 113:51). The “palms in their hands,” meaning the hands of the exalted saints, recalls Jesus’s triumphal entry into Jerusalem before his sacrifice, when his disciples “took branches of palm trees, and went forth to meet him, and cried, Hosanna: Blessed is the King of Israel that cometh in the name of the Lord” (John 12:13). The symbolic “robes of righteousness,” “palms in [the] hands,” and “crowns of glory” are the attire of the exalted saint in heaven (D&C 109:76).

10 And cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb.

verse 10 “cried with a loud voice” The hymn is sung by exalted souls, and they will sing again when Babylon falls (Revelation 19:1). The voice is loud here because of the sheer numbers who are crying with the loud voice, “a great multitude, which no man could number” (Revelation 7:9).

“Salvation to our God . . . and unto the Lamb” The multitude directs their words to both the Father and the Son. The word translated “salvation” (*stria*) expresses the idea of a great deliverance by the hand of God through which his people find total victory. But in this context, they are celebrating neither God’s salvation nor their own. Rather they are celebrating the victory of God and the Lamb. Joseph Smith defined salvation as “nothing more nor less than to triumph over all our enemies and put them under our feet”(Dahl and Cannon, *Teachings of Joseph Smith*, 600). Certainly, this definition fits nicely into this context of victory and exaltation. The term salvation is used on two other occasions when the multitude sings a hymn (Revelation 12:10; 19:1). Other versions clarify the confusing phrase “salvation to our God.” For instance, the Revised Standard Version says, “Salvation belongs to our God,” and the Good News Bible reads, “Our salvation comes from our God.”

11 And all the angels stood round about the throne, and about the elders and the four beasts, and fell before the throne on their faces, and worshiped God,

verse 11 “all the angels stood round about the throne . . . and worshipped God” In an earlier scene (Revelation 5:11-14) the angels directed their devotion to Christ, but here they bow down before God the Father.

12 Saying, Amen; Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honor, and power, and might, be unto our God forever and ever. Amen.

verse 12 “Amen: Blessing/ glory/ wisdom/ thanksgiving/ honour/ power/ might. . . Amen” The seven attributes of God uttered by the angels represent the totality of his perfections, for the number seven represents completion. The angels begin and close their statement of worship with “Amen,” one of the titles of Christ (Revelation 3:14). “The word amen connotes the idea of that which has been unalterably confirmed (Numbers 5:22), that which is sure, trustworthy, and faithful” (McConkie and Parry, *Guide to Scriptural Symbols*, 115).

13 And one of the elders answered, saying unto me, What are these which are arrayed in white robes? and whence came they?

14 And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest. And he said to me, These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

verses 13-14 “arrayed in white robes” One of the twenty-four elders, acting as a guide and an interpreter for John, asks him, “What are these which are arrayed in white robes” and “Whence came they?” John’s response to his heavenly guide is simply, “Sir, thou knowest.” The elder then explains that these exalted saints are those who have experienced tribulation during mortality and have made the atonement effective in their lives by washing their robes in Christ’s blood (through repentance, obedience, and endurance).

“great tribulation” Tribulation has always been part of the lives of those who accept and follow Christ (John 16:33; 2 Timothy 3:12; D&C 138:13), and eternal blessings and glory come after great tribulation (D&C 58:3-4). The tribulation mentioned here “is referring primarily to that final series of woes which will immediately precede the end. It is the hour of trial that is to come upon the whole world (Revelation 3:10)” (Mounce, *Book of Revelation*, 16).

“washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb” This statement is a common one in the Book of Mormon. It is clear that one’s robes become pure and white through that individual’s faith, faithfulness, and belief in Christ and his atoning sacrifice (1 Nephi 12:10-11; Alma 5:21; Mormon 9:6).

15 Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple; and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them.

verse 15 This verse changes the verb tense to the future. It appears that at this point John begins speaking from the standpoint of a prophet foretelling the future. He views the final abode of the saints upon the celestialized earth.

Millions will prevail during this time of trial because they heeded the warnings and prepared themselves, “therefore are they before the throne of God.” John’s use of the word “therefore” is deliberate. It means that the multitude stand before God because they have been purified from all sin. They have “washed their robes” in Christ’s blood that they are able to stand before God in heaven (D&C 121:45).

“serve him day and night in his temple” The exalted saints serve God “forever in his kingdom, where, in the literal sense, there is neither night nor a temple. See Revelation 21:22-23” (McConkie, *Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, 3:496). The word serve (Greek *latreu*) specifically denotes the performance of ceremonies associated with God’s sanctuary (cf. Hebrews 8:5), which these men can perform because they are kings and priests of the Most High.

“he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them” A better translation for the phrase “shall dwell among them” may be found in the Jerusalem Bible, which reads “will spread his tent over them.” This expression recalls the tabernacle of Moses, which was a tent. Similar to the way the earthly temple renders spiritual protection for those who worship therein, here God himself will serve as a temple and provide eternal shelter for the righteous. The Lamb feeds them and leads them. God himself wipes away their tears. Hunger, thirst, discomfort are all unknown to them, for the one who “sitteth on the throne shall dwell among

them.” Having overcome, they are honored by those whom they honor and loved by those whom they love. Such is the state of eternal life.

16 They shall hunger no more, neither thirst anymore; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat.

verse 16 “They shall hunger no more, neither thirst . . . neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat” The language of this verse recalls Isaiah 49:10: “They shall not hunger nor thirst; neither shall the heat nor sun smite them: for he that hath mercy on them shall lead them, even by the springs of water shall he guide them.” It also recalls Psalm 121:6: “The sun shall not smite thee by day, nor the moon by night.” This symbolic language indicates that exalted souls will not suffer the tribulations associated with mortality, such as fatigue, hunger, and thirst.

In the literal sense, it will not be necessary for the sun to shine on those who inherit the celestial kingdom because “the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof” (Revelation 21:23; 22:5; Isaiah 60:19).

17 For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters; and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.

verse 17 “Lamb . . . shall feed them” Many translations say the “Lamb . . . will be their shepherd” (RSV, NEB, JB, NIV, GNB; see also Isaiah 40:11; Ezekiel 34:23; John 10:11-16).

“lead them unto living fountains of waters” Metaphorically, Christ is the “fountain of living waters” (Jeremiah 17:13) and the “fountain of all righteousness” (Ether 12:28). He says to those who are spiritually thirsty, “I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely” (Revelation 21:6; 22:17). A parallel is found in Revelation 22:1, which speaks of a “pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb.”

“God shall wipe away all tears” The language of this passage recalls Isaiah’s prophecy that “the Lord God will wipe away tears from off all faces” (Isaiah 25:8). Later in Revelation we read, “God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying” (Revelation 21:4). Tears come from the pain and sorrow associated with mortality: affliction, pain, death, and personal sin. When he dwells with us after his coming, Jesus Christ, who is well acquainted with grief (Isaiah 53:3), will remove the pains of our mortality.

Chapter six, anticipating the outpouring of the wrath of God, asked the question: “Who shall be able to stand?” John answers that question in chapter seven: those who have been sealed against destruction by washing their robes in the blood of the Lamb. By this means they become pure and are able to dwell with the Lord. However, that dwelling need not be just in heaven. There is an earthly counterpart to paradise: Zion. The Lord has said: “Let Zion rejoice, for this is Zion – the pure in heart; therefore, let Zion rejoice, while all the wicked shall mourn. For behold, and lo, vengeance cometh speedily upon the ungodly as the whirlwind;

and who shall escape it? The Lord's scourge shall pass over by night and by day, and the report thereof shall vex all people; yea, it shall not be stayed until the Lord come . . . nevertheless, Zion shall escape" (D&C 97:21-23, 25).

As early as the first millennium of earth's history, prophets understood the importance of the latter-day Zion as the means of preserving the Lord's people. To Enoch the Lord declared:

As I live, even so will I come in the last days, in the days of wickedness and vengeance, to fulfil the oath which I have made unto you concerning the children of Noah; and the day shall come that the earth shall rest, but before that day the heavens shall be darkened, and a veil of darkness shall cover the earth; and the heavens shall shake, and also the earth; and great tribulations shall be among the children of men, but my people will I preserve; and righteousness will I send down out of heaven; and truth will I send forth out of the earth, to bear testimony of mine Only Begotten; his resurrection from the dead; yea, and also the resurrection of all men; and righteousness and truth will I cause to sweep the earth as with a flood, to gather out mine elect from the four quarters of the earth, unto a place which I shall prepare, an Holy City, that my people may gird up their loins, and be looking forth for the time of my coming; for there shall be my tabernacle, and it shall be called Zion, a New Jerusalem (Moses 7:60-62).

It is little wonder that, with righteousness and truth sweeping "the earth as with a flood," the judgment of God pours out against those who reject it. As for those who respond, they shall be gathered to places of safety. As the Lord declared, the righteous shall be gathered "upon the land of Zion, and upon her stakes . . . for a defense, and for a refuge from the storm, and from wrath when it shall be poured out without mixture upon the whole earth" (D&C 115:6). The Lord has specified that "those places which I have appointed for refuge, shall be the places for your baptisms for your dead" (D&C 124:36). In other words, the Lord shall gather his people to his temples.

This brings us back to the 144,000, those special ministers sealed by the four destroying angels against the day of indignation. Those under their care will find

a land of peace, a city of refuge, a place of safety for the saints of the Most High God; and the glory of the Lord shall be there, and the terror of the Lord also shall be there, insomuch that the wicked will not come unto it, and it shall be called Zion. And it shall come to pass among the wicked, that every man that will not take his sword against his neighbor must needs flee unto Zion for safety.

And there shall be gathered unto it out of every nation under heaven; and it shall be the only people that shall not be at war one with another. And it shall be said among the wicked: Let us not go up to battle against Zion, for the inhabitants of Zion are terrible; wherefore we cannot stand. And it shall come to pass that the righteous shall be gathered out from among all nations, and shall come to Zion, singing with songs of everlasting joy (D&C 45:66-71).

In this light, the most important work for the saints of the sixth seal is the establishment of Zion by faithfulness, diligence, and especially purity. Missionary work must spread, temple work increase, and righteousness flow out of the homes and into the communities of the saints. In this way God will have a people “prepared to receive the glory that I [God] have for them, even the glory of Zion” (D&C 136:31).

Revelation Chapters 8-9

The seventh seal is opened and the Millennium begins. These chapters contain the vision of destruction poured out during the seventh seal, or the period after the Millennium begins but preceding the second coming. Recall, however, that there will be still a final and total cleansing and destruction of evil before the period of peace and righteousness begins. The seven destroying angels announce with their trumpets in turn the final last touches of purging that will occur on the earth.

Actually, in Chapters 8 and 9, six out of seven angels sound their trumpets. In Chapter 10 the seventh angel proclaims the finished destruction.

Revelation Chapter 8 Opening of the Seventh Seal – Seven Angels with Trumpets

1 And when he had opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven about the space of half an hour.

verse 1 The interlude over, John resumes where chapter six left off. But once again, there is no clash of thunder, no outpouring of wrath. The Lamb breaks the seventh seal; the scroll of destiny lies open, but quiet prevails. God's testament, his will for the nations, stands ready to be executed. The day of judgment has come. The world will now receive its inheritance and just reward. Six thousand years of indifference, of carelessness toward God, of transgression, of deliberate corruption of his ways, of willful rejection and sometimes slaughter of his prophets, of conscious rebellion and evil – all these will now receive their just compensation.

As the seventh seal is broken, there is "silence in heaven about the space of half an hour." A solemn moment intervenes before judgment commences. Nothing breaks the solitude, but tension builds as seven angels, as captains over a host, receive seven trumpets and prepare to give their commands. The image of the trumpets creates a feeling of foreboding, for soon their blast will shatter the world. But an interval is needed: a period of preparation, of devotion and worship, of readying before heaven executes God's will, a moment of mourning for a world sick unto death.

The number seven signifies completion. During the seventh seal, we anticipate the completion of God's work, as indicated by D&C 77:12: "In the beginning of the seventh thousand years will the Lord God sanctify the earth, and complete the salvation of man. . . The sounding of the trumpets of the seven angels are the preparing and finishing of his work, in the beginning of the seventh thousand years."

The meaning of silence here is somewhat obscure. Several scriptural passages equate silence with God's withholding his judgments upon the wicked. When there is silence in heaven, no judgments are sent upon the earth. God breaks the silence by sending his judgments. The psalmist prophesied: "Our God shall come, and shall not keep silence: a fire shall devour before him, and it shall be very tempestuous round about him. He shall call to the

heavens from above, and to the earth, that he may judge his people" (Psalm 50:3-4). Also, "Keep not thou silence, O God: hold not thy peace, and be not still, O God. For, lo, thine enemies make a tumult: and they that hate thee have lifted up the head. . . O my God, make them like a wheel; as the stubble before the wind. As the fire burneth a wood, and as the flame setteth the mountains on fire; so persecute them with thy tempest" (Psalm 83:1-2, 13-14; 35:22; Habakkuk 2:20-3:2). After listing many evils of the people, the Lord then promises through Isaiah, "I will not keep silence, but will recompense, even recompense into their bosom" (Isaiah 65:6). A latter-day revelation reveals, "For all flesh is corrupted before me; and the powers of darkness prevail upon the earth, among the children of men, in the presence of all the hosts of heaven – which causeth silence to reign, and all eternity is pained, and the angels are waiting the great command to reap down the earth, to gather the tares that they may be burned" (D&C 38:11-12). In Revelation silence is interrupted and followed with God's judgments.

Silence in heaven may take place while the saints pray. The phrase "prayers of the saints" is mentioned in these verses twice, and the offering of incense (symbolizing the prayers, Luke 1:10) by an angel of God takes a central place in this scene. All of the creatures and exalted saints in heaven are silent as the mortal saints' prayers are offered to God (Revelation 8:3). "Is it too fanciful to suppose, as some have suggested, that everything in heaven halts so that the prayers of the saints may be heard?" (Metzger, *Breaking the Code*, 62).

Doctrine and Covenants 88:95 also speaks of a half hour of silence associated with the last days. In this case, it follows the acts of judgment and immediately precedes the coming of the Lord. Though it is out of position with that of Revelation, it carries the same import: it signals a theophany, but this time of total victory.

"about the space of half an hour" It is uncertain if this time is to be taken literally. "The half hour, it has been speculated, may actually approach twenty-one years, based on the Lord's time being 1,000 years to the day (see Abraham 3:4; 2 Peter 3:8). If such is correct, it will be a period when all will seem to be at rest, a return to the normal after the pounding taken during the sixth seal. The earth will cease to shake, the stars to fall, and the cosmos will return to a definite pattern. However, no matter what the duration, wickedness will not cease" (Draper, *Opening the Seven Seals*, 91).

2 And I saw the seven angels which stood before God; and to them were given seven trumpets.

verse 2 "I saw the seven angels which stood before God" Probably during the "half hour" of silence, John notices the seven angels receive seven trumpets. In Revelation 8:6 he will see them prepare to blow their trumpets, and in the next verse the first angel blows his trumpet. The chief goal of these angels is to prepare for the second coming of Christ: "The sounding of the trumpets of the seven angels are the preparing and finishing of [God's] work . .

. the preparing of the way before the time of [Christ's] coming" (D&C 77:12). This will occur "in the beginning of the seventh thousand years" (D&C 77:12).

These seven angels are men who belong or have belonged to our earth (D&C 130:5). They may be the same seven angels who pour out the seven plagues upon the earth's inhabitants, as identified in Revelation 15:1, 6-8; 16:1. The seven priests who blew the seven trumpets and walked with the Lord's ark of the covenant in ancient Israel (Joshua 6:13) were shadows and types of these seven angels from heaven.

Apocryphal sources name the seven angels as Uriel, Raphael, Raguel, Michael, Saraqael, Gabriel, and Remiel (1 Enoch 20:1-8). All of these names end in the particle *el*, which means "God." One source states, "I am Raphael, one of the seven holy angels which present the prayers of the saints, and which go in and out before the Holy One" (Tobit 12:15). Luke 1:19 records, "I am Gabriel, that stand in the presence of God," and we know of Michael, Gabriel, and Raphael from modern-day revelation (D&C 128:21).

"seven trumpets" The seven trumpets will be blown after the opening of the seventh seal, or "in the beginning of the seventh thousand years;" their purpose is to prepare the way for the second coming (D&C 77:12). At the sounding of each trump, great destructions occur upon the earth. For instance, as the first angel sounds his trump, "there followed hail and fire mingled with blood, and they were cast upon the earth: and the third part of trees was burnt up, and all green grass was burnt up" (Revelation 8:7).

Trumpets were used in war in ancient Israel, which is in keeping with the context of their use here. Trumpets also played a prominent role in the Israelite temple and may have served as types of the trumpets that sound from the temple in heaven. Nehemiah 12:41 and 1 Chronicles 15:24, for example, indicate that "there were seven trumpets in the temple orchestra" (Ford, *Revelation*, 136). Trumpets were blown during times of peace and burnt offerings (Numbers 10:10; 2 29: 27-28), at certain feasts and at a new moon (Leviticus 23:24; Numbers 29:1), during solemn assemblies and fasting (Joel 2:15), on the Day of Atonement (Leviticus 25:8-9), and at the dedication of the temple (2 Chronicles 5:12-14).

The scriptures inform us that the day of the Lord will be announced by the sounding of a trumpet (Joel 2:1; Zephaniah 1:14-16; Isaiah 27:13; Zechariah 9:14).

3 And another angel came and stood at the altar, having a golden censer; and there was given unto him much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne.

verse 3 "another angel" This angel is not one of the seven identified in the previous verse.

"stood at the altar, having a golden censer; and there was given unto him much incense" A censer is a utensil, perhaps similar to a large spoon or very small shovel, which was used for the incense rite. It was employed by the priestly officiant for carrying a few of the burning coals. The action of the angel recalls the activities of the priests in the Israelite temple system, in which the high priest took a "censer full of burning coals of fire from off the altar"

(Leviticus 16:12) and poured a handful of incense into the burning coals, creating a cloud of incense that ascended into the sky (Numbers 16:17-19). The burning incense symbolizes the prayers of the righteous, which ascend from the earth unto the throne of God.

“that he should offer it with the prayers of all saints” In the Mosaic temple system the priest offered up the incense inside the temple at the same time that the multitude outside offered their prayers (Luke 1:10). Similarly, in the temple in heaven the angelic minister offers incense simultaneous “with the prayers of all saints.” Thus, as Elder Bruce R. McConkie explained, “The saints on both sides of the veil join in worshipping the Lord” (*Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, 3:498).

“golden altar which was before the throne” The golden altar is the altar of incense, located before God’s throne in the temple in heaven. Similarly, the incense altar of the earthly temple was covered with gold and was situated before the mercy seat, or Jehovah’s throne (Exodus 30:1-6; 39:38). This altar may or may not be the same as that mentioned earlier in the verse; it is impossible to tell.

4 And the smoke of the incense, which came with the prayers of the saints, ascended up before God out of the angel’s hand.

verse 4 The moment of anguished calm is about to end. But the silence will not end until the heavenly priest, the mighty angel, performs at the altar a priesthood act – the judgment of the nations.

5 And the angel took the censer, and filled it with fire of the altar, and cast it into the earth: and there were voices, and thunderings, and lightnings, and an earthquake.

verse 5 Finally the judgment commences. The angel, performing his priestly service, moves to the altar. He is not one of the seven, but a minister of authority. This angel may have already intervened twice at critical points. He could be the one called “a strong angel” (Revelation 5:2), “another angel (Revelation 7:2; 8:3; 14:15), and “another mighty angel” (Revelation 10:1). The term “another angel” seems to suggest someone other than the ones who have gone before. However, in each instance where the term is used, it distinguishes one angel from the others just mentioned. It may be that this is Michael or father Adam, the only angel named by John, who holds the keys over this earth.

This conjecture is based on Adam’s role as understood by Joseph Smith. Adam acts under Christ over this earth, holding the key of presidency. Angels are under his direction; he reveals the gospel; and he watches over the ordinances. In the Doctrine and Covenants, he is called the seventh angel, perhaps symbolic of the fact that he represents all the angels or that he directs them. He is the one who, in the end, will lead the forces against Satan (see D&C 88:112-13, 115).

“filled it with fire . . . and cast it into the earth” This rite copies, on a grander scale, a practice in ancient Israel in which the burning coals were cast near the sacrificial altar (Number 16:36-40). At another time, they were scattered throughout the city (Ezekiel 10:2- 7). The

same angel who offered incense upon the golden altar now fills the censer with “fire of the altar” and casts it down to the earth. This action symbolizes the pouring out of God’s judgments upon earth and her inhabitants soon after the opening of the seventh seal. The burning coals recall the brimstone and fire that were cast down upon the wicked inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah. It is interesting to note that the first three trumpet blasts bring fire upon the earth (Revelation 8:7-10).

“there were voices / thunderings / lightnings / earthquake” The sound of the voices and thunderings shatter the silence in heaven that endured for half an hour (see Revelation 8:1).

verse 6-13 The seven angels will blow their trumpets at the beginning of the seventh thousand-year period to prepare the earth’s inhabitants for the second coming (D&C 77:12).

The trumpets’ blasts bring calamities upon the earth, which warn its inhabitants of greater destructions that will accompany the pouring out of the seven bowls identified in Revelation 16. The calamities that accompany the blowing of the trumpets also encourage the earth’s inhabitants to repent (Revelation 9:20-21; 16:9,11).

There is a progression of the degree of destruction in the groups of the seven seals, trumpets, and bowls: the fourth horseman affected a fourth part of the earth (Revelation 6:8), the first four angels’ trumpets are directed to one-third of the earth (“third part” is used twelve times in this section and likely refers to those souls bound for the celestial kingdom), and the bowls complete the wrath of God (Revelation 16:17). The multiple mention of “third part” may have a historical precedent. Just as one-third of heaven’s hosts were cast out for rebellion, so will one-third of the earth be smitten for the wickedness of her inhabitants.

The judgments of the first four trumpets are directed to nature and the elements (land, trees, grass, sea, fresh waters) and to heavenly bodies (sun, moon, stars), although humanity will be affected indirectly. The final three trumpets, represented by a threefold woe, are aimed directly at humanity.

The events that accompany the seven trumpets correspond to and recall the plagues of Egypt during the time of Moses. The hail, blood, and fire of the first trumpet parallel the seventh plague, in which God plagued Egypt with “hail, and fire mingled with the hail, very grievous, such as there was none like it in all the land of Egypt since it became a nation” (Exodus 9:24). The sea’s becoming blood at the sound of the second trumpet recalls the first plague of Egypt, in which God turned the river into blood (Exodus 7:14-25). The waters becoming bitter at the sound of the third trumpet recalls the first plague, during which the Egyptians [“loathed”] to drink of the water of the river” (Exodus 7:18). The sound of the fourth trumpet will bring darkness, which parallels the ninth plague, during which God brought three days of darkness over Egypt, “even darkness which may be felt” (Exodus 10:21). The locusts connected with the fifth trumpet (Revelation 9:1-11) recall the locusts that plagued Egypt, destroying all vegetation “through all the land of Egypt” (Exodus 10:15).

These parallels suggest that Egypt is a type of the world and wickedness, and the plagues are shadows of what will come upon our world in the last days. Also, just as God punished those who were hostile to the prophet Moses and his people, he will again plague those who do not hearken to his voice. God said to Pharaoh, “For I will at this time send all my plagues upon thine heart, and upon thy servants, and upon thy people; that thou mayest know that there is none like me in all the earth” (Exodus 9:14).

We recall that before the sounding of the seven trumpets, an angel filled his censer with burning coals from the altar in the temple in heaven and then cast them to the earth (Revelation 8:5). This fire became, symbolically, the fire that accompanied the first three trumpets: “the first angel sounded, and there followed hail and fire mingled with blood;” “the second angel sounded, and as it were a great mountain burning with fire;” and “the third angel sounded, and there fell a great star from heaven, burning as it were a lamp.” The seven angels identified in Revelation may be the same angels mentioned in D&C 88:94-110 who will blast their trumpets.

Outline of the judgments that will accompany the blowing of the seven trumpets:

	Judgment(s)	Things Harmed or Destroyed	Percentage or Amount of Damage	Agent of Destruction
first angel sounds trumpet (8:7)	hail and fire mingled with blood are cast upon the earth	trees and green grass	third part of trees and all green grass	burning
second angel sounds trumpet (8:8-9)	as it were a great mountain burning with fire was cast into the sea	sea creatures, ships	one-third of sea becomes blood; one-third of living creatures of the sea die; one-third of ships are destroyed	blood in the sea
third angel sounds trumpet (8:10-11)	there fell a great star from heaven, burning as it were a lamp	rivers, fountains of waters, many men die	third part of rivers and waters	waters are made bitter
fourth angel sounds trumpet (8:12)	none listed	sun, moon, stars, day and night	third part of the sun, moon, and stars smitten and darkened	
fifth angel sounds trumpet (9:1-12)	star falls from heaven, is given the key of the bottomless pit, and he opens the bottomless pit out of which came smoke which darkened the sun and the air	sun, air, those without the seal of God	those who do not have the seal	smoke, locusts

sixth angel sounds trumpet (9:13-21)	four angels are loosed men which were prepared to slay one-third of men	third part of men killed	horsemen and horses
seventh angel uncertain sounds trumpet (11:15-19)	none mentioned	none mentioned	none mentioned

6 And the seven angels which had the seven trumpets prepared themselves to sound.

verse 6 “seven angels . . . prepared themselves to sound [their trumpets]” The seven angels lift their trumpets to their mouths, ready to sound them.

7 The first angel sounded, and there followed hail and fire mingled with blood, and they were cast upon the earth: and the third part of trees was burnt up, and all green grass was burnt up.

verse 7 In an instant the silence is shattered. The seventh seal now picks up the destruction scenario of the sixth and multiplies it:

For not many days hence and the earth shall tremble and reel to and fro as a drunken man; and the sun shall hide his face, and shall refuse to give light; and the moon shall be bathed in blood; and the stars shall become exceedingly angry, and shall cast themselves down as a fig that falleth from off a fig-tree. And after your testimony cometh wrath and indignation upon the people. For after your testimony cometh the testimony of earthquakes, that shall cause groanings in the midst of her, and men shall fall upon the ground and shall not be able to stand. And also cometh the testimony of the voice of thunderings, and the voice of lightnings, and the voice of tempests, and the voice of the waves of the sea heaving themselves beyond their bounds.

And all things shall be in commotion; and surely, men's hearts shall fail them; for fear shall come upon all people. And angels shall fly through the midst of heaven, crying with a loud voice, sounding the trump of God, saying: Prepare ye, prepare ye, O inhabitants of the earth; for the judgment of our God is come. Behold, and lo, the Bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him (D&C 88:87-92).

Mankind's chance for repentance is rapidly coming to a close. God tried every means to reclaim them, but they would not hear. Now comes the response to the cry of the earth itself: "Wo, wo is me, the mother of men; I am pained, I am weary, because of the wickedness of my children. When shall I rest, and be cleansed from the filthiness which is gone forth out of me? When will my Creator sanctify me, that I may rest, and righteousness for a season abide upon my face?" (Moses 7:48). The answer is "now," for judgment has commenced.

"hail and fire mingled with blood" The hail and fire parallel the seventh plague of Egypt: "So there was hail, and fire mingled with the hail, very grievous, such as there was none like it in all the land of Egypt since it became a nation (Exodus 9:24). The plague that follows

the sounding of the first trumpet, however, is more severe, for the hail and fire are “mingled with blood” (see also Joel 2:30). The Lord has not revealed what will cause this plague, nor have Bible scholars been able to offer reasonable explanations of what will actually happen during this plague.

“the third part” A “third” means that these judgments were partial and incomplete – that, for now, God’s mercy is greater than his punishment.

“third part of trees was burnt up” The four destroying angels had commanded to “hurt not the earth, neither the sea, nor the trees, till we have sealed the servants of our God in their foreheads” (Revelation 7:3). Now, at the sounding of the first trumpet, hail and fire destroy one-third of the earth’s “trees,” which may be actual trees, for “green grass” is mentioned in the same context. The loss of one-third of the earth’s trees, which produce fruit, nuts, lumber, and oxygen, would be disastrous. It is also possible that the trees here symbolize people (Psalm 1:3) – thus, this prophecy may indicate that people will be burned. The ordinal number third is used elsewhere in Revelation (8:7-10, 12; 9:15, 18; 12:4).

“all green grass was burnt up” New Testament scholar Mounce believes “green grass” may mean “vegetation” in general (*Book of Revelation*, 179). The fire and hail that accompany the blast of the first trumpet destroy grass and vegetation. Such a catastrophe would cause a worldwide famine and millions of deaths.

8 And the second angel sounded, and as it were a great mountain burning with fire was cast into the sea: and the third part of the sea became blood;

verse 8 “as it were a great mountain burning with fire” John seems to be speaking symbolically, for he uses the expression “as it were,” although the meaning of this passage has not been revealed (Jeremiah 51:25). Or perhaps John is describing a great volcano.

“third part of the sea became blood” If the “great mountain burning with fire” were a volcano, its lava would look like blood flowing into the sea around it.

This plague parallels the first plague of Egypt, when fresh waters became blood at the world of the Lord. This plague was so severe that “there was blood throughout all the land of Egypt” (Exodus 7:21). Ancient Egypt is a type of the present-day world and its wickedness, and Egypt’s first plague is a type of the destruction that will fall upon the world in the days to come.

9 And the third part of the creatures which were in the sea, and had life, died; and the third part of the ships were destroyed.

verse 9 “third part of the [sea] creatures . . . died” As did the freshwater fish during the first plague of Egypt (Exodus 7:21), one-third of all sea creatures will die because of the great burning mountain, identified in the previous verse.

“third part of the ships were destroyed” The great burning mountain destroys the ships on earth.

10 And the third angel sounded, and there fell a great star from heaven, burning as it were a lamp, and it fell upon the third part of the rivers, and upon the fountains of waters;

verse 10 “fell a great star from heaven” Whether this expression refers to a meteorite, nuclear bomb, or another catastrophic event is unknown. We do know that the purpose of this destruction – “a symbol of divine visitation” (Mounce, *Book of Revelation*, 180) – is to encourage humanity to repent and turn to God.

“fell upon the third part of the rivers / fountains” The great star will fall upon and make bitter one-third of the earth’s fresh inland waters. Such a catastrophe will certainly alter drastically the earth’s ecological system, and many will die (see the following verse).

11 And the name of the star is called Wormwood: and the third part of the waters became wormwood; and many men died of the waters, because they were made bitter.

verse 11 “name of the star is called Wormwood” The star is named after a plant that has a bitter taste. In the Old Testament God sends wormwood upon the wicked as a judgment: to an immoral woman whose “end is bitter as wormwood” (Proverbs 5:4), to wicked people whom God will cause to eat wormwood (Jeremiah 9:15; Deuteronomy 29:17-18; Lamentations 3:15). Thus, the star called Wormwood will bring great bitterness upon earth’s inhabitants.

Because stars represent people in other passages of scripture (Revelation 12:4; Job 38:7; D&C 128:23), the star called Wormwood may represent an angel who is sent from God with bitter judgments upon the people (Mounce, *Book of Revelation*, 180).

“third part of the waters became wormwood” Approximately one-third of the earth’s fresh waters will become bitter, causing “many men” to die. Elder McConkie asks, “Could this be atomic fallout which shall poison a third of the drinking water of the earth?” (*Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, 3:499).

12 And the fourth angel sounded, and the third part of the sun was smitten, and the third part of the moon, and the third part of the stars; so as the third part of them was darkened, and the day shone not for a third part of it, and the night likewise.

verse 12 “third part of the sun / moon / stars . . . was darkened” The blast of the trumpet of the fourth angel brings total darkness for one-third of the day and night. John’s prophecy accords with other prophets who have testified that “the day of the Lord is darkness, and not light” (Amos 5:18; Joel 2:2). Isaiah also speaks of the darkening of the sun, moon, and stars, placing this darkening in the context of God’s punishment of the world for their evil (Isaiah 13:10-11). The events recall the ninth plague, or three days of “thick darkness,” in Egypt as well as the darkness at Christ’s crucifixion, recorded in 3 Nephi 8:20-23.

“And the fourth angel sounded, and the third part of the sun was smitten, and the third part of the moon, and the third part of the stars; so that the third part of them was darkened, and the day shone not for a third part of it, and the night likewise.”

verses 8-12 Four angels have brought four plagues. Again, the number four is symbolic of geographical totality. The whole earth will fall under the angel's censer, and thus there is the need for the saints to be sealed against these destructions. But remember that the prayers of the saints have played an important role in initiating this judgment. Their petitions, at least in part, have unleashed the wrath. This case seems to parallel that of Noah. According to the book of Moses, Noah's "heart was pained that the Lord had made man." The result was that the Lord decided to act, "for it repenteth Noah that I have created them, and that I have made them: and he hath called upon me" (Moses 8:25-26). The result of Noah's petition was the Flood. But just what role the Church plays during the period of the seventh seal is not disclosed. The Church is not in view in chapter eight; only the world is.

The sounding of the trumpets has important symbolic meaning. The Doctrine and Covenants makes it clear that, "as God made the world in six days, and on the seventh day he finished his work, and sanctified it, . . . the sounding of the trumpets of the seven angels are the preparing and finishing of his work, in the beginning of the seventh thousand years – the preparing of the way before the time of his coming" (D&C 77:12).

Much work must be done before the Lord comes in glory. The beginning of the Millennium will see the finishing of that work. The term millennium can be defined at least three ways. It means literally a period of a thousand years. According to LDS theology, the earth has passed through five full millennia and is about to complete a sixth. Using this definition, we think of the Millennium as the last thousand years of the earth's history before the "short season." The term can further be defined as that period during which the earth experiences peace and rest – the period when paradisiacal conditions will prevail. Finally, the term can define the period during which the Savior will take charge of affairs and reign personally upon the earth. These definitions are not mutually exclusive, and for the vast majority of the last thousand years all three definitions will be correct.

But Doctrine and Covenants 77 states that the seventh seal and the seventh thousand years coincide. That being the case, the Millennium will have begun before the second coming of the Savior. The Millennium officially begins at the time the Savior begins to reign on this earth at the great council at Adam-Ondi-Ahman. According to Elder Joseph Fielding Smith, "At that time there will be a transfer of authority from the usurper and imposter, Lucifer, to the rightful King, Jesus Christ. Judgment will be set and all who have held keys will make their reports and deliver their stewardships, as they shall be required. Adam will direct this judgment, and then he will make his report, as the one holding the keys for this earth, to his Superior Officer, Jesus Christ. Our Lord will then assume the reins of government; directions will be given to the Priesthood; and He, whose right it is to rule, will be installed officially by the voice of the Priesthood there assembled" (*The Way to Perfection*, Salt Lake City: Genealogical Society of Utah, 1931, 291. See also Bruce R. McConkie, *The Millennial Messiah*, Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1982, 578-88).

So, the second coming of the Savior does not usher in the Millennium; the plagues of the seven angels do. That work must first be completed before the Lord appears in glory. The

plagues are, therefore, God's last effort to soften the hardened. The plagues have but one purpose: to begin the cleansing process of the earth. But the method is twofold: first, to reclaim any who will repent under the excruciating pain of the last plagues; and second, to destroy those who will not.

As has been mentioned, as each angel sounds, echoes from Exodus 7-12 are heard. The scourges that God placed upon Egypt become John's type of the millennial plagues. The point seems to be that God will once again make bare his mighty arm before the nations. As Pharaoh hardened his heart and brought the plagues upon Egypt, so the Lord directs trumpet blasts against a world adamant in its hostility toward the Lamb. As happened with Egypt, as the intensity of the judgments increase, so also does the vehemence with which man refuses to repent (see Revelation 9:20-21; cf. Exodus 7:22-23; 8:15, 19, 32; 9:7, 12, 34-35; 10:20, 27-28).

But the trumpet blasts are not designed to destroy the earth. They affect a significant proportion, but not all. On twelve different instances the Revelator limits the destruction to one-third, symbolically showing that their bounds have been set. They can go only so far. The fraction one-third is used by a number of the prophets in association with what is called "remnant theology," the remnant being the unaffected part. We see this in Ezekiel 5:1-5. The prophet performs his dramatized prophecy (Hebrew 'ot,) against Jerusalem by shaving his head and beard, burns one-third of the hair with fire, cleaves one-third with the sword, and scatters the remainder to the wind. Only the latter one-third remains alive though scattered. It is the remnant. The fraction is used again in Ezekiel 5:12 and in Zechariah 13:8-9. In the latter, one-third is all that remains alive after the divine judgments while another one-third is burned with fire. So, the fraction John gives suggests that the purpose of the destruction in Revelation 8 is not so much retribution as a last attempt to turn man to God.

The plagues do not arise out of natural phenomena such as volcanic action. They represent eschatological judgments of which there is no equivalent in Jewish apocalyptic. The picture John paints graphically shows the tremendous power that will rampage upon the earth.

In this way, John symbolizes the great destructions he saw unleashed. The separate plagues are not to be taken as happening one after the other. Rather, the whole world will likely be set in commotion simultaneously. The attack is directed primarily against nature. Nonetheless, mankind is seriously affected. When the grass and trees are hurt, the wheat and fruit trees go up in flames. When the fresh waters are affected they become as wormwood, a very bitter herb that makes the water impossible to drink. The catastrophes apparently cause the atmosphere to become so polluted that sunlight and moonlight are significantly dimmed. This may cause a drastic change in the weather patterns of the earth. A greenhouse effect may be set up and temperatures rise unusually, resulting in the conditions noted by John in chapter sixteen.

The day of darkness as a symbol of the day of judgment runs throughout the Old Testament. Amos notes that the Lord's day will be a day of darkness and not of light (Amos 5:18). For Joel, it will be a "day of darkness and of gloominess, a day of clouds and of thick

darkness" (Joel 2:2). As the Savior noted, in the day of the Lord, "the sun shall be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light" (Mark 13:24; cf. Isaiah 13:10). The fourth trumpet plague fulfills these conditions.

In each of the first three instances, fire is an active ingredient in the judgments. However, this fire is not the same as the fire of the Lord's coming. During the latter "the elements should melt with fervent heat, and the earth should be wrapt together as a scroll, and the heavens and the earth should pass away" (3 Nephi 26:3: cf. Mormon 9:2). The fire of these three judgments precedes the fire of the Lord's second coming. The fire of the Lord's coming has been called "the Great Overburn," an apt description of the final holocaust of Revelation, and has been associated with the last great war before the second coming – a war of a special nature. It is not described in the usual term of bloodshed and the work of the sword. It is a war of burning in which "the people shall be as the fuel of the fire" (2 Nephi 19:19).

It would take a miracle for anyone to survive such a general holocaust, but that is exactly the point. The destruction of these judgments is limited. God supervises the whole thing. Further, the fire acts as his agent. Its purpose is not only to destroy, but also to protect his people:

For the time soon cometh that the fulness of the wrath of God shall be poured out upon all the children of men; for he will not suffer that the wicked shall destroy the righteous. Wherefore, he will preserve the righteous by his power, even if it so be that the fulness of his wrath must come, and the righteous be preserved, even unto the destruction of their enemies by fire. Wherefore, the righteous need not fear; for thus saith the prophet, they shall be saved, even if it so be as by fire. Behold, my brethren, I say unto you, that these things must shortly come; yea, even blood, and fire, and vapor of smoke must come; and it must needs be upon the face of this earth; and it cometh unto men according to the flesh if it so be that they will harden their hearts against the Holy One of Israel (1 Nephi 22:16-18).

The Lord is perfectly prepared to allow thousands to die in order to protect his people. Some may have trouble with this idea, but John has a very realistic understanding about death. From his perspective, all must die. The question is when and how. Ultimate destiny is not determined by the moment or manner of death; it is by the manner of life. Those who are destroyed are not annihilated. They have further existence. But for the present they have not been playing the game by God's rules. They have become mean, and so they are thrown into the penalty box, so to speak, for unnecessary roughness while the game goes on. According to Caird, the idea that mortality is so infallibly precious that

the death which robs us of it must be the ultimate tragedy is precisely the idolatry that John is trying here to combat. We have already seen that John calls the enemies of the church "the inhabitants of earth," because they have made themselves utterly at home in this transient world order. If all men must die, and

if at the end heaven and earth must vanish, along with those whose life is irremediably bounded by worldly horizons, then it is surely in accord with the mercy of God that he should send men from time to time forceful reminders of the insecurity of their tenure (*Revelation*, 113).

Besides, as already noted, the purpose of the plagues is to drive those who would not otherwise do so to repentance and, thus, into the protective arms of God. Those who will not repent must be accountable to the fire.

The Lord has stated, "Mine indignation is soon to be poured out without measure upon all nations; and this will I do when the cup of their iniquity is full" (D&C 101:11). The world will not take advantage of the half hour of silence to repent. Though warned and recognizing the source of that warning, they will not respond. Thus, sin will be added to sin until the measure is complete; when it is, the moment of grace will pass. Then the angels will sound, and the earth will fall under the power of the four trumpets.

13 And I beheld, and heard an angel flying through the midst of heaven, saying with a loud voice, Woe, woe, woe, to the inhabitants of the earth by reason of the other voices of the trumpet of the three angels, which are yet to sound!

verse 13 "I beheld, and heard an angel flying through the midst of heaven" The word "angel" here is probably not what was intended. Most manuscripts have the Greek word aetos here which translates as either eagle or vulture, as in the Septuagint and the New Testament (e.g. Luke 17:37). This verse parallels D&C 88:92, which reads, "And angels shall fly through the midst of heaven, crying with a loud voice, sounding the trump of God, saying: Prepare ye, prepare ye, O inhabitants of the earth; for the judgment of our God is come."

"with a loud voice" All of the earth's inhabitants must hear. The voice here is probably not literal; instead, it may pertain to God's judgments that accompany the sounding of the seven trumps. All of humanity will hear of these great calamities.

"Woe, woe, woe, to the inhabitants of the earth" These words clearly show God's deep displeasure in the inhabitants of the earth, specifically those who choose sin and worldliness and will not repent. God's pronouncement of a woe results in a condition of woe on the earth.

Woe denotes great trouble and anguish; three woes magnify the trouble and anguish. The first woe occurs when the fifth angel sounds his trumpet (Revelation 9:1-12), and the second woe accompanies the sixth angel's trumpet blast (Revelation 9:13-21) and is fulfilled in Revelation 11:14, although there is an interlude in chapter 10. John does not identify the fulfillment of the third woe, although it may be connected with the bowl of judgments in Revelation 16, for we observe that as the opening of the seventh seal encompasses both the seven trumps and the seven bowls, so might the seventh trump encompass the seven bowls.

God uses three woes to encourage the wicked to repent, for he says, "Woe shall come unto the inhabitants of the earth if they will not hearken unto my words" (D&C 5:5).

As if the destruction trumpeted by the four angels were not enough, John hears the ominous cry of a bird of prey preparing to dive for the kill. The image of the vulture hovering over a dying beast or of the eagle ready to swoop down for the kill best expresses the doom that the other three trumpets are about to bring upon unrepentant man. From the high heaven where all are visible to it and it is visible to all, it screeches its dirge: "Woe, woe, woe to the inhabitants of the earth" because of the trumpet blasts that are about to be sounded by the other three angels. Real destruction, of which mankind has had only a little taste up to this point, awaits the fifth trumpet blast. Indeed, verse thirteen serves as a "transition between the four plagues brought by God upon nature to lead man to repentance and the subsequent demonic woes in which man will be directly subjected to the forces of the abyss" (Mounce, *Revelation*, 189).

Revelation Chapter 9 Fifth and Sixth Angels Sound Their Trumps

1 And the fifth angel sounded, and I saw a star fall from heaven unto the earth: and to him was given the key of the bottomless pit.

verse 1 As the fifth trumpet blasts, the first of the eagle's woes strikes the earth. A star, symbolic of a once divine being, a premortal power of such proportion his name was "light bearer," unlocks a terror so great that no nightmare can match it. The tense of the verb fall in verse one actually should read: "I saw a star fallen from heaven." John did not see the star fall but knew that it had fallen. The star had become evil and twisted, partaking too long of a poison so strong it could snuff out all light and turn a "son of the morning" into the devil himself. John will have more to say of the fall of this great and terrible being in chapter twelve. For now, the John seems to have had the words of the Lord in mind, "I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven" (Luke 10:18). Isaiah's imagery also holds:

How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! how art thou cut down to the ground, which didst weaken the nations! For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north: I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the most High. Yet thou shalt be brought down to hell, to the sides of the pit (14:12-15).

"key of the bottomless pit" According to his divine schedule, God permits the inhabitants of hell to come forth with Satan as their king (Revelation 9:11), and unleash their torment on earth's inhabitants. Later an angel will come out of heaven with a key and a chain which he will use to bind Satan for a thousand years (Revelation 20:1-3).

"bottomless pit" The pit is the abyss, or the "place of imprisonment for disobedient spirits" (Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, 1:9, s.v. "abyss"). This is the pit identified in Joseph Smith's translation of Isaiah 14:15, 19. The king of the abyss is Lucifer, who is also called Abaddon and Apollyon (Revelation 9:11). God, of course, has complete control over this prison (Revelation 20:1-3).

"And the fifth angel sounded, and I saw a star fall from heaven unto the earth: and to the angel was given the key of the bottomless pit." The JST has the fifth angel holding the key and opening the bottomless pit rather than Satan.

2 And he opened the bottomless pit; and there arose a smoke out of the pit, as the smoke of a great furnace; and the sun and the air were darkened by reason of the smoke of the pit.

verse 2 When the fifth angel blows his trumpet, John sees Satan turn the key which results in the complete unleashing of hell upon the earth, as the great abyss is opened and smoke billows forth onto the earth, darkening the world with great evil. Armies, many perhaps unknowingly, will be influenced and led by the devil into battle. As locusts ravage green plants and trees, the armies will scourge the men and women of the earth, save those who are citizens of Zion and who possess the seal of the living God on their foreheads (Revelation 9:4;

7:3-4). The saints, we are told in a modern-day revelation, will dwell safely in Zion (D&C 45:66-70). Joseph Smith taught: "Some may have cried peace, but the saints and the world will have little peace from henceforth. . . The time is soon coming, when no man will have any peace but in Zion and her stakes" (HC, 3:390-91).

The series of events that accompanies the fifth and sixth trumpets is to encourage people to repent of their sins and to acknowledge God as their Lord and King (see Revelation 9:20-21).

John shows that Satan leads the hosts forth upon the earth. Before this, God overmastered the plagues through the destroying angels. From this point on, Satan personally directs the operations bringing the misery that fuels hell to the surface of the earth. John reveals the Adversary at his worst – venting anger, frustration, and rage. The world will feel the full thrust of his fury.

John sees the evil pour out of the pit in the abyss. Ancient writings show this place to be the abode of Jehovah's enemy and a kind of holding tank for fallen angels or even Satan himself. The key Satan uses to open the pit symbolizes power, authority, and ownership. But note, Satan does not own the key. He receives it. Once again, John reveals that someone acts behind the scenes, controlling and directing even the machinations of the Evil One. Ironically this potent one, for all his flaunted authority, cannot free the might of hell until God gives him the key. In this way, John shows that Perdition's dominion starts and ends where the Lord dictates. Satan's limits are firm – he cannot go beyond them (cf. Job 1:12; 2:6). But in the last days, because of the wickedness of men, the devil will have great power, "For I [God] am no respecter of persons, and will that all men shall know that the day speedily cometh; the hour is not yet, but is nigh at hand, when peace shall be taken from the earth, and the devil shall have power over his own dominion" (D&C 1:35).

"there arose a smoke out of the pit . . . the sun and the air were darkened" As the pit is opened, smoke billows forth and obscures the light of the sun. Darkness reigns. Through this powerful symbol, John reveals the nature of the first thrust against mankind: a blow against the light. The darkness of false philosophy and theology must first hide the truth. The Destroyer must mitigate the positive effects of the sixth seal and the first four trumpets. So, he sends forth deceptions and delusions after the pattern he has used before with tremendous success.

At an earlier time, when none could ignore the signs and many began to believe, Satan's smoke billowed forth: "From this time forth there began to be lyings sent forth among the people, by Satan, to harden their hearts, to the intent that they might not believe in those signs and wonders which they had seen" (3 Nephi 1:22). Yes, "Satan did stir them up to do iniquity continually; yea, he did go about spreading rumors and contentions upon all the face of the land, that he might harden the hearts of the people against that which was good and against that which should come" (Helaman 16:22). His plan worked well. Under his influence men began to rationalize against the continuing fulfillment of the words of the prophets, saying: "Some things they may have guessed right, among so many; but behold, we know that all

these great and marvelous works cannot come to pass, of which has been spoken" (Helaman 16:16). History is about to repeat itself.

3 And there came out of the smoke locusts upon the earth: and unto them was given power, as the scorpions of the earth have power.

verse 3 "there came out of the smoke locusts upon the earth" Out of this smoke of the abyss comes an appalling nightmare. The portrait of horror John describes focuses on one monstrosity: the locust. This dreaded engine of destruction ravages vegetation to such an extent that famine invariably follows. Coming out of the desert, locusts invade fertile areas in search of food. Some of their columns reach hundreds of feet in breadth and up to four miles in length. They strip the land bare of all vegetation. In Algiers, for instance, a plague of locusts created a famine that left two hundred thousand people dead. The Bible used locust plagues in a special symbolic sense that John follows: judgment against the rebellious. Pharaoh received this judgment from God because of his rebellion (see Exodus 10:4-20; Psalm 105:34-35). God told his own people that if they turned from him, he would send the locust plague upon them (see Deuteronomy; 1 Kings 8:35, 37; 2 Chronicles 7:13-14). Infestations of these swarming beasts were so dreaded that, even on the Sabbath, the shophar (the ram's horn trumpet blown only for sacred and very special occasions) would sound the alarm.

These insect demons were often associated with darkness. This was not accidental. The cloud they form is often so compact that it obscures the light of the sun. However, John's monsters do not cause the darkness; they result from it. According to the Doctrine and Covenants 93:39, "that wicked one cometh and taketh away light and truth, through disobedience, from the children of men." The result is a frenzy of evil not unlike the feeding frenzy of the locusts.

These are not actual insects, for they sting like scorpions, strike out at mankind, have a king, and are commanded not to eat vegetation (Revelation 9:3-5, 11). These are actually wicked men and armies with power to torment all of humanity except those who have God's seal in their foreheads (Revelation 9:4). John's imagery of locusts is similar to Joel's description of the locust-like armies that will "come up upon my land, strong, and without number. . . He hath laid my vine waste, and barked my fig tree: he hath made it clean bare, and cast it away; the branches thereof are made white" (Joel 1:4-7; 2:25). The locusts that plagued ancient Egypt and "covered the face of the whole earth, so that the land was darkened" (Exodus 10:15) are types of this great army of wicked people.

"unto them was given power" God gives agency to humankind, and he permits the wicked to destroy one another, but he sets boundaries for them.

"as the scorpions of the earth" Here and in Revelation 9:5 the locusts are likened to scorpions, which torment humans, often without killing them.

4 And it was commanded them that they should not hurt the grass of the earth, neither any green thing, neither any tree; but only those men which have not the seal of God in their foreheads.

verse 4 “it was commanded them” God controls the destiny of this army of locusts and commands them to harm only those who do not have God’s seal on their foreheads.

“not hurt the grass / green thing / tree” These are the usual objects that locusts feed on in their developmental stages (cankerworm, palmerworm, caterpillar, locust). The creatures of Revelation 9 are not like the locusts that plagued the Egyptians and “did eat every herb of the land, and all the fruit of the trees which the hail had left: and there remained not any green thing in the trees, or in the herbs of the field, through all the land of Egypt” (Exodus 10:15). These creatures are soldiers who seek to destroy humans.

“men which have not the seal of God in their foreheads” Their objective unlike real locusts’, is men. But not all men. Only those who do not wear the seal of the living God upon their foreheads. This verse glances back at chapter seven and the sealing of God’s servants. Inhabitants of Zion (many of whom will have the seal of God) will be preserved during this time. They will dwell in the New Jerusalem, which is called “a land of peace, a city of refuge, a place of safety for the saints of the Most High God. . . There shall be gathered unto it out of every nation under heaven; and it shall be the only people that shall not be at war one with another. And it shall be said among the wicked: Let us not go up to battle against Zion, for the inhabitants of Zion are terrible; wherefore we cannot stand” (D&C 45:66, 69-70). The righteous in the stakes of Zion will also have safety (D&C 115:5-6; 124:36).

Once again John does not let the reader forget that a power is moving behind the scenes, setting the limits, determining how far and how long things will go. The plague, though driven by the minions of hell, is under sovereign control.

5 And to them it was given that they should not kill them, but that they should be tormented five months: and their torment was as the torment of a scorpion, when he striketh a man.

verse 5 “to them it was given that they should not kill them” The armies of locusts will not kill humans; instead they will harm and torment them. Elder Bruce R. McConkie suggests that “perhaps John is seeing such things as the effects of poisonous gas, or bacteriological warfare, or atomic fallout, which disable but do not kill” (*Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, 3:502). The locusts must not kill, at least not at first. God permits them initially only to cause spiritual and mental anguish. The Greek word *basanisthsonτai* used by John and translated “torment” is from the noun *basanismos*, which occurs only in Revelation: twice here in 9:5, once of those who worship the beast in 14:11, and three times in 18:7,10,15 in association with the anguish of the Great Whore. In each instance, it indicates mental and spiritual suffering, not physical.

“tormented five months” Five months is the life cycle of the locust. Here five months may represent a short period and not exactly five months.

“torment of a scorpion” The scorpion’s sting rarely results in death, but it causes great pain and discomfort. Torment in this context pertains to more than war and warfare. Torment is also associated with “guilt and abominations, which doth cause [the wicked] to shrink from the presence of the Lord into a state of misery and endless torment” (Mosiah 3:25). Alma spoke of both the abyss and torment when he declared: “My soul hath been redeemed from the gall of bitterness and bonds of iniquity. I was in the darkest abyss. . . My soul was racked with eternal torment” (Mosiah 27:29).

6 And in those days shall men seek death, and shall not find it; and shall desire to die, and death shall flee from them.

verse 6 Just how the locusts are able to torment the wicked is not known. But John insists that the anguish is real, for “in those days shall men seek death, and shall not find it; and shall desire to die, and death shall flee from them” – death shall elude them. The scene is not pretty, but it is not as though there is no means of relief; righteousness, however, is the price. For these men and women, that price is too high. Death appears much cheaper; to melt into nothingness seems more desirable. Of course, this is an illusion. Nevertheless, they will cling to it as their only hope of escape.

Again, a parallel comes from the Book of Mormon. During the final battles that destroyed the Nephite nation, as blood and carnage swept through the land, “no man could keep that which was his own, for the thieves, and the robbers, and the murderers, and the magic art, and the witchcraft [i.e. sorceries] which was in the land” (Mormon 2:10). Everyone was out for everyone else’s wealth. As a result of the butchery and thievery, many were filled with sorrow and mourned, but “their sorrowing was not unto repentance, because of the goodness of God; but it was rather the sorrowing of the damned, because the Lord would not always suffer them to take happiness in sin” (Mormon 2:13). As a result, “they did curse God, and wish to die. Nevertheless, they would struggle with the sword for their lives” (Mormon 2:14).

Note that in both Revelation and the Book of Mormon, “it is by the wicked that the wicked are punished; for it is the wicked that stir up the hearts of the children of men unto bloodshed” (Mormon 4:5). The locusts breed their sadistic torment and pour it out upon the corrupt. God’s judgment comes fully, but God needs to do nothing. In fact, his judgment is to do nothing.

7 And the shapes of the locusts were like unto horses prepared unto battle; and on their heads were as it were crowns like gold, and their faces were as the faces of men.

verse 7 “shapes of the locusts” John seems to be describing soldiers that are trained and equipped to fight on land, sea, or in the air, with their various types of uniforms and protective gear, including helmets, body armor, and protective masks; their war vehicles, including aircraft, helicopters, tanks, and dozens of other military machines; and their weaponry and artillery of many types and kinds, each designed to harm, maim, or kill humans.

He may be describing that which belongs to military units of our era, or he may be seeing that which belongs to our own future.

Joseph Fielding Smith, citing Isaiah 5:26-30, Nahum 2:2-5, and Revelation 9:6-10, opined that the ancient prophets saw “our automobiles, our railroad trains . . . the airplanes flying in the midst of the heavens, because we can read in the prophecies of these ancient scriptures many things that indicate that these things were revealed unto those ancient prophets” (*Doctrines of Salvation*, 1:146).

John describes the things that he envisions by using objects or creatures that were known to him in the first century after Christ: locusts, horses, crowns, hair, lions, breastplates, chariots, and scorpions. These objects and creatures create a fearsome picture of symbolic images for his audience.

“shapes of the locusts were like unto horses prepared unto battle” This phrase recalls Joel 2:4, which reads: “The appearance of them is as the appearance of horses; and as horsemen, so shall they run.” The image of locusts depicts an army of tens of thousands of warriors, an army so great that its soldiers darken the land and cannot be numbered. The phrase “horses prepared unto battle” portrays warriors wearing body armor similar to the protective body and headgear worn by warhorses of John’s day. John’s description here recalls Job’s description of a warhorse (Job 39:19-24).

“on their heads were as it were crowns like gold” This expression may refer to the soldier’s helmet, in all of its shapes and varieties. The Greek word here is stephanos (the award for athletic prowess), not diadma, “royal crown.” This is the only place where the word is associated with any other than the Lord and the saints. However, these are not crowns of permanent victory. John makes it clear that “on their heads were as it were crowns like gold,” but not the real thing: his phrase stephanoi homoioi chrus means “laurels like unto gold.” Victory of the wicked is at best only an imitation of the genuine; it is never lasting or true. The locusts, though terrifying in their appearance and crushing in their initial onslaught, cannot conquer.

“their faces were as the faces of men” This expression seems to indicate that the locusts represent men.

8 And they had hair as the hair of women, and their teeth were as the teeth of lions.

verse 8 “they had hair as the hair of women” We don’t know what this expression means, but there is precedent in scripture for long hair on men being seen as a sign of strength (Judges 16:17).

“their teeth were as the teeth of lions” This expression describes the warriors’ ability to ravage and destroy. It also recalls Joel’s description of warriors: “For a nation is come up upon my land, strong, and without number, whose teeth are the teeth of a lion, and he hath the cheek teeth of a great lion” (Joel 1:6-7). Satan himself has been called a “roaring lion, [who] walketh about, seeking whom he may devour” (1 Peter 5:8).

9 And they had breastplates, as it were breastplates of iron; and the sound of their wings was as the sound of chariots of many horses running to battle.

verse 9 “they had breastplates” Modern soldiers’ armor and protective gear covers vital organs. It may also refer to the armor of war vehicles.

“sound of chariots of many horses” Natural locusts in flight make a fearful noise, and the reference here may be to the mingled sound of chariot wheels and the hooves of the horses (see Joel 2:5). Anciently the chariot and its horses were used for war, and in prophetic language they may be a metaphor for modern war vehicles (Ezekiel 39:20; Daniel 11:40; Joel 2:5).

10 And they had tails like unto scorpions, and there were stings in their tails: and their power was to hurt men five months.

verse 10 “they had tails like unto scorpions” This expression could refer to any number of weapons.

“power was to hurt men five months” This particular battle, or war, will have a limited duration. It may serve as a precursor to the great war that will accompany the blasting of the sixth trumpet, when two hundred million soldiers will fight and kill one-third of humanity (Revelation 9:13-19).

11 And they had a king over them, which is the angel of the bottomless pit, whose name in the Hebrew tongue is Abaddon, but in the Greek tongue hath his name Apollyon.

verse 11 “And they had a king over them” A single king drives the frenzied host. Though not identified specifically as such, he is the fallen star, Satan who is the angel of the abyss. John gives him both a Hebrew and Greek epithet. In the Hebrew, he is called Abaddn. The name is derived from *abad*, meaning “to perish,” and the noun meaning “he who causes to perish,” or “the destroyer.” The Greek Apollun means “destroyer” as well. No matter what the language is, the message is the same. Satan, an unseen general, pushes the horde forward. They are his minions, aping his nature, being led by his demonic inspiration. Their rise and torment constitute the fifth trumpet blast and the first period of woe.

12 One woe is past; and, behold, there come two woes more hereafter.

verse 12 “one woe is past” The first woe occurs when the fifth angel sounds his trumpet (Revelation 9:1-12); the second woe will begin with the blowing of the trumpet by the sixth angel (Revelation 9:13-21). There are still two more woes to go. The sixth trumpet blast is about to sound.

The second woe brings great anguish upon humankind, for two hundred million warriors battle in war and destroy, ultimately causing the death of one-third of humanity. John uses descriptive and symbolic terms in describing this great conflagration, including fire (three times), brimstone (three times), smoke (twice), lions, and serpents. The sixth trump announces these events, but it is Satan and his angels who set them in motion through their

evil influence and guidance. The events recall numerous other historical time periods when “Satan had great dominion among men, and raged in their hearts; and from thenceforth came wars and bloodshed” (JST Genesis 6:13).

The purpose of these events that accompany the blowing of this trump is to encourage humankind to repent of their many grievous sins, which John lists as idolatry, murders, sorceries, fornication, and thefts. Sadly, they do not repent of their wickedness.

13 And the sixth angel sounded, and I heard a voice from the four horns of the golden altar which is before God,

verse 13 The second woe begins here with the blowing of the sixth angel’s trump but is not completed until Revelation 11:14, in which John writes “the second woe is past.”

“voice from the four horns of the golden altar which is before God” The voice here could be that of the angel identified in Revelation 8:3-5, who was located near this altar.

An alternate explanation for the voice comes from the horns of the altar might be that in some way the second woe is connected with or a result of the prayers of the saints, for the voice that commands the infliction comes from the very place, the altar, on which their prayers were offered (see Revelation 7:3-4).

14 Saying to the sixth angel which had the trumpet, Loose the four angels which are bound in the great river Euphrates.

verse 14 “Loose the four angels which are bound in the great river Euphrates [bottomless pit]” The “bound” angels may belong to that group of “angels that sinned” and thus who God “cast . . . down to hell, and delivered them into chains of darkness” (2 Peter 2:4; see also Jude 1:6). They will be set loose to prompt and persuade the wicked to kill one-third of humankind during the great war described in Revelation 9:15-19.

“Saying to the sixth angel which had the trumpet, Loose the four angels which are bound in the bottomless pit.”

15 And the four angels were loosed, which were prepared for an hour, and a day, and a month, and a year, for to slay the third part of men.

verse 15 “prepared for an hour / day / month / year” The time mentioned here does not indicate how long the four angels will be loosed, but it does say they will be loosed at a specific, divinely appointed time. The Jerusalem Bible reads, “These four angels had been put there ready for this hour of this day of this month of this year.”

These angels have been prepared specifically for this moment, for they had been kept ready (see verse 15). Here the Greek participle hoihtoimasmenoi (a reflexive perfect passive) is “those having been prepared,” or “those having been made ready.” The use of the perfect tense heightens the idea of their purpose. At an exact moment, and not a second before, Satan will release the demonic tetrad. But the destroying angels do not have complete reign.

John once again uses the symbolic number one-third to show that there is a limit to what they can do. God continues to hold sway even at this moment.

“for to slay the third part of men” The army of two hundred million individuals (see commentary on 9:16), with their modern weapons of destruction, will kill one-third of the earth’s inhabitants. It is unclear whether the figure “one-third” is to be taken as literal or symbolic.

16 And the number of the army of the horsemen were two hundred thousand thousand: and I heard the number of them.

verse 16 “number of the army . . . were two hundred thousand” The number of fighting men that John “saw” (JST) was two hundred million, twice the number of the angels who were worshipping God in the celestial kingdom (Revelation 5:11). The numerical figure is likely symbolic, intended to represent great hosts of warriors: “And the number of the army of the horsemen were two hundred thousand thousand: and I saw the number of them.”

17 And thus I saw the horses in the vision, and them that sat on them, having breastplates of fire, and of jacinth, and brimstone: and the heads of the horses were as the heads of lions; and out of their mouths issued fire and smoke and brimstone.

verse 17 “I saw the horses in the vision, and them that sat on them” John describes this scene of horses using various images and symbols; he makes threefold repetition of “fire” and “brimstone” (the Jerusalem Bible says “fire” and “sulfur”) and twofold repetition of “smoke” and “horses” in verses 17-18. Fire, smoke (see commentary on Revelation 9:2), and brimstone may describe the bombs and destructive devices associated with present- day or future warfare. Horses often represent war vehicles (see commentary on 9:9).

18 By these three was the third part of men killed, by the fire, and by the smoke, and by the brimstone, which issued out of their mouths.

verse 18 “by these three was the third part of men killed” Fire, smoke, and brimstone are the weapons of this mighty army that will destroy one-third of humanity.

19 For their power is in their mouth, and in their tails: for their tails were like unto serpents, and had heads, and with them they do hurt.

verse 19 “power is in their mouth, and in their tails” The fire-breathing capacity of these lion-headed horses symbolizes “the torment of hell and [underscores their] diabolical nature.” (Draper, Opening the Seven Seals, 108.) Like the scorpions in Revelation 9:10, there is destructive power in the horses’ tails. In fact, the tails are snakes with heads, another evidence that they are sent from the devil (Mounce, *Book of Revelation*, 197).

20 And the rest of the men which were not killed by these plagues yet repented not of the works of their hands, that they should not worship devils, and idols of gold, and silver, and brass, and stone, and of wood: which neither can see, nor hear, nor walk:

verse 20 As amazing as it seems, those that are not killed continue to worship the very forces that worked for their destruction. They refuse to give up their materialistic idolatry. Their hearts continue to crave gold, silver, brass, and other material objects that, as John points out, “neither can see, nor hear, nor walk.” Though their world is collapsing because of it, these wicked souls sell themselves as the lackeys of the Never-living and the Destroyer-doomed-to-destruction. Thievery, murder, and fornication, specifically prohibited in the ten commandments, all continue apace.

“rest of the men . . . repented not” The “rest of the men” speaks of those who are not sealed (Revelation 9:4) and who survive the warfare described above. The purpose for the blowing of the sixth trumpet is manifest here: to encourage the wicked to repent, for they are idolaters, devil worshippers, murderer, fornicators, thieves, and sorcerers (Revelation 9:21). The great war, however, during which one-third of humankind is destroyed, does not succeed in bringing the wicked to repentance; they “repented not of the works of their hands, that they should not worship devils, and idols,” writes John.

“works of their hands” This expression seems to refer to idol worship (Psalm 115:4-7; Isaiah 2:8; Jeremiah 1:16), which consists both of images and statues created by human hands and of all the evil deeds and actions of humanity that replace one’s righteous desire to serve the true and living God.

“that they should not worship devils” Humanity continues to worship devils, even after the great war that destroys so many. Devil worship has long been a gross evil conducted upon the earth (Deuteronomy 32:17; Psalm 106:37; 1 Corinthians 10:20-21).

“idols of gold” Nephi warned, “Yea, wo unto those that worship idols, for the devil of all devils delighteth in them” (2 Nephi 9:37). In our dispensation we are told of those who “have strayed from [God’s] ordinances, and have broken [God’s] everlasting covenant; they seek not the Lord to establish his righteousness, but every man walketh in his own way, and after the image of his own god, whose image is in the likeness of the world, and whose substance is that of an idol, which waxeth old and shall perish in Babylon, even Babylon the great, which shall fall” (D&C 1:15-16).

21 Neither repented they of their murders, nor of their sorceries, nor of their fornication, nor of their thefts.

verse 21 To the list John adds sorcery. The Greek word he uses is *pharmakeia*, from which the word pharmacy is derived. Pharmakeia indicates the use of drugs, elixirs, and contraceptive potions associated with the occult. When freely accepted, these narcotics addict, desensitize, and deceive the nations, resulting in blindness and the inability to change. The use of drugs, simple and potent, is the same means by which the Mother of Abominations is able to deceive the nations (see Revelation 18, particularly verse 23).

John's two images in chapter nine combine to reveal the nature of the latter-day nightmare, give the reader a feel for the horror that Satan will free against the wicked. The vision creates a picture composed of the most horrible images that can be imagined; not so much to detail what actually will be but to give the reader, through the use of powerful metaphors, a feeling for the reality behind what will be. But the real horror is neither the horses nor the horsemen. It is those men and women who will live through the evil day and not be humbled, who will continue to cling to their idols of gold, silver, brass, stone, and wood. Inanimate objects, which neither see, nor hear, nor feel, will become masters and bind to themselves these demented souls. Thus, these people practice the most blatant form of idolatry – placing material things before God – even in the face of the reality that their idols do them no good.

And all this will "be accomplished after the opening of the seventh seal, before the coming of Christ" (D&C 77:13). The second coming of the Lord does not usher in the millennial era. The woes pronounced by the trumpets do. Let me emphasize, Christ will not appear in glory as the millennial day dawns. Instead, Satan's inferno-creating horses and sadistic hoards "having fiery breastplates, dusky red, and sulfurous" will.

The Millennium, for the purpose of this study, begins at the time the Savior commences his reign on the earth. But to begin his rule, he does not have to have appeared to the world. His reign begins as he collects the keys he has given to the prophets through the ages and directs affairs personally. Daniel gives a hint when this will be. Speaking as though it had already happened, he notes that war was made against the saints and that the wicked had power to prevail "until the Ancient of days came, and judgment was given to the saints of the most High; and the time came that the saints possessed the kingdom" (Daniel 7:21-22). The prophet appears to have had in mind the great future gathering at Adam-ondi-Ahman. At that time, Adam, the Ancient of days, will appear, as will the Savior. An account will be given to the Lord, and he will then begin to personally orchestrate all events from that point (see D&C 116). Very likely the events in Revelation 8 and 9 will take place after this event.

How long after the Millennium begins will it take for the Lord to come? "The hour and the day no man knoweth, neither the angels in heaven, nor shall they know until he comes" (D&C 49:7). But it will likely be some time after the seventh seal is opened. For the present, we of the sixth seal are to watch for the signs the Lord has given and wait in faith. In this way, we prepare ourselves to receive the Savior's mark, because of which we will have no need to fear the millennial-day horrors.

Revelation Chapter 10 John Sees a Visions of a Book Which He Eats. Seventh Angel Pronounces Destruction Complete

Chapter 10 describes the second interlude giving John some specific personal instructions.

John sees the vision of a book which he eats. In his mouth, it is sweet, and yet in his belly it is bitter. The book represents the future missionary work which John is called to do (D&C 77:14). Keep in mind that John became a translated being in order to continue his labors upon the earth. It is sweet to preach the gospel but bitter to see the saints suffer so because of the gospel. In John's day preaching the gospel was essentially offering persecution or death to those who received it.

1 And I saw another mighty angel come down from heaven, clothed with a cloud: and a rainbow was upon his head, and his face was as it were the sun, and his feet as pillars of fire:

verse 1 John has prepared his reader to expect in chapter ten the final trumpet blast to fill the air the final woe to be hurled against the wicked. But it does not happen. The seventh angel does not appear; the trumpet remains mute. Instead, the picture shifts and a new vision opens. In this way, John dramatically introduces another interlude, a moment of instruction and insight before the resolution of the crisis.

"I saw another mighty angel come down from heaven" As the new vision opens, John sees another angel, mighty and radiant, descending from heaven, holding a little scroll in his hand. This angel stands in sharp contrast to the star that introduced chapter nine: The star fell to earth; the angel descends of his own accord. The star had to receive the key to the pit; the angel possesses the book. Thick black smoke boiled from the star's abyss, while brilliant spectral light emanates from the angel's face. The star drove the demonic horde; the angel governs cosmic phenomena – cloud, rainbow, sun. One stands as a prince of darkness; the other as a prince of light. One is Satan, the father of lies; the other, the revealer of truth. Thus, John demonstrates the vast difference between the two beings.

John describes the angel's celestial light and glory with four symbolic expressions: cloud, rainbow, sun, and fire. His greatness is further emphasized with the expressions "mighty," "loud voice" (verse 3), and "as when a lion roareth" (verse 3). Although he is not identified by name, the angel is likely Michael, the seventh angel, who is second only to Jehovah himself in authority. D&C 88:110-12 (see also Daniel 12:7) identifies Michael as the seventh angel, has some notable similarities with this section of Revelation (see the following table). These three verses have significant similarities but also have a different context.

Revelation 10:1-7

1 And I saw another mighty angel come down from heaven, clothed with a cloud: and a rainbow was upon his head, and his face was as it were the sun, and his feet as pillars of fire:

2 And he had in his hand a little book open: and he set his right foot upon the sea, and his left foot on the earth,

3 And cried with a loud voice, as when a lion roareth: and when he had cried, seven thunders uttered their voices.

4 And when the seven thunders had uttered their voices, I was about to write: and I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Seal up those things which the seven thunders uttered, and write them not.

5 And the angel which I saw stand upon the sea and upon the earth lifted up his hand to heaven,

6 And sware by him that liveth for ever and ever, who created heaven, and the things that therein are, and the earth, and the things that therein are, and the sea, and the things which are therein, that there should be time no longer:

7 But in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he shall begin to sound, the mystery of God should be finished, as he hath declared to his servants the prophets.

Doctrine and Covenants 88:110-112

110 And so on, until the seventh angel shall sound his trump; and he shall stand forth upon the land and upon the sea, and swear in the name of him who sitteth upon the throne, that there shall be time no longer; and Satan shall be bound, that old serpent, who is called the devil, and shall not be loosed for the space of a thousand years.

111 And then he shall be loosed for a little season, that he may gather together his armies.

112 And Michael, the seventh angel, even the archangel, shall gather together his armies, even the hosts of heaven.

“a rainbow was upon his head” Once again the image of the rainbow is present, sign of God’s covenant not only with mankind, but also with all living creatures. It surrounds the angel’s head like a many-colored diadem (a crown or ornamental head band) beaming around a face full of celestial glory prepared to bestow favor and blessings. It reminds one of the invocation that Aaron bestowed upon Israel saying, “The Lord bless thee, and keep thee: the Lord make his face shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee: the Lord lift up his countenance upon thee, and give thee peace” (Numbers 6:24-26). The rainbow also suggests the Lord’s covenant with Noah, that he would again bring Zion to the earth (JST Genesis 9:21-23.)

2 And he had in his hand a little book open: and he set his right foot upon the sea, and his left foot on the earth,

verse 2 “he had in his hand a little book” This “little book” is mentioned four times: Revelation 10:2, 8, 9, 10. This “book,” or scroll, is not the same as that identified in Revelation 5:1-5, which is sealed with seven seals, for this book is described as “little” and “open” (the other book was sealed), and the angel (possibly Michael) has the book in his hand (no one but Jesus was permitted to touch the other book). The little book would be eaten by John, representing “a mission, and an ordinance, for him to gather the tribes of Israel; behold, this is Elias, who, as it is written, must come and restore all things” (D&C 77:14).

“he set his right foot upon the sea, and his left foot on the earth” John speaks three times of the angel standing on sea and land (10:2, 5, 8). A similar expression is found in D&C 88:110, where the order of “land” and “sea” is reversed. “Earth” and “sea” appear to indicate the total existence of the celestial world (Exodus 20:4, 11; Psalm 69:34). That the mighty angel has established one foot on the sea and a second on the earth may demonstrate that the celestial world is under his power and authority. It is not clear why the angel sets his right foot on the sea and his left on the earth and not the other way around.

“And he had in his right hand a little book open: and he set his right foot upon the sea, and his left foot on the earth.”

3 And cried with a loud voice, as when a lion roareth: and when he had cried, seven thunders uttered their voices.

verse 3 “cried with a loud voice, as when a lion roareth” The “loud voice” may be required so that a very large audience will hear the angel, as was the case in Revelation 7:9-10 and 8:13; or it may refer to the great authority of the angel, whose voice resembles the mighty voice of God himself, which is sometimes likened to a lion’s roar (Hosea 11:10; Joel 3:16; Amos 1:2; 3:8).

“seven thunders uttered their voices” The thunders are voices in heaven (Revelation 6:1; 14:2; Mosiah 27:18) that respond to the loud voice of the angel. Compare the sevenfold “voice of the Lord” in Psalm 29:3. Elder Bruce R. McConkie suggests that “the seven thunders which here utter their voices are the seven angels reciting in some detail that which is to be in each of the thousand year periods of the earth’s temporal continuance” (*Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, 3:505).

Elder McConkie also provides another possible interpretation of the seven thunders: “It also appears that John’s vision prefigured what is to be when the events occur and that the promised proclamations shall yet be made when the hour for Millennial peace actually arrives.” Doctrine and Covenants 88:108-10 speaks of the seven angels, who each sound their trumpets and “reveal the secret acts of men, and the thoughts and intents of their hearts, and the mighty works of God” (D&C 88:109) in each of the six thousand years of the earth’s temporal existence.

4 And when the seven thunders had uttered their voices, I was about to write: and I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Seal up those things which the seven thunders uttered, and write them not.

verse 4 John gives neither the content of the angel's cry nor the thunders' message. In fact, God specifically commands him to seal up the message.

This is the only place in all Revelation where disclosure is forbidden. On other occasions, too, God has directed his prophets to "shut up the words, and seal the book" (Daniel 12:4; 2 Nephi 27:22; Ether 3:22-23, 27-28).

"And when the seven thunders had uttered their voices, I was about to write: and I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Those things are sealed up which the seven thunders uttered, and write them not."

5 And the angel which I saw stand upon the sea and upon the earth lifted up his hand to heaven,

6 And sware by him that liveth for ever and ever, who created heaven, and the things that therein are, and the earth, and the things that therein are, and the sea, and the things which are therein, that there should be time no longer:

verses 5-6 The mighty angel lifts his right hand (many translations read "right hand") to heaven, making the standard oath-taking gesture (Genesis 14:22; Deuteronomy 32:40; Daniel 12:7). With one foot on the sea, the other on the land, and the right arm raised to the sky, the angel "touches the three parts of the universe because he is going to swear by him who created them" (Harrington, *Revelation*, 115).

"him that liveth for ever" This is a name, or title, of God the Father. The angel swears by using God's name, for there is no greater power and more exalted name. When God himself makes oaths with his people, he swears "by himself" because "he could swear by no greater" (Hebrews 6:13). To emphasize that God is the most exalted of all, John writes that "him that liveth for ever and ever" is the same being who created heaven, earth, the sea, and all things that are found within them.

The mighty angel then swears a solemn oath "that there should be time no longer" The context of this phrase is the sounding of the seventh angel's trumpet, as recorded in the next verse, which reads, "When he shall begin to sound, the mystery of God should be finished" (Revelation 10:7; see also D&C 88:106). This passage coincides with Revelation 11:15, when the seventh angel actually sounds his trumpet, signaling the end of the earth in its present state, or the time when the earthly kingdoms "become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever."

In this setting, "time no longer" may refer to the beginning of the Millennium, when time as we understand it with our calendar, seasons, hours, minutes, and seconds no longer exists. This seems to be the manner in which two revelations use the phrase "time no longer": "The Lord hath redeemed his people; and Satan is bound and time is no longer. The Lord hath

gathered all things in one. The Lord hath brought down Zion from above. The Lord hath brought up Zion from beneath" (D&C 84:100) and "The seventh angel shall sound his trump; and he shall stand forth upon the land and upon the sea, and swear in the name of him who sitteth upon the throne, that there shall be time no longer; and Satan shall be bound, that old serpent, who is called the devil, and shall not be loosed for the space of a thousand years" (D&C 88:110).

The phrase could also mean "there should be no more delay," meaning that there will be no more delay before the final signs of the times are fulfilled and God sends his final judgments upon the wicked. This phrase answers the martyrs' question, "How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?" (Revelation 6:10).

7 But in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he shall begin to sound, the mystery of God should be finished, as he hath declared to his servants the prophets.

verse 7 "days of the voice of the seventh angel" Michael, the seventh angel, sounds his trump at least twice and possibly on three different occasions (Revelation 11:15; D&C 88:106, 110). This constitutes the "days of the voice of the seventh angel."

"mystery of God should be finished" The "mystery of God" may pertain to the book with seven seals that "contains the revealed will, mysteries, and the works of God; the hidden things of his economy concerning this earth during the seven thousand years of its continuance, or its temporal existence" (D&C 77:6). This mystery will be finished "in the days of the voice of the seventh angel." Elsewhere the seventh angel is associated with completion, for the number seven signifies completion: when he pours out his vial, a voice from heaven says, "It is done" (Revelation 16:17); and when he sounds his trump, he declares, "It is finished; it is finished!" (D&C 88:106; see also Revelation 11:15; D&C 88:110).

"declared to his servants the prophets" The Lord has revealed the completion of God's mystery to many of his prophets, who are called the Lord's "servants" (2 Kings 17:23; Jeremiah 25:4; Daniel 9:10).

8 And the voice which I heard from heaven spake unto me again, and said, Go and take the little book which is open in the hand of the angel which standeth upon the sea and upon the earth.

verse 8 "voice which I heard from heaven spake unto me again" This voice is the same that commanded John not to write the "things which the seven thunders uttered" (Revelation 10:4). Here the voice commands John to take the little book from the hand of the mighty angel.

"take the little book" Ezekiel and Lehi also received books from heavenly messengers (Ezekiel 2:9; 1 Nephi 1:11). The command to John to eat the little book identified in Revelation 10:8-11 "was a mission, and an ordinance, for him to gather the tribes of Israel; behold, this is Elias, who, as it is written, must come and restore all things" (D&C 77:14). John's job includes

active participation in restoring the gospel and priesthood blessings to scattered Israel. Presently, he is actively involved in fulfilling the rest. In June conference, 1831, the prophet Joseph Smith stated “that John the Revelator was then among the Ten Tribes of Israel who had been led away by Salmanasar, king of Assyria, to prepare them for their return from their long dispersion” (*HC*, 1:176).

In addition, John is an Elias; he is identified in the revelations as one who, accompanying Peter and John, restored keys and powers to the earth through the prophet Joseph Smith (D&C 27:12-13; 128:20). The prophets spoke of Elias, who “must come and restore all things” (JST Matthew 11:15; 17:10; D&C 27:6-7). Joseph Fielding Smith explained that “the Elias who was to restore all things is a composite Elias. In other words, the restoration was not made by one personage, but many, and in speaking of Elias coming to restore all things, the Lord was using that title in a plural meaning, having in mind all the prophets who came to restore the fulness of the gospel. This would include John the Baptist, Peter, James and John, and every ancient prophet who restored keys from the days of Adam down” (*Doctrines of Salvation*, 1:174).

9 And I went unto the angel, and said unto him, Give me the little book. And he said unto me, Take it, and eat it up; and it shall make thy belly bitter, but it shall be in thy mouth sweet as honey.

verse 9 “I went unto the angel” John approaches the angel to obtain the book.

“eat it up” The angel commands John to eat the little book. This symbolic action has historical precedents, for Jeremiah declared unto the Lord, “Thy words were found, and I did eat them; and thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart” (*Jeremiah* 15:16). Ezekiel also received a book from a messenger who commanded him to “eat this [scroll], and go speak unto the house of Israel. So I opened my mouth, and he caused me to eat that [scroll]. . . Then did I eat it; and it was in my mouth as honey for sweetness” (*Ezekiel* 3:1-3).

John partakes of God’s word as contained in the little book, making it part of his soul, and he now fully understands his mission to gather the tribes of Israel.

10 And I took the little book out of the angel’s hand, and ate it up; and it was in my mouth sweet as honey: and as soon as I had eaten it, my belly was bitter.

verses 9-10 “mouth sweet as honey . . . my belly was bitter” The book is sweet when John eats it because feasting upon the word of God is always sweet, and John’s mission to gather the tribes of Israel would bring joy and satisfaction to his soul. But the book is bitter in his belly. Just why his mission would contain bitterness is unknown. In Ezekiel’s case, the parchment he figuratively ate contained woes, lamentations, and judgments (see *Ezekiel* 2:9-10). Because it was the word of God, it pleased Ezekiel, but because it was harsh it pained him. Note too how God’s word is considered sweet in *Psalm* 119:103 and *Jeremiah* 15:16. Perhaps John’s mission is somewhat the same. The angel told him that “thou must prophesy again before many peoples, and nations, and tongues, and kings” (verse 11). The formula

used seven other times by John is changed here, “kings” replacing “tribes.” John’s commission includes testifying not just to peoples but to heads of state. The term “many” suggests the vastness of the field; not just to one empire but to a multitude. But by witnessing the gospel, John participates directly in damning rebellious nations. Therefore, their rejection of his message, in part, brings upon them the horrible judgments he saw while on the Isle of Patmos.

11 And he said unto me, Thou must prophesy again before many peoples, and nations, and tongues, and kings.

verse 11 “Thou must prophesy again” The angel who gave the book to John now promises John that he will “prophesy again before many people, and nations, and tongues, and kings.” During His mortal ministry, the Lord prophesied to John that he would “tarry until I come in my glory, and shalt prophesy before nations, kindreds, tongues and people” (D&C 7:3; see John 21:22-23). John thus became a translated being, “as flaming fire and a ministering angel,” who would “minister for those who shall be heirs of salvation who dwell on the earth” (D&C 7:6). He “is yet alive in the flesh,” explained Elder Parley P. Pratt, “and is held in reserve, to ‘prophesy again before many peoples, and nations, and tongues, and kings,’ as it is written” (*Key to the Science of Theology*, 32).

“before many peoples, and nations, and tongues, and kings” John’s work among the tribes of Israel (D&C 77:14) and among “those who shall be heirs of salvation” (D&C 7:6) may constitute, in part, the promise that he will “prophesy again before many peoples.”

This interlude in chapter ten helps explain why John received the Patmos vision. He was to play an active role in the events he recorded. The reader should keep in mind that John became a translated being, and thus his time on earth was extended (D&C 7:1-8). Thus, God commanded him to devour the scroll, symbolic of mental digestion, and thereby internalize its contents. John did so, and by this means made a complete appropriation of his mission and the message he was to bear. This done, he was ready to act. The degree to which he internalized the message is illustrated by the book of Revelation itself. The vision rings with clarity and purpose. It had become a part of John. Only after this point does John become a participant in, not just an observer of, what goes on. His first official act opens chapter eleven.

Revelation Chapter 11 Two Prophets in Jerusalem

The principal theme of Revelation 11 is the work and ministry of two prophets who will minister in the last days in Jerusalem. Elder Parley P. Pratt summarized these events:

[John] informs us that, after the city and temple are rebuilt by the Jews, the Gentiles will tread it under foot forty and two months, during which time there will be two Prophets continually prophesying and working mighty miracles. And it seems that the Gentile army shall be hindered from utterly destroying and overthrowing the city, while these two Prophets continue. But, after a struggle of three years and a half, they at length succeed in destroying these two Prophets, and then overrunning much of the city, they send gifts to each other because of the death of the two Prophets, and in the meantime, will not allow their dead bodies to be put in the graves, but suffer them to lie in the streets of Jerusalem three days and a half (*Voice of Warning*, 41-42).

The two prophets will prophesy “at the time of the restoration” (D&C 77:15), after the Jews “are gathered and have built the city of Jerusalem” (D&C 77:15), after the opening of the seventh seal but before the second coming (D&C 77:12-13), and during the events of the second woe (11:3-14). They will prophesy for 1,260 days, or three and one-half years.

Their mission will have several purposes: to “prophesy to the Jews” (D&C 77:15), to serve as “witnesses” of God and his judgments, to symbolically provide oil unto those who are preparing for Christ’s coming, to work many great miracles, and to bear testimony.

They will receive power from God to prophesy, and they will be clothed in sackcloth, which symbolizes the great power possessed by the Old Testament prophets. They will have power to devour “their enemies” with fire; to “shut heaven, that it rain not;” to turn waters to blood; and to smite the earth with plagues according to their will.

The two prophets will minister in Jerusalem (D&C 77:15), where they will be killed, for “Satan shall slay them, by the hands of those in his employ, even as he slew their Lord and the prophets who were before them.” (Doctrinal New Testament Commentary, 3:510.)

There will be two prophets in order to establish God’s word with more than one testimony: “In the mouth of two or three witnesses shall every word be established” (2 Corinthians 13:1).

Many of the events connected to the sacred work of the two prophets recall events of the mortal ministry of Jesus Christ: the duration of their three-and-one-half year ministry, their prophesying, their working great miracles, and their control over the elements. In addition, the two prophets, like Jesus, will be anointed with oil and will be slain in Jerusalem by evil men – acts which will be followed by an ascension into heaven.

1 And there was given me a reed like unto a rod: and the angel stood, saying, Rise, and measure the temple of God, and the altar, and them that worship therein.

verse 1 As chapter eleven opens, the seventh trumpet remains mute; tension continues. Before it breaks, John must perform a task growing out of the commission he received in chapter ten. He is given a measuring rod or surveyor's rule, probably made from the "giant reed" (*arundo donax*) that grows in the swampy areas of Mediterranean lands and can reach heights of twenty feet.

"reed like unto a rod" A heavenly being hands John a long reed, or stick, to use as a measuring tool, and tells him to measure the temple, its altar, and the worshippers. Similarly, a "golden reed" is used to measure the wall and gates of the celestial temple (Revelation 21:15).

"the angel stood" Some Greek texts omit this phrase.

"Rise, and measure" Measuring is God's symbolic means of noting that protective power will not allow the sanctuary to be profaned. The background appears to be Ezekiel 40-42 where the prophet sees the temple measured with great care. Zechariah 1:16, where Israel is saved in association with a measuring line, shows that protection is symbolized. For those outside those limits, there is no celestial shelter. Proximity will not be good enough. The outer court will be in no better position than the city itself. There is a message here. It appears that the sanctuary is itself a symbol of the Lord's people, those who are the living temple of God wherein his Spirit dwells (see 1 Corinthians 3:16-17; 2 Corinthians 6:16; Ephesians 2:19-22). If that is the case, then the outer court is those who are just outside the reach of the Spirit. They are not antagonistic to God, but they are not fully committed to him either. They are the lukewarm, and, as God has said, "I will spue thee out" (Revelation 3:15-16).

Perhaps the measuring of the temple, the altar, and worshippers symbolizes "taking the measure" of worthiness to partake of blessings of the atonement. Kenneth Strand, a New Testament scholar, points out parallels between Revelation 11:1 and Leviticus 16:6, 11, 16-18 (Leviticus 16 speaks about the Day of Atonement): "It is striking . . . that the three other exact entities to be atoned for in Leviticus 16 [temple, altar, and worshippers] are precisely those three elements to be 'measured' in Revelation 11:1" (Strand, "Overlooked Old Testament Background," 322).

The term *measure* also has another application in the scriptures. In contrast to the measuring of God's righteous people, the scriptures speak of the destruction of the wicked "without measure," meaning to the fullest extent. "When the wrath of God shall be poured out upon the wicked without measure" (D&C 1:9) "mine indignation is soon to be poured out without measure upon all nations; and this will I do when the cup of their iniquity is full" (D&C 101:11; see also 109:45).

"temple of God" The Greek word used here for temple is *naos*, which refers to the sanctuary itself, namely the Holy Place and the Most Holy Place, not the outer courts. This temple was not Herod's temple, which had been destroyed in AD 70, more than twenty years before John is instructed to "measure" the temple. This temple may be the temple that will yet be built in Jerusalem in the last days, as the prophets have declared. Ezekiel, for instance, saw and described in some detail this temple in Ezekiel 40 through 46. Joseph Smith also

spoke of the future temple: “Judah must return, Jerusalem must be rebuilt, and the temple, and water come out from under the temple, and the waters of the Dead Sea be healed. It will take some time to rebuild the walls of the city and the temple.” (TPJS, 286.)

The phrase “temple of God” also has a symbolic meaning. Paul likened the saints to a temple when he asked, “Know ye not that ye are the temple of God?” (1 Corinthians 3:16). Later Paul wrote, “Ye are the temple of the living God” (2 Corinthians 6:16). On another occasion, he likened Christ to the chief cornerstone and the apostles and prophets to the building’s foundation. The saints, together with the apostles and prophets, are “an holy temple in the Lord” (Ephesians 2:19-21). That is to say, the community of saints, speaking of those who attend the temple and worship within its walls, constitute a temple of God. These are “measured” by John and receive protection from the coming judgments.

“altar” This altar may refer to the altar of incense or to the great altar of sacrifice. In our day, this altar refers to the sacred altars of our temples and those who surround them or kneel at them for sacred ordinances. The ordinances and the keeping of covenants associated with them protect the saints from God’s judgments.

“them that worship therein” John measures temple worshippers, speaking of the saints who worship in our temples today, to ensure their protection from Gods wrath and judgments.

2 But the court which is without the temple leave out, and measure it not; for it is given unto the Gentiles: and the holy city shall they tread under foot forty and two months.

verse 2 John’s instructions leave no doubt about the fate of the outer court: “it is given unto the Gentiles: and the holy city shall they tread under foot forty and two months.” Therefore, the angel forbids John to measure the court, and further, it, along with the Holy City, is to be “cast out” (Greek, *ekball*) because both have lost divine favor. Thus, the phrase “it is given” (Greek, *edoth*) carries the idea that God has already determined how far the destruction will go.

“it is given unto the Gentiles: and the holy city shall they tread under foot” The Gentiles will trample the holy city for forty-two months. Both the old Jerusalem (Nehemiah 11:1; Isaiah 52:1; 2 Nephi 8:24; Ether 13:5) and the New Jerusalem (Revelation 21:10; D&C 133:56; Moses 7:62) are called “holy city,” but here the context seems to refer only to Old Jerusalem.

According to Luke 21:24, “Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled” (see also Isa. 63:18; Dan. 8:13). The “times of the Gentiles” refers to that era when the Gentiles, rather than the Jews, are the primary recipients of the gospel (See *Discourses of Wilford Woodruff*, 132; Smith, *Restoration of All Things*, 164; McConkie, *Mortal Messiah*, 1:97n). To trample or tread upon includes showing contempt for sacred things and to persecute, even destroy, others. The phrase “it is given” suggests that God will allow this oppression but only for a set period of time.

“forty and two months” The number forty-two often signifies the period when righteousness is cut short and the wicked dominate the righteous. There will be a period in the last days when evil will reign. Even the powerful prophets of God (the two witnesses in the next verse) will be destroyed. Evil will win for the moment – but only until God’s full power is unleashed.

The number forty-two is manifest scripturally in several ways, each of which equals three and one-half:

1. Daniel 7:25 speaks of “a time and times and the dividing of time.” A “time” equals one year, “times” equal two years, and a “the dividing of time” equals half a year, based on the Hebrew calendar of thirty days per month. The total time is three and one-half years. A wicked king will blaspheme God and persecute the saints for this time period (see Daniel 7:25).

2. Daniel 9:27 speaks of the “midst [middle] of the week.” Half a week, or three and a half days, may perhaps signify years (Ezekiel 4:6; Numbers 14:34). Daniel prophesies that temple sacrifices will cease for this period of time (see Daniel 9:27).

3. Daniel 12:7, which speaks of “time, times, and an half,” indicates that during this period the wicked will “scatter the power of the holy people.”

4. Revelation 11:2 records that “forty and two months,” or three and one-half years, is the length of time the Gentiles will tread the holy city.

5. Revelation 11:3 speaks of “a thousand two hundred and threescore days,” which is another way of saying three and one-half years, or forty-two months. That is the same length of time as that spoken of in Revelation 11:2; it is also the period of time that the two prophets will prophesy before they are killed. Moreover, if we use that number with years rather than days, as in the Joseph Smith Translation rendering of Revelation 12:5, “a thousand two hundred and threescore years,” we have the period of the Great Apostasy (see commentary on 12:5).

6. Revelation 12:14 uses the expression “a time, and times, and half a time” as another way of describing the period of the Great Apostasy.

7. Revelation 11:11 gives “three days and an half” as the period during which the bodies of the two prophets will lie in the streets.

8. Revelation 13:5 records “forty and two months,” or three and one-half years, as the duration of the beast’s evil activity.

Forty-two months, or three and one-half, or 1,260, belong to the wicked and apparently signify their work; the number three and one-half may mean that the work of righteousness is cut short. That number is one-half of seven, the number of perfection and completion, which belongs to God and his saints. We recall that the number seven is used symbolically many times in Revelation with regard to God and his work: “seven churches” (Revelation 1:4), “seven servants” (JST Revelation 1:4), “seven golden candlesticks” (Revelation 1:12), “seven stars” (Revelation 1:20), “seven lamps of fire” (Revelation 4:5), “seven seals” (Revelation 5:5), “seven angels” with their “seven trumpets” (Revelation 8:6), “seven thunders” (Revelation 10:3), “seven last plagues” (Revelation 15:1), and “seven vials” (Revelation 17:1).

Further, “the root of the Hebrew word for seven (*sheva*) is identical to the Hebrew verb that means ‘to take an oath,’ thus connecting the word seven to covenants and covenant making.” (McConkie and Parry, *Guide to Scriptural Symbols*, 99). One-half of seven, or three and one-half, represents an incomplete covenant (religious systems that appear to be spiritual and to possess power but do not) or the broken covenant (apostate conditions).

3 And I will give power unto my two witnesses, and they shall prophesy a thousand two hundred and threescore days, clothed in sackcloth.

verse 3 “I will give power” The Greek text omits the word power, but it is clear from the context of this verse that the two witnesses will have great power indeed.

“my two witnesses” The two witnesses are “two prophets that are to be raised up to the Jewish nation in the last days, at the time of the restoration, and to prophesy to the Jews after they are gathered and have built the city of Jerusalem in the land of their fathers” (D&C 77:15). Why two? Ancient Israelite law required two witnesses for testimony to be valid (Deuteronomy 17:6; 19:15). The law of witnesses remains in effect today (D&C 6:28; 42:80).

They are called witnesses because they will bear testimony of Jesus Christ and his latter-day work. Revelation 11:10 calls the two witnesses “two prophets,” indicating that they will have the powers and authority of prophets. Joseph Smith’s translation of Isaiah 51:19 refers to them as “two sons,” perhaps suggesting that they are sons of Abraham, whether literally or by covenant. Zechariah 4:3 calls them “two olive trees,” indicating that they possess oil and light (see commentary on Revelation 11:4); and Zechariah 4:14 calls them “two anointed ones.”

“These two shall be followers of that humble man, Joseph Smith,” states Elder McConkie, “through whom the Lord of Heaven restored the fulness of his everlasting gospel in this final dispensation of grace. No doubt they will be members of the Council of the Twelve or of the First Presidency of the Church” (*Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, 3:509).

“prophesy a thousand two hundred and threescore days” The two prophets will prophesy for three and one-half years, the same length of time that the Gentiles will tread underfoot the holy city. Perhaps these two events – the prophesying of the two prophets and the treading of the Gentiles – will occur at the same time. The Jerusalem Bible says that the Gentiles “will trample on the holy city for forty-two months. But I shall send my two witnesses to prophesy for those twelve hundred and sixty days” (JB-Revelation 11:2-3). It must be noted, however, that since this is a symbolic number, the time frame may not be exact.

The number six connotes deficit, a failure to attain the completeness of seven, while eight designates superabundance. Symbolically forty-two is pejorative, since, as one scholar has pointed out, “it is the result of six multiplied by seven, i.e. ‘perfection missing the mark’” (Ford, *Revelation*, 170). The number is used again in Revelation 13 where it personifies complete imperfection. In apocalyptic material, it designates a limited period in which evil is allowed free reign. The John’s use of it underscores the idea that the period of the witnesses,

of divine protection upon the saints, and of vehement antagonism toward righteousness are all concurrent.

“clothed in sackcloth” The two prophets will likely not actually wear sackcloth, but sackcloth signifies that they will possess the same prophetic powers and authority to teach, warn, prophesy, and perform mighty miracles as did such ancient prophets as Moses, Elijah, and Isaiah (1 Kings 17; Isa. 20:2-4).

4 These are the two olive trees, and the two candlesticks standing before the God of the earth.

verse 4 “two olive trees, and . . . two candlesticks” The imagery of olive trees recalls the book of Zechariah, in which he asks an angel, “What are these two olive trees upon the right side of the candlestick and upon the left side thereof?” The angel’s response indicates that the two prophets have been anointed with holy oil in the Lord’s temple: “These are the two anointed ones, that stand by the Lord of the whole earth” (Zechariah 4:11, 14).

Zechariah’s images of a bowl, golden pipes, oil, olive branches, and seven lamps (Zechariah 4:2-14) seem to say that the two prophets, as olive trees, will help “provide oil for the lamps of those who go forth to meet the Bridegroom.” (Doctrinal New Testament Commentary, 3:510.)

The two prophets will be like candlesticks holding up the light of Christ to shine in the darkness. Some will see the light, recognize their “good works,” and “glorify [their] Father which is in heaven” (Matthew 5:16). Some will recognize Jesus through the prophets’ testimony: “Therefore, hold up your light that it may shine unto the world. Behold I am the light which ye shall hold up – that which ye have seen me do” (3 Nephi 18:24).

“standing before the God of the earth” John symbolically notes their high position with God. They stand before him as two olive trees, and two lampstands or candlesticks. This reflects Zechariah 4:12-14. Here the two are anointed ones who stand next to the Lord, thus showing the position of preeminence.

5 And if any man will hurt them, fire proceedeth out of their mouth, and devoureth their enemies: and if any man will hurt them, he must in this manner be killed.

verse 5 “if any man will hurt them, fire proceedeth out of their mouth” The two prophets will possess great power, similar to that of Moses (Numbers 16:23-35) and Elijah (2 Kings 1:10-14), to call upon heaven and cause fire to consume those who attempt to hurt them or to hinder their work. The two will call upon God with their mouth, and God will respond by sending the consuming fire. Although there are two witnesses, the singular “mouth” is used (“their mouth”), perhaps indicating that the message of the two will be unified.

6 These have power to shut heaven, that it rain not in the days of their prophecy: and have power over waters to turn them to blood, and to smite the earth with all plagues, as often as they will.

verse 6 “power to shut heaven, that it rain not” The two prophets will possess the sealing power whereby they perform great miracles among the people, including closing of the skies so that it does not rain and thus causing famine in the land. When such occurs, the land does not “yield . . . her fruit,” and the people begin to “perish quickly from off the good land” (Deuteronomy 11:17). The prophet Elijah from Gilead also “prayed earnestly” (James 5:17) and shut heaven, causing a great famine in the land. He promised King Ahab, “As the Lord God of Israel liveth, before whom I stand, there shall not be dew nor rain these years, but according to my word” (1 Kings 17:1). Elijah’s prophecy was fulfilled, and “heaven was shut up three years and six months, when great famine was throughout all the land” (Luke 4:25).

Many during mortality have held power over earth’s waters, including Enoch (Moses 7:13; JST Genesis 14:30), Moses (Moses 1:25; Helaman 8:11), Jesus Christ (Mark 4:39), and others (D&C 61:27). God, of course, is the power behind these miracles (Ether 4:9).

The witnesses combine the powers of Moses and Elijah. The latter caused a three-and-one-half-year drought upon Israel (see 1 Kings 17:1; Luke 4:25; James 5:17), and on two occasions fire consumed troops sent to arrest him (2 Kings 1:9-12; cf. 2 Ezra 13; Jeremiah 5:14); while the former held authority over water (see Exodus 7:20; cf. Psalm 105:29) and brought plagues against Egypt (see Exodus 7-11). During the course of their ministry, the two latter-day prophets will be absolutely indestructible. Those who attempt to stop the two witnesses will be smitten, so powerful will be the Spirit of the Lord upon them.

“to smite the earth with all plagues” D&C 84:97 promises, “And plagues shall go forth, and they shall not be taken from the earth until I have completed my work, which shall be cut short in righteousness” (see also D&C 43:25). The plagues that will occur at the command of the two prophets are similar to those spoken of in Exodus when Moses, through the power of God, smote the land of Egypt with numerous plagues (Exodus 7-10). The two prophets’ plagues may be the same as the seven plagues of the seven angels (Revelation 15:1, 6, 8) at least, the prophets’ plagues anticipate and perhaps foreshadow the great plagues that will be poured out of the bowls (vials) identified in Revelation 16.

“as often as they will” This phrase suggests that the prophets will conduct miracles as necessity demands, which may be frequently during their three-and-one-half-year ministry.

7 And when they shall have finished their testimony, the beast that ascendeth out of the bottomless pit shall make war against them, and shall overcome them, and kill them.

verse 7 “finished their testimony” God will protect the two prophets until they complete their mission; then he will permit them to be killed. Their testimony will focus on Jesus Christ (Revelation 19:10). (HC, 5:215-16; 3:389.)

To seal their sure witness (Greek, *marturia*), these two great prophets will be martyred. Thus, their testimony will join with those of the fifth seal to cry against the world of wickedness. Just how these two will die is unknown. John notes that it will come only when they have finished their ministry, and that the beast that ascends from the pit in the abyss will attack and overpower them. But there has not been any previous mention of a beast from the pit.

However, in chapter nine Abaddn, or Satan, is called the king of the pit. We may assume then that Satan and the beast are one and that he will inspire his minions to renewed fury against the prophets. Those within the camp of the witnesses may engineer their death since the enemies outside have been held in abeyance for years. This is suggested through the association of their death with that of the Lord, killed by his own people. Moreover, the witnesses shall lie in the streets of Jerusalem (termed Sodom and Egypt to reflect its corruption and rebellion), not in the camps of the enemy.

8 And their dead bodies shall lie in the street of the great city, which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also our Lord was crucified.

verse 8 “their dead bodies shall lie in the street” The two prophets’ bodies will lie in the street for three and one half days while the people of the earth rejoice and send gifts to one another (Revelation 11:9-10). Allowing the dead to lie in view of their enemies was considered extremely disrespectful in ancient times (see Psalm 79:3-4; 2 5:10). Joseph Smith taught, “It has always been considered a great calamity not to obtain an honorable burial: and one of the greatest curses the ancient prophets could put on any man, was that he should go without a burial” (HC, 5:361).

“great city, which [allegorically] is called Sodom and Egypt” Jerusalem is called the “great city” (see D&C 77:15), “where also our Lord was crucified.” Jerusalem is allegorically called “Sodom” (Isaiah 1:10; 3:9) and “Egypt” because of the wickedness of her inhabitants. Sodom, we recall, was destroyed for her abominations and gross wickedness (Ezekiel 16:49-50; Jude 1:7), and Egypt, called “the basest of the kingdoms” (Ezekiel 29:15), symbolizes worldliness and oppression of the Lord’s people.

Babylon is also called the “great city” (Revelation 14:8; 18:21), implying that “great city” symbolizes all of earth’s cities that contain iniquitous and godless people who war against the Lamb and his witnesses. One commentator writes that the “great city” is “every city that embodies self-sufficiency in place of dependence on the creator, achievement in place of repentance, oppression in place of faith, the beast in place of the Lamb, and murder in place of witness to God” (Krodel, *Revelation*, 226).

9 And they of the people and kindreds and tongues and nations shall see their dead bodies three days and an half, and shall not suffer their dead bodies to be put in graves.

verse 9 “they of the people and kindreds and tongues and nations” This expression signifies totality of people and indicates that the worldwide community will be involved, at least emotionally, in the slaying of the two prophets.

“see their dead bodies three days and an half” The two prophets’ bodies will lie in a highly visible place for all to see. The time of three and one-half days corresponds to the time that Jesus’ body rested in the tomb. Perhaps more importantly, this period also parallels the number that belongs to the wicked, the cutting short of righteousness. See commentary on Revelation 11:2.

"not suffer their dead bodies to be put in graves" See commentary on Revelation 11:8.

10 And they that dwell upon the earth shall rejoice over them, and make merry, and shall send gifts one to another; because these two prophets tormented them that dwelt on the earth.

verse 10 "they that dwell upon the earth" This expression denotes was the "people and kindreds and tongues and nations" spoken of in Revelation 11:9.

"shall rejoice over them, and make merry, and shall send gifts one to another"

The death of the two prophets causes ecstasy among the wicked. The Revelator pictures the whole area involved in a frenzy of joy, the people sending presents to one another and generally making merry "because these two prophets tormented them that dwelt on the earth." Earth's inhabitants celebrate and gloat over the death of the two prophets, who had "tormented them" by bringing forth famine and plagues and who had testified of Jesus Christ (see Revelation 11:5-7). The brilliant light of truth had burned the eyes and scorched the hearts of the people who had grown to love darkness. With the prophets' deaths, there appears to be nothing to stop the victory of evil. The beast from the abyss has overcome. He has proved himself more mighty than God. No wonder his lackeys rejoice. This is the moment of triumph; death and hell are victorious. But are they?

This celebration indicates the gross darkness that belongs to the wicked during this period; not satisfied with the spilling of the blood of God's witnesses and leaving their bodies in the streets for all to see, they will also party, revel over their deaths, and exchange gifts.

11 And after three days and an half the Spirit of life from God entered into them, and they stood upon their feet; and great fear fell upon them which saw them.

12 And they heard a great voice from heaven saying unto them, Come up hither. And they ascended up to heaven in a cloud; and their enemies beheld them.

verses 11-12 For three-and-a-half days the bodies, serving as war trophies, remain unburied. Among ancient people, such treatment was a means of mocking and generating great shame toward the unburied, their families, and all they stood for. The time reference, three-and-one-half days, seems symbolically fitting, for this is the period when evil rules unchecked. However, revelries are suddenly cut short; celebrations turn to shock. In an instant, before the carousing multitudes, the spirit of life enters into the bodies of the witnesses, and they are called into heaven.

John's phrase parallels that of Ezekiel 37 when the breath of life entered into the dry bones and they arose and stood on their feet. The prophets' ascension into heaven in a cloud parallels the ascension into heaven of both Elijah and the Lord (2 Kings 2:11; Acts 1:9). The result is consternation such as has seldom been seen on this planet. What appeared to be total triumph suddenly becomes complete defeat.

Murder is the last resort of the wicked. What happens when the murdered do not stay dead? The ultimate power of the unrighteous fails, and with it all other forms of coercion and intimidation. With this act, God begins to move directly onto the historical stage. No longer working behind the scenes, he shows that he has final authority over life and death.

13 And the same hour was there a great earthquake, and the tenth part of the city fell, and in the earthquake were slain of men seven thousand: and the remnant were affrighted, and gave glory to the God of heaven.

verse 13 “same hour was there a great earthquake” A “great earthquake” coincided with the opening of the sixth seal (Revelation 6:12), and another “great earthquake” will occur after the seventh angel pours out his bowl or vial (Revelation 16:17- 18). The earthquake identified here accompanies the prophets’ ascension into heaven and serves as another testimony, subsequent to the testimony of the two prophets, that God lives (see D&C 88:87-89) and he does intervene in the affairs of man.

“tenth part of the city fell” The earthquake causes great destruction to the city’s buildings, roads, and other structures. The damage is selective. A tenth of the city falls. This is the Lord’s portion – his tithe that he will demand of the wicked.

“were slain of men seven thousand” The earthquake destroys a great number of individuals, represented here as “seven thousand.” That John uses the figure seven thousand as the number devoted to death lends support to this idea. The number is probably not to be taken literally. Rather, it signifies, as in other places, fulness and completeness. Thus, of the specific number doomed to death all died during this judgment.

“the remnant . . . gave glory to the God of heaven” To give glory to God, at the very least, is to acknowledge his hand in the resurrection and ascension of the two witnesses and in the earthquake (Revelation 16:9; 3 Nephi 20:9; D&C 88:104; 133:38). This remnant may represent the less wicked, the court followers but not the actual doers of evil. Certainly, they do not appear to be the righteous. The effect of the appalling judgment on the city does not lead these survivors to repentance and faith. However, in fright they give “glory to the God of the heaven.” But note, they do not invite him among them. They reverence him as the God of heaven because that keeps him at a distance.

14 The second woe is past; and, behold, the third woe cometh quickly.

verses 15-19 Three major events occur when Michael, the archangel, blows the seventh trumpet: heavenly voices declare the eternal kingship and reign of God and Jesus, the twenty-four elders fall on their faces and worship God, and the heavenly temple is opened for all of God’s saints to enter.

As the seventh seal includes the events connected to the seven trumpets, so the seventh trumpet seems to include the events connected with the seven vials (bowls, or seven

last plagues). “The seventh trumpet . . . embraces the whole of the seven vials, or last seven plagues, which make up the ‘third woe’” (Bullinger, *Commentary*, 369).

15 And the seventh angel sounded; and there were great voices in heaven, saying, The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever.

verse 15 With the ascension of the two prophets, the second woe is fulfilled and, at last, the seventh trumpet sounds.

“there were great voices in heaven” The voices are not identified, but they may belong to the twenty-four elders, the four living creatures, or the great multitude of exalted souls in heaven.

“kingdoms of this world” The world’s kingdoms are like wild beasts, who have no owner or master and are untamed, uncivilized, and often bloodthirsty. Joseph Smith explained: “You there see that the beasts [in Daniel 7:16] are spoken of to represent the kingdoms of the world, the inhabitants whereof were beastly and abominable characters; they were murderers, corrupt, carnivorous, and brutal in their dispositions. The lion, the bear, the leopard, and the ten-horned beast represented the kingdoms of the world, says Daniel” (*TPJS*, 289).

When Christ, the Lamb of God, comes in great power and glory, he will destroy these beasts, or earthly kingdoms, and establish his perfect kingdom, for he has promised, “I will be your ruler when I come” (*D&C* 41:4). At that time “the Lord shall be king over all the earth: in that day shall there be one Lord, and his name one” (*Zechariah* 14:9), and he will make “a full end of all nations” (*D&C* 87:6).

Daniel envisioned these things: “I beheld till the thrones were cast down . . . and there was given [the Son of Man] dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed” (*Daniel* 7:9, 14).

“he shall reign for ever” The tenth Article of Faith states that “Christ will reign personally upon the earth.” Also, “the Lord, even the Savior, shall stand in the midst of his people, and shall reign over all flesh” (*D&C* 133:25).

“And the seventh angel sounded; and there were great voices in heaven, saying, The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdom of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever.”

16 And the four and twenty elders, which sat before God on their seats, fell upon their faces, and worshipped God,

verse 16 “four and twenty elders . . . fell upon their faces, and worshipped God”

Four times John sees the elders “fall down” to worship God, who “sat on the throne” (*Revelation* 4:10; 5:14; 11:16; 19:4), and once he observes them as they “fell down before the Lamb” (*Revelation* 5:8).

17 Saying, We give thee thanks, O Lord God Almighty, which art, and wast, and art to come; because thou hast taken to thee thy great power, and hast reigned.

verse 17 “We give thee thanks” In Revelation 4:9 the four living creatures who are located near God’s throne give thanks to God; in Revelation 7:12 the angels who stand before God say “thanksgiving” to God; and here the twenty-four elders state, “We give thee thanks, O Lord God Almighty.” The twenty-four elders exclaim in essence, “We give thanks to you Lord God Almighty, who is and who was, because you have taken your great power and have begun to reign.” Although included in the King James Version the phrase “and art to come” is not in the Greek and does not appear again in Revelation. This is probably because the moment waited for has now arrived. God has come. Now as he reigns, all is set for “destroying the destroyers of the earth” (verse 18). The destruction of the wicked remnant is the last woe. All heaven prepares for this last assault that God himself will direct.

18 And the nations were angry, and thy wrath is come, and the time of the dead, that they should be judged, and that thou shouldest give reward unto thy servants the prophets, and to the saints, and them that fear thy name, small and great; and shouldest destroy them which destroy the earth.

verse 18 “the nations were angry, and thy wrath is come” Psalm 2 helps us understand this section of Revelation. The psalmist wrote: “Why do the heathen rage? The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord, and against his anointed” (Psalm 2:1-2; 46:6). That is to say, the nations are angry and they and their leaders continually war against God and Jesus Christ. The psalmist prophesies that the Lord will become the earth’s king and ruler and receive as a possession “the uttermost parts of the earth” (Psalm 2:8).

The Lord’s wrath (“thy wrath is come”) is also mentioned in Psalm 2, where the psalmist writes that the Lord shall “speak unto them [the heathen] in his wrath, and vex them in his sore displeasure” (Psalm 2:5). Modern revelations also speak of the Lord’s wrath: “Hearken, O ye people who profess my name, saith the Lord your God; for behold, mine anger is kindled against the rebellious, and they shall know mine arm and mine indignation, in the day of visitation and of wrath upon the nations” (D&C 56:1) and “with the sword and by bloodshed the inhabitants of the earth shall mourn; and with famine, and plague, and earthquake, and the thunder of heaven, and the fierce and vivid lightning also, shall the inhabitants of the earth be made to feel the wrath, and indignation, and chastening hand of an Almighty God, until the consumption decreed hath made a full end of all nations” (D&C 87:6).

“time of the dead, that they should be judged” The first resurrection pertains to the prophets and saints of God (Revelation 20:4-5): “For the day cometh that the Lord shall utter his voice out of heaven; the heavens shall shake and the earth shall tremble, and the trump of God shall sound both long and loud, and shall say to the sleeping nations: Ye saints arise and live; ye sinners stay and sleep until I shall call again” (D&C 43:18; 29:12). Later, John will

witness the “dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened . . . and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works” (Revelation 20:12-13).

“give reward unto thy servants the prophets, and to the saints” God’s reward to his prophets and saints is thus described: “And thus we saw the glory of the celestial, which excels in all things – where God, even the Father, reigns upon his throne forever and ever; before whose throne all things bow in humble reverence, and give him glory forever and ever. They who dwell in his presence are the church of the Firstborn; and they see as they are seen, and know as they are known, having received of his fulness and of his grace; and he makes them equal in power, and in might, and in dominion” (D&C 76:92-95).

“small and great” Individuals from all walks of life, both prophets and saints, who “fear,” or reverence, God’s name will receive an eternal reward (D&C 138:14-15).

“destroy them which destroy the earth” Those who belong to Babylon, whose citizens worship the beast and have received his mark in their foreheads or hands (Revelation 20:4), have sought to destroy the earth’s inhabitants. Jesus Christ will destroy these destroyers and “every corruptible thing, both of man, or of the beasts of the field, or of the fowls of the heavens, or of the fish of the sea” (D&C 101:24). Note that Jesus comes to save the earth from those who would destroy it. Even the second coming is an act of salvation.

19 And the temple of God was opened in heaven, and there was seen in his temple the ark of his testament: and there were lightnings, and voices, and thunderings, and an earthquake, and great hail.

verse 19 “temple of God was opened in heaven” The celestial kingdom, called the “temple of heaven” (Revelation 16:17; 14:17), is opened to receive the saints who are resurrected, judged (Revelation 11:18), and found worthy to enter. The heavenly host enter the Holy of Holies and receive their eternal rest. In Hebrews 9:1-11 Paul notes that the opening of the temple symbolizes that all may now enter God’s rest.

“ark of his testament” This expression refers to the ark of the testimony (also called ark of the covenant), which rested in the Israelite temple’s holy of holies, into which only the high priest was permitted to enter “once every year” (Hebrews 9:7). The ark was a box that held three sacred items symbolically connected to Jesus Christ’s power and atonement – Aaron’s rod, the pot of manna, and the tablets of the law (Hebrews 9:4) (see McConkie and Parry, Guide to Scriptural Symbols, 76-77, 81, 94). The lid, or covering, of the ark served as Jehovah’s “seat of atonement,” or “mercy seat;” it was situated between two large, gold cherubim. John’s statement that “there was seen in his temple the ark of his testimony” indicates that all exalted saints, not just the high priest of the earthly temple, will be privileged to gain access to Jesus Christ and his sacred, heavenly dwelling.

“lightnings, and voices, and thunderings, and an earthquake, and great hail” But not all is done. The world’s wicked must still stand judgment. So, from the temple issue

flashes of lightning, rumblings, peals of thunder, an earthquake, and a great hailstorm. All these are sent against the earth once more.

Revelation Chapter 12 The Church in the Meridian of Time and the Great Apostasy

Chapter eleven moved through the second woe and introduced the third. But it only introduced the third. There is no description of the final onslaught, no explanation of how God will wrest control of the world, no judgment. Instead, it focused on the praise and glory of God as he begins to reign and prepares for the destruction of the wicked. Certainly, there must be more to come. Indeed, the Revelator does give a preview that justice is about to be meted out. A crescendo of disaster, greater than that shown, is about to usher in the great and terrible day of the Lord.

However, that must wait while John rounds out the picture with additional information. So, John breaks the narrative just at the point where God begins his reign. With chapter twelve, John starts anew, and this time he uses a different point of view to disclose additional details of the same scenes. In doing so, he more clearly portrays the foundation, beginning, development, and final end of the antagonism between good and evil.

Some may be concerned because the day of the Lord is filled with destruction. But it has its purpose. Nothing unclean, that is, unjustified, can enter into the Lord's presence and survive (see Nahum 1:2-8; Moses 6:57). The glory of God is about to sweep the earth so that the Holy City can be established. Therefore, evil must come to an end.

Note that by the time the Lord comes, very little evil will be left to put to an end. Throughout Revelation we have seen the self-destructive nature of wickedness. But God cannot allow such self-destruction to act as an impersonal nemesis, an independent self-operating moral law sweeping away all in its path. To do so would allow the powers of evil to carry all the inhabitants of the earth down with them to utter ruin. God would be left with a hollow, Pyrrhic victory that resembled defeat far more than victory. A Pyrrhic victory is a victory gained at too high a cost. Since God's victory must also be man's victory, it must be won through righteous human agents exercising faith in God. Evil must be allowed to combine its nefarious forces against the Savior's people and then be forced back in utter defeat through the faith, trust, and loyalty of the Lord's disciples.

This is what the second woe is all about. As the third comes, the saints ride with their Christ on the clouds and move against the remnant of evil in total faith toward victory. Those whose souls have lain beneath the altar will find that they are not only vindicated but also that they are the vindicators. As it states in Joseph Smith-History 1:37, "The day cometh that shall burn as an oven, and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly shall burn as stubble; for they that come shall burn them, saith the Lord of Hosts."

With the angelic rejoicing caused by the blast of the seventh trumpet, the vision of the seven seals closes. But the revelation does not end. Immediately in chapter 12 another series of visions begins. These, however, do not take up where the old series left off. Chapter twelve breaks the flow of the vision and introduces new elements and explanations. Flashing back to John's day, it develops the whole story again, this time continuing on to the end of time.

The second half of Revelation has far fewer scriptural guides than the first half. Doctrine and Covenants 77, very helpful up to this point, contains no information on material after the eleventh chapter of Revelation. The JST, however, remains useful. In it we see that Joseph Smith made more changes in chapter twelve than in any other portion of Revelation with the possible exception of chapter one. However, a careful examination of these changes shows that the amount of actual material added is small. Most of the changes constitute little more than switching verses. The result, unfortunately, is not very helpful.

Joseph Smith, breaking from total silence on the subject, gave three discourses on the beasts of Revelation, two on 2 April 1843 and one on 8 April 1843. The speeches were recorded in brief in Joseph Smith's diary by his scribe Willard Richards and more extensively by William Clayton. Franklin D. Richards made a few notes on points of interest to him. Unfortunately, all these accounts are so abbreviated that a great deal of ambiguity exists. These speeches do provide some assistance and will be used in reconstructing John's message in this and the following chapter.

The kingdom of God (the child) is born through the instrumentality of the Church (the woman). Once the kingdom is born, Satan (the dragon) and his followers make war against it, seeking to destroy it. To protect them from the attacks of Satan, the Lord removes both the Church and the kingdom of God from the earth.

This great battle was begun in premortality and was continued in the Garden of Eden: There the woman faced the serpent, learned that she would bring forth in anguish, and was told that her child would be attacked by Satan (Genesis 3:1, 15-16). The battle was renewed in the time of Christ and his apostles, when Satan attacked the Church with great vigor (1 Nephi 11:32-35). The battle continues to this day as our adversary, in his wrath, makes war with all those who "keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ" (1 Nephi 12:17).

Revelation 12 may be divided into three parts. First, verses 1 through 5 appear to depict the establishment of the Church in the meridian of time and the beginning of the Great Apostasy. Second, verses 6 through 11 show us the war in heaven between Satan and his followers and the Lord and his followers. This war gives heightened understanding of the war between Satan and the righteous on the earth – and the outcome of the heavenly war gives us confidence that the saints will prevail. Third, verses 12 through 17 return to the theme of the persecution of the meridian Church and the Great Apostasy that followed.

In Revelation 12 through 14, the Lord seems to be setting the stage for the great tribulations and final triumph described in the final chapters of the book. He introduces the primary players in those last events – the Church and kingdom of God, Satan, the wicked earthly kingdoms, the powerful followers of Satan, and the Lord and his angels. And he introduces the theme that will be portrayed: Satan, having been cast down from heaven to earth, will rule in terror; Satan's kingdom will eventually fail; and the Lord and his kingdom will triumph.

One commentator has written perceptively that Revelation 12 reveals “to the believing community the ultimate cause for the increased opposition and hostility they will meet in the last days. Beyond that the visions in chapter 12 form the theological heart of the entire book. In Christ, God engaged Satan in the ultimate battle of the Holy War. The redemptive triumph of Christ in his death and resurrection was the crucial defeat of Satan and the forces of evil. Yet for a time the dragon vigorously pursues the people of God. Hence there is great suffering in the final days (which extend from Pentecost to the return of Christ)” (Mounce, *Book of Revelation*, 230).

verses 1-5 Flashback to John’s day; disclosure of Satan’s active persecution of the Church.

1 And there appeared a great wonder in heaven; a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars:

verse 1 “there appeared a great wonder in heaven” Here “wonder” would be better translated as “sign” (Greek *smeion*). A wonder is a surprise of great magnitude, but a sign is replete with meaning and points to a definite subject or object. The word denotes an optical impression through which one gains confirmations. John’s use of the word is consistent. It foreshadows a coming event and thus serves as a prophetic or anticipatory omen (Revelation 12:3; 15:1). It appears in heaven because that is where John sees his vision – in the temple in heaven, the celestial kingdom of God. The sign is “in the likeness of things on the earth” (JST-Revelation 12:1) in that it portrays a pregnant woman who is experiencing labor, something commonly seen on the earth.

The adjective “great” is used six times in this chapter, suggesting the importance of the themes covered.

“a woman clothed with the sun” Joseph Smith’s translation of Revelation 12:7 makes clear that the woman represents the true Church of God, which is not just an organization but many righteous individuals joined together by covenant. In being clothed with the sun, the woman represents the destiny of those who join themselves to her and follow the Lord with pure hearts: they will be privileged to enter the celestial kingdom, “whose glory is like that of the sun” (D&C 76:70). In being clothed with the sun, the true Church becomes like unto God himself, who is clothed “with light as with a garment” (Psalm 104:2).

Celestial glory surrounds the woman as a garment, showing that the power of God is upon her. The Greek word used here, *peribebmen*, “having been clothed,” suggests that the woman wears the glory as a garment but that it does not belong to her. It is reflected by her. Thus, she manifests the light of Christ but is not the source of that light. There is also a secondary meaning of the Greek verb *periball*, translated “clothed,” that is very likely at play here. The word means “to throw up a rampart around” (cf. Luke 19:43). John’s imagery could, therefore, represent the glory of God acting as a bulwark to protect the Church.

“the moon under her feet” The moon represents a lesser glory than that of the sun (1 Corinthians 15:40-41). The glory of the moon, which is terrestrial, is lesser than, or inferior to, the glory enjoyed by the Church and its faithful adherents. This expression could also mean that the woman has power or dominance over the moon; in other words, it may suggest that those of the Church who attain a celestial glory will have stewardship and ascendancy over those who attain a lesser glory.

“a crown of twelve stars” The head of the Church is the Twelve Apostles of the Lord, who direct the Church in righteousness, under Christ (1 Nephi 1:10). This system of Church government continues to our day – the presiding officer of the Church is the senior apostle. The crown signifies the preeminent position of the apostles; stars often symbolize individual human beings (Genesis 37:9; Job 38:7; see commentary on 1:16, 20). The crown of twelve stars may also represent the twelve tribes of Israel, through whom we are able to partake of the Abrahamic covenant.

“And there appeared a great sign in heaven, in the likeness of things on the earth; a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars.”

2 And she being with child cried, travailing in birth, and pained to be delivered.

verse 2 “And she being with child” The woman, representing the true Church, bears within her the seed of the kingdom of God (JST 12:7). The Church is the ecclesiastical arm of the Lord’s work. The child represents the political kingdom of God on earth, which will come to full fruition in the Millennium.

“travailing in birth, and pained to be delivered” According to this symbolism, it was not an easy thing for the Church to bring forth the kingdom of God but required both sacrifice and pain. Similarly, Old Testament prophets depicted ancient Israel as a travailing woman seeking to give birth to Zion (Isaiah 66:7-8; Jeremiah 4:31; Micah 4:10). It is uncertain what the travail and pain represent in actual history – perhaps they are related to persecution from without and apathy and apostasy from within the Church.

The child, then, according to the JST, does not represent Zion per se but a particular aspect of God’s work in establishing Zion. The child, “who was to rule all nations with the rod of iron” (verse 3), is “the kingdom of our God and his Christ” (verse 7). Insights from modern prophets make it clear that John’s “man child” represented a real political kingdom that was to be established by God to govern the whole earth. Brigham Young taught that this political power actually grows out of the Church. Speaking of the latter-day event, he explained, “The Church of Jesus Christ will produce this government, and cause it to grow and spread, and it will shield round about the church. And under the influence and power of the Kingdom of God, the church will rest secure and dwell in safety, without taking the trouble of governing and controlling the whole earth.” Elder Joseph Fielding Smith stated:

After Christ comes, all the peoples of the earth will be subject to him, but there will be multitudes of people on the face of the earth who will not be

members of the Church; yet all will have to be obedient to the laws of the kingdom of God, for it will have dominion upon the whole face of the earth. These people will be subject to the political government, even though they are not members of the ecclesiastical kingdom which is the Church.

This government which embraces all peoples of the earth, both in and out of the Church, is also sometimes spoken of as the kingdom of God, because the people are subject to the kingdom of God which Christ will set up (*Doctrines of Salvation*, 1:229; italics in original).

John's account suggests that the early Church endeavored to establish the political kingdom in the meridian of time. The attempt proved unsuccessful. Such an institution would have shaken the very powers of hell as it overmastered the world and protected the Church. Little wonder that the manifestation of the woman and the child is followed by another portent showing Satan's opposition to the kingdom.

"And the woman being with child, cried, travailing in birth, and pained to be delivered."

3 And there appeared another wonder in heaven; and behold a great red dragon, having seven heads and ten horns, and seven crowns upon his heads.

4 And his tail drew the third part of the stars of heaven, and did cast them to the earth: and the dragon stood before the woman which was ready to be delivered, for to devour her child as soon as it was born.

verses 3-4 "another wonder in heaven" This sign or wonder is a portent of things to come in the vision.

"a great red dragon" The dragon represents the devil, or Satan (Revelation 12:8). This dragon is not the winged and fire-breathing creature of fairy tales, though just as ferocious and evil. The Greek word (*drakn*) signifies a serpent or sea monster, but it is best understood as the personification of seething chaos, often represented as the dark primeval waters, which oppose not only God but all that is holy. It is no minor power. Indeed, in the Old Testament it represents that force which only God can subdue. The distinguishing feature of the beast is its insatiable cruelty. It is demonic in its genesis and intent and, as such, is the perfect type of Satan at his worst. The red here is the color of fire, symbolizing the indiscriminate destruction of the dragon-like fire, the dragon destroys all in its path. Red is also the color of sin, murder, and bloodshed (Revelation 6:4; Isaiah 1:18).

John sets this symbol against that of the woman, who represents poise, harmony, beauty, and life-giving creation. In this context, the significance of the dragon's color is heightened. It is fiery red, the color of what engulfs and consumes. The color seems to suggest the despiteful, violent, and murderous means by which Satan, the dragon, brings about his ends. Jesus said of his adversaries, "Ye are of your father the devil. . . He was a murderer from the beginning" (John 8:44).

“seven heads and ten horns / seven crowns upon his heads” Satan is found in many places, and he rules over many nations, represented by the seven crowns on seven heads (see also Daniel 7:7). Horns are a symbol of power. The number ten suggests that Satan has great power, but it is neither perfect nor complete; such complete power, represented by twelve horns, resides in the Lamb (JST Revelation 5:6). Yet the seven crowns indicate that Satan has perfect and complete power on earth, at least for a time. This description of the dragon is repeated in relation to one of his followers, a beast from the sea (see commentary on Revelation 13:1).

John may have intended a dual meaning. The dragon is Satan, and herein is implied the satanic nature of Rome in John’s day. The dragon is characterized as having “seven heads and ten horns” which is John’s way of referring to Rome with its seven emperors (prior to Domitian) and three military leaders — totaling in all, ten leaders. As J. R. Dummelow explained, “[Satan’s] seven heads and ten horns . . . represent the Roman emperors through whom he exercised his power. The seven crowned heads perhaps signify the seven emperors, from Augustus to Titus, who had really reigned. The ten horns may stand for the same emperors with the addition of Galba, Otho, and Vitellius” (*Commentary on the Holy Bible*, 1082). These last three were pretenders to the Roman throne in AD 68 and 69. Some historians, however, include them in the count of the Roman emperors. This argument is basically flawed, however: The dragon’s power began long before the Roman empire and has continued long since.

“his tail [draws a] the third part of the stars of heaven, and did cast them to the earth” Satan does not work alone here on earth. This passage refers to the third of the hosts of heaven who were cast out with Satan after the war in heaven. Job also refers to the premortal spirit children of God as “stars” (Job 38:4-7). This idea is repeated in Revelation 12:8 (Daniel 8:10; 2 Peter 2:4; Jude 1:6). The tense John chooses, contrary to that shown in the KJV, is present. The Greek form is the present indicative active third person singular form of the verb (Richard D. Draper, *Opening the Seven Seals: The Visions of John the Revelator*, Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1991). By this means John shows that the dragon draws his lackeys with him by clutching them in the coils of his tail.

John has the dragon rise against God’s earthly authority by attempting to destroy God’s agent the moment he is born into the world. This hostile act symbolizes Satan’s attempt to become king of the earth. Once again, John emphasizes the issue of sovereignty and authority. The Church during the meridian of time briefly challenged Lucifer’s domain by bringing forth the kingdom of God. The old dragon had to act with all his fury, bringing the entire legion of demons with him, to stop this threat to his kingdom.

“the dragon stood before the woman . . . [ready] to devour her child” This passage reminds us of the serpent’s presenting himself, face to face, to the first woman of our earth, Eve, in the Garden of Eden (Genesis 3:1-6). Satan traditionally places himself in the best position to do us harm (1 Peter 5:8). Here, he stands before the Church, ready to prevent her

from bearing the fruit that is the kingdom of God. Should that kingdom be born, Satan's plan will be defeated as the Lord's influence on earth spreads.

Though Satan failed in his attempt to destroy the man child, he was partially successful. He did prevent the kingdom of God from being permanently established. According to the JST, "the dragon stood before the woman which was delivered, ready to devour her child after it was born" (verse 4), but the "child was caught up unto God and his throne" (verse 3). Thus, it appears that God took the fledgling kingdom – that is, the political keys and authority given to the apostles and other leaders – to heaven, where it was safe from the dragon, until the restoration in the latter days. Frustrated because he could not destroy the child, the dragon turns on the woman herself, but she escapes by fleeing into the wilderness (see verse 6).

"And there appeared another sign in heaven; and behold, a great red dragon, having seven heads and ten horns, and seven crowns upon his heads. And his tail drew the third part of the stars of heaven, and did cast them to the earth. And the dragon stood before the woman which was delivered, ready to devour her child after it was born." This is verse 4 in JST Revelation 12. It obviously is a combination of verses 3 and 4 in the KJV.

5 And she brought forth a man child, who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron: and her child was caught up unto God, and to his throne.

verse 5 "she brought forth a man child" After her travail and pain, the Church did indeed bring forth the political kingdom of God. The birth occurred in the time of the original Twelve Apostles, but because of Satan's oppressions, that kingdom (which stems from the establishment of Zion) was driven from the earth before it could grow. See the discussion of the political kingdom of God in the commentary for verse 2 above.

"rule all nations with a rod of iron" It was the destiny of the kingdom of God to rule all nations, but, as John saw, because of Satan's opposition, the kingdom was not able to assume that role at the time of its birth. The rod of iron is "the word of God," as seen by Lehi and Nephi (1 Nephi 11:25). To rule by the word of God is to rule by the principles of divine truth, under the direction of the Spirit. Such rule implies priesthood direction. It is part of the oath and covenant of the priesthood to "live by every word that proceedeth forth from the mouth of God" (D&C 84:44). Those who so live shall also so rule (Psalm 2:9; Revelation 2:27; 19:15).

"her child was caught up unto God" Because of Satan's threat, the infant political kingdom of God was not allowed to remain on the earth. When all who held the keys and authorities of the kingdom were killed, those keys were returned to God by being lost to those on the earth.

"his throne" The Eternal Father rules from a throne in the heavens (Revelation 3:21; 4:2-6).

"And she brought forth a man child, who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron; and her child was caught up unto God and his throne." This verse in the JST is 12:3.

6 And the woman fled into the wilderness, where she hath a place prepared of God, that they should feed her there a thousand two hundred and threescore days.

verse 6 “the woman fled into the wilderness” The Lord’s people, when persecuted, have often fled into the wilderness (Exodus 2:15; 1 Kings 17:2-3; 19:3; 1 Nephi 2:2), meaning the uninhabited desert. While the child (kingdom of God) was returned to the presence of God (Revelation 12:3); the woman (the Church) is also taken away from the inhabited earth. During the time of the Great Apostasy, which followed the death of Christ and his apostles, the Church was removed from the earth. See commentary on Revelation 12:14.

“she [had] a place prepared of God” The Lord had foreseen that Satan would persecute the Church and was prepared to withdraw the keys and authority from the earth, to keep them with himself until the Restoration.

“they should feed her there” In place of feed, other versions use taken care of (GNB, NIV, LB), nourished (RSV), or sustained (NEB). The sense of the passage is that the Lord will not allow the Church to die but will keep it in his care until it is time to restore the gospel to the earth.

“a thousand two hundred and threescore [years]” The clarification of years in the Joseph Smith Translation rather than the King James Version days is an important one, for the number suggests the length of time the Church will be gone from the earth during the Great Apostasy – 1,260 years. If we consider that the Apostasy ended in 1820 (when the silence of the heavens was broken during Joseph Smith’s First Vision) or in 1830 (when the Church was formally organized), then the 1,260-year period began in AD 570 or 560. But we know that the world had plunged deep into apostasy centuries before that time.

Perhaps John saw the Renaissance and the later Reformation as part of the restoration of the gospel; latter-day prophets have taught that events of these periods did indeed pave the way for the Restoration (See, for example, Smith, *Gospel Doctrine*, 31; Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation*, 1:176-77; McConkie, *Millennial Messiah*, 90, 92-93). The Renaissance began to bring light to the Dark Ages in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. A key date in the Renaissance was Gutenberg’s invention of the printing press in about 1451. Less than a century later, in 1517, Martin Luther nailed his ninety-five theses to the door of the Castle Church in Wittenberg, Germany, sparking the beginning of the Reformation.

If we count 1,260 years before Luther’s protest, we get a date of AD 257. If we count backwards from Gutenberg, the resulting date is AD 191. We could likely find other dates from which to measure the end of John’s 1,260 years, but all such efforts are no more than speculative. The important point is that John saw an extended period of widespread apostasy, followed by the immeasurable blessing of the restoration of the gospel (Revelation 14:6). That is probably the basic and most important understanding we can come to here: the Apostasy would last a very long time.

In Revelation 12:14, the 1,260 years is given differently, as “a time, and times, and half a time” – which may mean “one year [time], plus two years [times], plus half a year [half a

time], which equals three and one-half years, or, again, 1,260 days. Perhaps in “prophet’s time” (D&C 130:4), a prophetic day sometimes equals a mortal year. Compare the similar time period – “forty and two months” (Revelation 11:2), or “a thousand two hundred and threescore days” (Revelation 11:3), or three and one-half years – during which Jerusalem would be besieged and the two prophets would testify in power. In the latter instances those time periods seem to be literal, rather than symbolic, months and days.

The ancient prophet Daniel dealt with similar time periods. After seeing a vision of the last days, Daniel asked, “How long shall it be to the end of these wonders?” And the answer: “It shall be for a time, times, and an half.” Daniel did not understand, asked again, and was told, “From the time that the daily sacrifice shall be taken away, and the abomination that maketh desolate set up, there shall be a thousand two hundred and ninety days. Blessed is he that waiteth, and cometh to the thousand three hundred and five and thirty days” (Daniel 12:6-12). Daniel’s time periods are slightly different, but the application may be similar.

The specific meaning of these time periods has not been revealed, though some may come to a private understanding through personal revelation. As an angel told Daniel, “None of the wicked shall understand; but the wise shall understand” (Daniel 12:10).

“And the woman fled into the wilderness, where she had a place prepared of God, that they should feed her there a thousand two hundred and threescore years.” This is verse 5 in JST-Revelation 12.

verses 7-12 At this point, John chooses to do a flashback to the war in heaven, probably to show that the conflict between the Church and the dragon had its genesis in the premortal world. Apparently, the events in chapter 12 do not follow an orderly temporal sequence in that we usually regard the war in heaven as a premortal event. Richard D. Draper has raised the question as to whether or not the war in heaven might have not been a premortal event, but rather an event that occurred following the apostasy of Christ’s Church:

I am cautious on when this battle occurred. Depending on how it is read, the JST may suggest that the war in heaven was not the premortal conflict. The JST notes that the devil did not win the battle “against Michael, neither the child, nor the woman, which was the church of God, who had been delivered of her pains, and brought forth the kingdom of our God and his Christ” (verse 7). Further, it notes how Lucifer was overcome: “For they [the righteous] overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; for they loved not their own lives, but kept the testimony even unto death” (verse 11). Placing these two passages in a premortal context is difficult for two reasons: first, the battle takes place after the man child is taken into heaven, and second, those who overcame Satan did so by giving their lives. Since righteous immortals do not die any form of death, the context suggests mortal martyrs (Richard D. Draper, *Opening the Seven Seals: The Visions of John the Revelator*, Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1991, 134).

It would be easy to see the changes in the JST reordering the events recorded in the KJV in such a way that those in chapter twelve continue the story in chapter eleven. This would give chapter twelve a nineteenth-century context. The woman would be the Church, which went into the wilderness; the child would be the kingdom of God, which the early brethren tried to establish but could not, the keys of which are presently dormant; and the battle, a representation of the spiritual conflict between the forces of good and evil continuing from that time forth. The problem with this view is that the JST places the woman in the wilderness for an extended period (1,260 years, verse 5), which does not fit a contemporary setting; furthermore, the dragon is cast out of heaven (see verses 8, 11), an event associated directly with the war in heaven. Because of the ambiguity in our modern work, I have elected to follow the ancient Greek text.

John reveals that the central figure in the premortal battle was Michael, who led the angels of God against Satan and his minions. There, victory resulted in banishment of the Devil from heaven but not from the world: the old dragon “was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him” (verse 9). On the earth the battle was renewed, and the Church in John’s day felt the brunt of it.

John’s account gives insight into the nature of the heavenly war. He states that Lucifer, the accuser (Hebrew, *satan*), “accused [the brethren] before God day and night” (verse 10). One wonders what the nature of those accusations were. Perhaps that the gospel would fail, that the Savior would back away from the wracking pain of the atonement, or that the priesthood would crumble under the pressure of mortality. The vision emphasizes the powers that overcame Satan: faith and testimony – faith that the Redeemer would make the atonement, and willingness to proclaim it to all who would hear. Courageously, these saints of the spirit world put their eternal lives on the line. Their witness won many souls and assisted in overthrowing the great enemy.

With the defeat of the dragon, John hears a voice proclaim, “Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ” (verse 10). The exclamation suggests that much was at risk during the great war. Satan sought to introduce modifications in God’s plan of salvation through which Satan himself would take the honor, or power, of God (see Moses 4:1-3; D&C 29:36). Apparently, Lucifer’s intent was to replace Elohim. The victory secured God’s authority over the rest of the children and firmly established his kingdom in heaven. Further, it confirmed the power of the Savior.

But heaven’s win was earth’s loss. Thus, the angel laments, “Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and of the sea! for the devil is come down unto you, having great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time” (verse 12). Satan has lost. However, the prison prepared for him and his angels, *Gehenna*, yet stands empty. *Gehenna* comes from the Hebrew through the Greek and represents the place of misery for rebellious souls. The term is often used as a synonym for hell but is more expressive of perdition. It is briefly described in Doctrine and Covenants 76:44-48. Satan has a little season in which to operate before God freezes him into eternal impotence, but this fact only serves to anger him. He is not out to win.

He can't, and no one knows it better than he. But driven by his insane wrath, he seeks the misery of God's children for as long as he can (see 2 Nephi 2:27).

7 And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels,

verse 7 “war in heaven” “What kind of war? The same kind that prevails on earth; the only kind Satan and spirit beings can wage – a war of words, a tumult of opinions, a conflict of ideologies; a war between truth and error, between light and darkness, between the gospel of Jesus Christ, with all its saving power, and the false religions of the world, which have a form of godliness but are devoid of saving grace. And the battle lines are still drawn. It is now on earth as it was then in heaven; every man must choose which general he will follow” (McConkie, *Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, 3:518).

Latter-day Saints traditionally speak of the war in heaven that occurred before Satan was cast out (see Revelation 12:8), but in verses 7 and 8, John may be seeing a renewal of that war in the days of the meridian church – and beyond. Two clues support this idea: first, the Church and kingdom of God are both present during the war (Revelation 12:7), and second, some of the righteous who fight in the war are killed (Revelation 12:11), which cannot happen with premortal spirits.

“Michael and his angels fought against the dragon” Michael, leading the hosts of the Lord, fought Satan and his followers (Daniel 10:13, 21; 12:1; Jude 1:9). The battle begun in premortality continued when Michael came to earth as Adam, the first man, and it continues to this day among Adam's descendants. The great battle between Michael and Satan, with their angels, will be fought anew at the end of the world (D&C 88:112-15).

“And there was war in heaven; Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon and his angels fought against Michael;” This is verse 6 in the JST-Revelation 12.

8 And prevailed not; neither was their place found any more in heaven.

verse 8 “[the dragon] prevailed not [against Michael, neither the child, nor the woman]” Powerful as he is, Satan is not as powerful as God. Though he may gain temporary victories, ultimately Satan fails in his evil plans against Michael and his righteous descendants, against the child (the kingdom of God), and against the woman (the true Church of God).

“And the dragon prevailed not against Michael, neither the child, nor the woman which was the church of God, who had been delivered of her pains, and brought forth the kingdom of our God and his Christ.” This is JST Revelation 12:7.

“brought forth the kingdom of our God and his Christ” Through her pains, the Church brought forth the kingdom, which is ruled over by both God the Father and his Son, Jesus Christ. This phrase is an important addition to the King James Version found in the Joseph Smith Translation.

9 And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.

verse 9 The JST of this verse (which is actually JST Revelation 12:8): “**Neither was there place found in heaven for the great dragon, who was cast out, that old serpent called the Devil, and also called Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth; and his angels were cast out with him.**”

“Neither was there place found . . . in heaven for the great dragon, who was cast out.” This passage seems to flash back to the time in premortality when Satan was cast out of heaven. “I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven,” the mortal Jesus said (Luke 10:18).

“Devil / Satan” Not used in the Old Testament, devil is a word found in the New Testament, which was translated from Greek rather than Hebrew. The word means “false accuser” or “slanderer,” which is one of Satan’s primary tactics against God the Father, the Lord Jesus Christ, and the followers of Christ. We learn from modern revelation that Satan was “a liar from the beginning” (D&C 93:25). The word satan means “adversary” – he stands in opposition to God, to good, and to all who embrace the Lord and his goodness.

“deceiveth the whole world” The adversary’s work of deception on earth is well documented in the scriptures (John 8:44; JST 2 Thessalonians 2:7-9; Revelation 16:14; 20:7; Mosiah 16:3; Moroni 7:17; D&C 84:49).

“cast out into the earth” As a result of the war in heaven, the devil was cast from the presence of God down to the earth. As Isaiah exclaimed, “How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning!” (Isaiah 14:12).

“his angels were cast out with him” Through his deceptions, Satan drew a full third of the Lord’s premortal children after him – and they suffered the same consequences he did: they were cast from heaven to earth (D&C 29:37).

10 And I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night.

verse 10 “I heard a loud voice saying in heaven” John here seems to be differentiating between the voice in the vision and the normal voice of the Spirit. The voice in the vision is not a still small voice but a loud voice proclaiming to all the goodness of God. The loud voice may be the voice of an angel (Revelation 8:13; 14:6-7; 19:17; D&C 88:92).

“Now is come salvation / strength” With Satan cast from heaven, the Lord’s plan can now begin to be effected among his children. Satan opposed the salvation that God would send through his Only Begotten Son. Now Satan is banished from heaven, and the plan can move forward, bringing redemption and spiritual blessing to all who will receive them. Other versions clarify the meaning of strength here. The New English Bible says, “This is the hour of victory for our God, the hour of his sovereignty and power” (Exodus 15:2; Psalm 27:1; 37:39; 118:14; Isaiah 12:2; 1 Nephi 15:15).

“the kingdom of our God / the power of his Christ” With the great opponent of God’s kingdom cast down, that kingdom is now ready to be established. Christ will now go forth with power to perform the atonement and bless all mankind (Omni 1:26; Moroni 7:41).

“the accuser of our brethren” Satan calls good evil and evil good (2 Nephi 15:20). He accuses those who are righteous (“our brethren”) of being evil. Often his accusations will be made through the mouths of his followers on earth (Daniel 6:24; Matthew 27:12; D&C 122:6). Interestingly, the Hebrew word for Satan means “to accuse.” Accuser here has a broader meaning. It seems to connote “a betrayer,” “a denouncer,” or one who “speaks evil of another.”

“accused them before our God day and night” Satan never ceases from his evil work. He seeks constantly, both day and night, to undermine the righteous. And, as in the story of Job, he makes false accusation directly to the face of God (Job 1:6-12; 2:1).

11 And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death.

verse 11 “they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb” Ultimately, we conquer Satan not by our own righteousness nor by the valiant efforts of Michael, who leads the heavenly armies. We overcome as we partake of the blessings of the atonement of Christ, which atonement was wrought by the shedding of his blood (Revelation 7:14; 1 Peter 1:18-19; 1 Nephi 12:10-11; 2 Nephi 9:6-26; Alma 34:36).

“by the word of their testimony” We also conquer Satan in our own lives by standing firm in our testimonies and being willing to proclaim them even in the face of opposition.

“they loved not their [own] lives, [but kept the testimony even unto death]” Those who overcome the enticements and powers of Satan include the martyrs for truth, who love the Lord and their testimony of his word more than they love their own lives (Revelation 6:9; 20:4-6).

“For they have overcome him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; for they loved not their own lives, but kept the testimony even unto death. Therefore, rejoice, O heavens, and ye that dwell in them.”

12 Therefore rejoice, ye heavens, and ye that dwell in them. Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and of the sea! for the devil is come down unto you, having great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time.

verse 12 “Therefore, rejoice, ye heavens” Those in heaven have cause to rejoice (Psalm 96:11; Isaiah 49:13): Satan has been cast out; the plan can go forward; salvation has come. The rejoicing in heaven contrasts with the state of those on earth, who must deal with Satan and his deceptions. “Woe to the inhabitants of the earth” (12:12).

“Woe to the inhabitants of the earth” The book of Revelation has other woes pronounced on the inhabitants of the earth – plagues and judgments that will cause much loss of life and destruction. But this woe is the greatest – that Satan will dwell unseen among the

Father's children on earth and will use his lies and deceptions to bring spiritual death to many (3 Nephi 9:2; Moses 7:25-26). This judgment will result in the fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecy: "The earth also is defiled under the inhabitants thereof; because they have transgressed the laws, changed the ordinance, broken the everlasting covenant. Therefore hath the curse devoured the earth, and they that dwell therein are desolate: therefore the inhabitants of the earth are burned, and few men left" (Isaiah 24:5-6; D&C 5:5). The woe seems to have begun when Satan first entered the Garden of Eden and tempted Eve; it will not end until Satan has been bound with chains and cast into the bottomless pit (Revelation 20:1-3).

"the devil is come down unto you" Satan dwells on the same planet on which we dwell.

"having great wrath" The devil is angry by nature, and he is further incensed by the fate he suffered in being cast out of heaven. In his wrath, he seeks to bring us to a misery like unto his own (2 Nephi 2:27; see also Revelation 14:8).

"he knoweth that he hath but a short time" Satan is fully aware that he will be able to tempt us for only a brief moment of the eternities, and then he will be cast out forever (Matthew 8:29).

"And after these things I heard another voice saying, Woe to the inhabiters of the earth, yea, and they who dwell upon the islands of the sea! for the devil is come down unto you, having great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time."

"after these things" This phrase is an addition found in the Joseph Smith Translation. Its inclusion does more than suggest a sequence in the vision, which is implied anyway. The words seem to create a separation between rejoicing in heaven in Revelation 12:11 and the woe on earth in Revelation 12:12.

"I heard another voice" Apparently, the voice that proclaims rejoicing in heaven is different from the voice that proclaims the woe on earth. This is another addition found in the Joseph Smith Translation.

"[they who dwell upon the islands] of the sea" Even those in the far-flung areas of the earth will be subject to the evil work of the devil (Ezekiel 26:17).

verses 13-17 Flash forward to John's day, showing the forces of apostasy working against the Church.

13 And when the dragon saw that he was cast unto the earth, he persecuted the woman which brought forth the man child.

verse 13 "he persecuted the woman" Persecution of the Church (the woman), meaning the righteous members as well as the organization itself, has always been Satan's first order of business. He seeks to deceive the whole world, but he seems to save his persecutions for those who resist his deceptions. Jesus taught us that we should expect persecutions – and yet remain steadfast to the end (Matthew 5:11-12; John 15:21).

“For when the dragon saw that he was cast unto the earth, he persecuted the woman which brought forth the man child.”

14 And to the woman were given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness, into her place, where she is nourished for a time, and times, and half a time, from the face of the serpent.

verse 14 “to the woman were given two wings of a great eagle” Satan exercised his energy first on the organization of the kingdom. Once he had chased off that threat to his earthly sovereignty – the greater threat – he turned on the woman. However, she received divine assistance and escaped into the wilderness. “The two great wings of an eagle” (alternate translation) symbolize this assistance. The insertion of the definite article, omitted in the KJV, underscores the explicitness of the action.

The wings have a double meaning: rapid motion or flight and divine deliverance. The idea of divine protection grows out of the reference to eagles’ wings in Jehovah’s past care of his people and deliverance from impending danger. Note Deuteronomy 32:10-11, where the care of God for Jacob is compared to a mother eagle fluttering over her young, where she “spreadeth abroad her wings, taketh them, beareth them on her wings” (cf. Exodus 19:4). In Isaiah 40:31 the prophet promises that those who wait upon the Lord “shall mount up with wings as eagles.”

“[flee] into the wilderness, into her place, where she is nourished” As the children of Israel found deliverance from Egypt, symbolizing the wicked world, by fleeing into the wilderness, so will the Lord’s true Church be protected “in the wilderness” when Satan attacks in the meridian of time. In this case, the wilderness is a place of safety prepared for it and isolated from mortals, namely, a place in the care of God (Revelation 12:5). During the period that the Church is gone from the earth, she will be “nourished” by God, which probably means he will make certain that all is in readiness when the time comes for the restoration, which began in the days of Joseph Smith.

“for a time, and times, and half a time” Note the fun John has with numbers as he reiterates the duration of the apostasy. He states that the woman will “fly into the wilderness . . . a time [360 years], and times [two times equals 720 years], and a half a time [180 years].” This totals 1,260 years. The number 1,260 years, of course, cannot be considered to be the exact time or duration of the apostasy, but rather is a number which represents the apostasy.

“from the face of the serpent” The woman (meaning the Church) will be taken to a place where the serpent (meaning the devil) will no longer be able to harm her – it is, the protective presence of God.

“Therefore, to the woman were given two wings of a great eagle, that she might flee into the wilderness, into her place, where she is nourished for a time, and times, and half a time, from the face of the serpent.”

15 And the serpent cast out of his mouth water as a flood after the woman, that he might cause her to be carried away of the flood.

verse 15 “the serpent [casteth] out of his mouth water as a flood after the woman” Before the woman (or the Church) actually departed into the wilderness (meaning the safety of heaven), the serpent (the devil) tried to destroy her with a flood. The flood from Satan’s mouth could have been a torrent of lies against the Church; the flow of evil that he sent forth, seeking to overwhelm the Church; ceaseless persecution and tribulation; or the attacks of a wicked nation (Rome) – or each of these in turn. (For scriptural examples of such applications of flood waters, see Psalm 18:4, 14-15; Isaiah 17:12-14; 43:2; Jeremiah 46:7-8; 51:55.) The real point, of course, is that Satan made great efforts to destroy the Church, and that the true power and authority of the Church survived in God’s care.

“And the serpent casteth out of his mouth water as a flood after the woman, that he might cause her to be carried away of the flood.”

16 And the earth helped the woman, and the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed up the flood which the dragon cast out of his mouth.

verse 16 “the earth [helpeth] the [woman / [swalloweth] up the flood” John’s meaning here seems unclear, but nature often seems to cooperate with the God of nature to protect the Church long enough for God’s purposes to be fulfilled (compare Numbers 16:30; 26:10; Deuteronomy 11:6). As Mormon testified, even the dust of the earth is obedient to the command of God (Helaman 12:7-19). And as we learn from Enoch, the earth itself has a spirit that loves righteousness and is pained by wickedness (Moses 7:48). Satan’s river of destruction (Revelation 12:15) stands in contrast to the river of life that flows from God (Revelation 22:1).

“And the earth helpeth the woman, and the earth openeth her mouth, and swalloweth up the flood which the dragon casteth out of his mouth.”

17 And the dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.

verse 17 “the dragon was wroth with the woman” Satan’s anger against the Church as an institution, as well as the righteous members of the Church, continues.

“make war with the remnant of her seed” Satan particularly attacks those who “keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.” And his efforts are neither feeble nor sporadic. The war in heaven continues as Satan constantly brings the battle to the righteous on the earth. This verse applies not only to the gradually dwindling numbers of the righteous in Christ’s Church in the meridian of time but also to the increasing numbers of righteous in the restored Church of Jesus Christ in our day.

“Therefore, the dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.”

John seems to have written the book of Revelation during the period portrayed in chapter twelve. The external church was on the defensive, and John warned her of what would happen if she failed to resist the floods of evil and persecution that Satan was loosing (pouring out) upon her. But to those who were true and faithful, the Lord held out hope. Indeed, the inner church, during the period of John's writing, was already escaping – sometimes through the assistance of Roman persecution – to a place prepared by God where it would be secure until God needed the keys to begin the work again.

Revelation Chapter 13 Two Beasts – The World’s Wicked Governments

As part of his effort to make war against the saints, Satan summons from the sea a beast, which symbolizes certain of the “kingdoms of the earth” (JST Revelation 13:1). This beast, depicted as various wild animals, has many heads and many crowns (suggesting many different rulers or kingdoms) and many horns (suggesting much power). He is known for his blasphemy against God (Revelation 13:1, 6). The world is so taken by the beast and his power that they worship him and fear him, and they worship the dragon (Satan himself) as well (Revelation 13:4). The beast’s power continues for “forty-two months,” during which time he fights and overcomes the saints of God (Revelation 13:5, 7).

Most commentators identify the beast as the wicked Roman emperor Nero, and, by extension, the Roman Empire itself (see discussions in Harrington, Revelation, 138-41; Mounce, Book of Revelation, 246-48; Glasson, Revelation of John, 79-81). Nero had great power and allied himself with Satan to persecute the saints. He took his own life in AD 68, and in the year that followed, civil war threatened to destroy the very life of the empire. Vespasian rose to power in AD 69 and restored order, but during his reign he proved to be as vicious against the Christians as Nero had been.

All this seems to fit with the description of the beast and its mortal wound (Nero’s suicide) as found in Revelation 13:3, and this may have been the interpretation the early Christians understood. But the vision seems to lead us to another, broader level of meaning as well. The beast appears to have power that reaches worldwide – “over all kindreds, and tongues, and nations,” even “all that dwell upon the earth” (Revelation 13:7-8). Further, that power was appointed to continue only “forty and two months” (Revelation 13:5). The second beast, which is a supporter and ally of the first, has no such time limit placed on his reign.

If we take these descriptions literally, the beast must be more than simply an emperor of Rome, however powerful he might have been in his corner of the world. Some might argue that Nero did have power over all the known world, suggesting that “all . . . nations” refers to all nations that John was familiar with. But in the very next chapter John notes that the gospel was to go to “every nation” (Revelation 14:6), which certainly was not limited to the Mediterranean world.

Who, then, is the beast from the sea? Following are some clues to its identity:

1. The beast has political power – from it stem many kings (Revelation 13:1; 17:12).
2. It stands in blatant opposition to God, representing blasphemy with no shame (Revelation 13:1).
3. It receives its power and authority from Satan himself (Revelation 13:2).
4. One of its heads receives a deadly wound by a sword and is healed (Revelation 13:3, 14).
5. The whole world knows about the healing and is amazed (Revelation 13:3).
6. The people of the world worship the beast (Revelation 13:4, 8).
7. The world marvels at the power of the beast (Revelation 13:4).

8. The beast is able to speak great things, including blasphemies (Revelation 13:5, 6).
9. It has power for forty-two months (Revelation 13:5).
10. It has power to make war with and overcome the saints (Revelation 13:7).
11. It has power over all nations (Revelation 13:7).
12. A second beast has power to give life to an image of the first beast, enabling it even to speak (Revelation 13:15).
13. The second beast causes all who do not worship the first beast to be put to death (Revelation 13:15).
14. The first beast will make war against the two witnesses in Jerusalem and will kill them (Revelation 11:7).
15. The first beast supports Babylon, the mother of harlots (Revelation 17:7).
16. It comes from the bottomless pit and is destined to go to perdition (Revelation 17:8).
17. The beast “was, and is not, and yet is” (Revelation 17:8).
18. The seven heads of the beast are seven mountains (Revelation 17:9).
19. The beast is eighth in a line of kings, five of which have come and gone by the time of John’s vision (Revelation 17:10-11).
20. It is yet to come in John’s future – but it existed in some form before John’s vision (Revelation 17:11, 8).
21. Many kings will lend their power and strength to the beast (Revelation 17:13).
22. The beast is not limited in time to the period of the Great Apostasy but will still be in power when the Lord returns in power (Revelation 19:19).
23. The beast and the false prophet, who is the second beast, will both be captured at the time of the second coming and will be thrown into the lake of fire (Revelation 19:20).

We will talk about the specific meaning of these elements, as far as they are known, in commentaries to follow. But the combination of elements gives us these essential understandings:

1. The beast is a servant of Satan and receives power from him.
2. The beast has power politically, a power that reaches to all nations.
3. It speaks blasphemies, fights and overcomes the saints, and supports Babylon. The wicked throughout the world worship it.
4. It seems to have existed in some form before the time of Christ, and it will continue to exist as a force in the world until the Lord returns in glory.

What power in the world fits such a description? It seems to be the power of unrighteous government, or an ideology or philosophy or culture that binds many governments. Governments in any age that resist the spirit of truth, that exercise power over men and women inappropriately, that set themselves up as the source (rather than simply the protector) of people’s security – all these partake of the spirit of the beast. (For an interesting discussion of the power of wicked governments, see Andersen, Great and Abominable Church.)

Note that the commentary to this chapter is written primarily in the present tense. Yet much of that which is depicted in this portion of John's vision may be in the past, and much may also be in the future.

1 And I stood upon the sand of the sea, and saw a beast rise up out of the sea, having seven heads and ten horns, and upon his horns ten crowns, and upon his heads the name of blasphemy.

verse 1 “I . . . saw a beast rise up out of the sea” John earlier had seen a sign “in the likeness of things on the earth” (Revelation 12:1). Here he sees a sign, or omen, that is, according to the JST, “like unto the kingdoms of the earth” (italics added).

“a beast” The beast is a symbol of an unnamed kingdom on the earth, most likely a political kingdom. Joseph Smith taught, “When God made use of the figure of a beast in visions to the prophets He did it to represent those kingdoms which had degenerated and become corrupt, savage and beast-like in their dispositions, even the degenerate kingdoms of the wicked world. . . The beast that rose up out of the sea should be translated the image of a beast” – meaning that it was symbolic rather than literal (HC, 5:341, 345).

The beast also represents a particular ruler over a kingdom: “There are seven kings . . . and the beast . . . is the eighth” (Revelation 17:10-11). Though the beast seems to be a particular king or kingdom, his horns represent other kingdoms as well. Some have tried to identify the beast with a particular king or kingdom, such as Rome or one of its caesars, but it is more important to identify its chief characteristics.

It has also been noted that the beast may correlate with Nephi’s seeing “among the nations of the Gentiles the formation of a great church.” This church, or institution, was, according to an angel, “most abominable above all other churches, which slayeth the saints of God, yea, and tortureth them and bindeth them down, and yoketh them with a yoke of iron, and bringeth them down into captivity.” Further, Nephi notes, “I saw the devil that he was the founder of it” (1 Nephi 13:4-6).

“rise up out of the sea” In the ancient world the sea was often associated with evil, with chaos, with the enemies of God (Mounce, *Book of Revelation*, 244). The four beasts Daniel saw also came up from the sea (Daniel 7:3). That may suggest that the king who is the beast will literally come from the sea when he attacks the people of God. Sea here may symbolize the nations of the world, as waters does in Revelation 17:15. Thus, the beast rises to prominence from among the nations of the world.

If sea is to be read literally, a statement in the Doctrine and Covenants may provide an interesting connection. Said the Lord: “Behold, I, the Lord, in the beginning blessed the waters; but in the last days, by the mouth of my servant John, I cursed the waters. . . I, the Lord, have decreed, and the destroyer rideth upon the face thereof, and I revoke not the decree” (D&C 61:14, 19).

“seven heads and ten horns / upon his horns ten crowns” The beast has heads, horns, and crowns like its master, Satan – with one difference: Satan has but seven crowns

(JST Revelation 12:4), whereas the beast has ten. In numerology, seven is a perfect number, but ten is not, which suggests that Satan has more complete power and sovereignty than his beast, even though the beast has a greater number of heads, horns, and crowns. This beast reappears in Revelation 17, in which we are given an interpretation of some of the symbolism. We learn that the woman who is called “Babylon the great, the mother of harlots” is carried by the beast (Revelation 17:5, 7). The seven heads represent seven mountains, “on which the woman sitteth” (Revelation 17:9). The heads may also represent seven kings (Revelation 17:10). The ten horns represent ten kings who are yet to come (Revelation 17:12; Daniel too saw ten horns on a beast, also representing kings – Daniel 7:7). These kings receive their power from the beast (Revelation 17:12).

This beast is commonly understood to represent Rome or one of the evil rulers of Rome with its “seven heads [emperors] and ten horns, and upon his horns ten crowns [ten leaders counting the three military generals],” Rome, of course, comes “out of the sea” in that it juts out into the Mediterranean Sea. But if Rome does fit the description in some respects, it is only as a prototype or symbol of the true beast of the last days. For even though the beast may represent a particular king or kingdom, its horns represent other kings and kingdoms, and its heads seem to represent that which supports the great Babylon of the earth, which is the embodiment of all wickedness.

“upon his heads the name of blasphemy” It is in the nature of the beast to oppose and mock God, to seek to injure His good name and reputation – and to ascribe to itself the character and attributes of God.

“And I saw another sign, in the likeness of the kingdoms of the earth; a beast rise up out of the sea, and he stood upon the sand of the sea, having seven heads and ten horns; and upon his horns ten crowns; and upon his heads the name of blasphemy.”

There are two manuscript traditions for verse one. One has John standing on the seashore (the KJV follows this one); the other, the dragon (as seen in the RSV and the NIV). The JST solves the problem by noting that the monster from the sea was what stood upon the sandy shore.

2 And the beast which I saw was like unto a leopard, and his feet were as the feet of a bear, and his mouth as the mouth of a lion: and the dragon gave him his power, and his seat, and great authority.

verse 2 “the beast . . . like unto a leopard / bear / lion” The beast has power among nations and peoples in the same way vicious animals have power in their kingdoms, ruling others by fear and force. These three animals are the same as those seen by Daniel, which also rise up from the sea (Daniel 7:3-6). Daniel saw a fourth beast as well; it is not described as a particular animal but is called “dreadful and terrible, and strong exceedingly.” This beast has ten horns and “a mouth speaking great things” (Daniel 7:7-8; compare Revelation 13:5). Daniel learns that “these great beasts . . . are four kings” (Daniel 7:17). He sees further that one of the horns on the last beast “made war with the saints, and prevailed against them”

(Daniel 7:21; compare Revelation 13:7). The last beast “shall devour the whole earth . . . and he shall speak great words against the most High, and shall wear out the saints of the most High” (Daniel 7:23, 25; compare Revelation 13:7). Daniel appears to have seen the same thing John saw but in a slightly different form.

The Bible uses the term beast to translate three Greek words: *zon*, *ktnos*, and *thrion*. *Zon* describes living creatures, often those connected with God like the seraphim of Isaiah 6:2-3 and the four living beings in Revelation 4:6-9. *Ktnos* refers to domesticated animals, especially beasts of burden and animals used for food as in Revelation 18:13. *Thrion*, on the other hand, characterizes wild beasts, especially beasts of prey. John calls the sea monster *thrion*, and the term aptly fits. The beast’s three components – leopard, bear, and lion – are all untameable and flesh-devouring.

“the dragon gave him his power, and his seat, and great authority” The beast looks to the devil for power to rule; in turn, the devil is the master, or ruler, of the beast.

3 And I saw one of his heads as it were wounded to death; and his deadly wound was healed: and all the world wondered after the beast.

verse 3 “one of his heads as it were wounded to death / deadly wound was healed” If the heads represent kings (JST Revelation 13:1), apparently one of the kings is wounded to the point of death but will then be healed. If the heads represent kingdoms, perhaps one of the kingdoms will seem to be destroyed but will then come forth unto power once again.

Those who would see the beast as representing Rome would see this verse as referring to Domitian. John would have disguised this reference to Domitian by using the myth of Nero redivivus. “And I saw one of its heads as it were wounded to death [Nero]; and his deadly wound was healed [Nero came alive again].”

This wound to a beast that is an enemy of Christ contrasts with the mortal wound the Lamb will receive on the cross (Revelation 5:6, 12); and as the beast, which is anti- Christ, is healed, so also will the true Christ be healed in the resurrection. There, however, the similarity ends: Jesus Christ the Lamb will live victorious forever, while his enemy the beast will be thrown into the “lake of fire” (Revelation 19:20). In 17:8, John states that the beast “was and is not and is to come” (alternate translation). This mimics the description of the Savior in Revelation 1:4 as he “which is, and which was, and which is to come.” The Lamb is Lord of lords and King of kings, and the beast seeks the same positions. In short, the beast is the spiritual antithesis of Christ and his kingdom. Thus, the beast not only wears the name of blasphemy upon its heads, it embodies the name by counterfeiting the attributes and position of deity.

“all the world wondered after the beast” The people of the world see the healing of one of the heads of the beast and are amazed. Of course, the people do not view the beast as a beast – that is only the metaphor John uses to convey his message. Instead, the people are amazed at the power and resilience of the king, kingdom, or philosophy that the beast

symbolizes. As an analogy, suppose that communism were to be revitalized and return to worldwide power after being repudiated in the late 1980s. That would be a source of wonderment to all the world. That is only an analogy, not an interpretation of prophetic or future events, but the analogy may be instructive in helping us to see what John seems to be describing in this verse.

4 And they worshipped the dragon which gave power unto the beast: and they worshipped the beast, saying, Who is like unto the beast? who is able to make war with him?

verse 4 “they worshipped the dragon” In John’s vision, the people of the world worship the devil. This does not mean, necessarily, that they bow down before him or that they offer prayers or oblations to him. Rather, they may follow him, subscribe to his way of thinking, and choose to do his will – some knowingly, some unknowingly.

“they worshipped the beast” The people of the world worship this king, kingdom, or philosophy in the same way that they worship the devil – by following it and making it the ruling principle in their lives. The word anti-Christ does not appear in Revelation; in the New Testament, it is found only in the epistles of John (1 John 2:18, 22; 4:3; 2 John 1:7). But this beast is unquestionably an anti-Christ, standing in opposition to Christ, seeking his power and authority.

“Who is like unto the beast?” The people of the world offer to the beast praise and admiration that should be reserved for God. In Exodus, for example, the people exclaim, “Who is like unto thee, O Lord, among the gods? who is like unto thee . . . ?” (Exodus 15:11; Psalm 89:8; Isaiah 44:7; Micah 7:18). Of course, because the Lord really is preeminent, the beast, whom the people worship, will be destroyed.

5 And there was given unto him a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies; and power was given unto him to continue forty and two months.

verse 5 “given unto him a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies” These blasphemies might claim that the beast ought to be worshipped rather than God. In speaking of the days before the second coming of Christ, Paul spoke of “that man of sin . . . who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God” (2 Thessalonians 2:3-4). The power to speak these blasphemies is given to the beast by Satan.

“continue forty and two months” The beast is allowed to exercise its power for forty-two months. This number often represents the period when the wickedness of the world will hold sway (see commentary on Revelation 11:2-3). The number forty-two may not indicate an actual number of months or other specific period of time but may instead symbolize a general, prolonged, but ultimately limited, time of wickedness.

When the forty-two months are broken down into days (1,260) and then translated into years, we have the period of time that the woman finds refuge in the wilderness (Revelation

12:6). Whether or not this connection applies, however, we know that the beast will have power for a finite amount of time and that in the end the Lord and his people will emerge victorious.

6 And he opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme his name, and his tabernacle, and them that dwell in heaven.

verse 6 “blasphemy against God / his name / his tabernacle / them that dwell in heaven” The beast speaks his blasphemy against God himself, against God's name, against God's dwelling place (the tabernacle, or temple), and against the angels and gods in heaven. The beast is opposed to all that is good (Daniel 7:8, 20, 25; 11:36) and tries to garner to himself the honor and respect that should be given only to God.

7 And it was given unto him to make war with the saints, and to overcome them: and power was given him over all kindreds, and tongues, and nations.

verse 7 “given unto him to make war with the saints, and to overcome them” It appears that the Lord is the one who is allowing the beast to make war with the saints, even knowing that they will be conquered for a time. It is part of the Lord's eternal plan to allow the exercise of agency to both wicked and righteous on the earth – even if the wicked martyr the righteous in the process. The Lord takes the long, eternal view, knowing that in the end he will be able to exact full justice both from those who deserve punishment and for those who deserve comfort and reward.

We read in Revelation 12:11 that the righteous did not love their lives more than they loved the Lord, and thus they were willing to suffer martyrdom. Here that resolve is put to the test for many saints, who pass the test by succumbing to death at the hands of the beast. Yet that death is the very means of their own victory (Revelation 15:2; see also Daniel 7:21).

Joseph Smith seems to place this event “in the last days” (*HC*, 5:344). Supporting that is John's statement that the beast will still be in power when Christ comes again (Revelation 19:19). If that is the case, it must be emphasized that the beast's war against the saints will bring only a partial and temporary victory. The Great Apostasy will be followed by the restoration of the gospel. And the Lord has promised that his kingdom of the last days, once it is put in place, will never again be lost from the earth (McConkie, *New Witness for the Articles of Faith*, 557-58). Perhaps the beast will oppose the saints beginning in John's day – when he will overcome them so thoroughly that the Church will be lost from the earth – and continue his efforts (with varying degrees of success) until the end. Even though John sees in his vision the final triumph of Christ and his forces for good, he does not sugarcoat the events that precede the victory. Many of the righteous will suffer at the hands of Satan and his followers, but the righteous will indeed be victorious.

The beast will not restrict himself to persecution in his efforts to overcome (or conquer; RSV, NIV) the saints. He will likely use all the tricks of his master, Satan, including the three great enemies of the Saints in all eras: apathy, apostasy, and sin.

Power was given him over all kindreds, and tongues, and nations. The power and influence of the beast extend across the entire earth. Yet greater still is the eternal power of Christ, who “redeemed us to God by [his] blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation” (Revelation 5:9).

8 And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.

verse 8 “all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him” Those who worship the beast include all the people of the earth “whose names are not written in the book of life.” To worship the beast is to honor and obey him. Again, we see that the beast’s influence is worldwide.

“book of life of the Lamb” See commentary on Revelation 3:5; see also 20:12, 15.

“Lamb slain from the foundation of the world” The promise of the atonement of Christ was made at the beginning, even before the creation of the world – and, through the grace of God, the power of that atonement took effect even from the time of that promise (1 Peter 1:18-20).

9 If any man have an ear, let him hear.

verse 9 “If any man have an ear, let him hear” This is an invitation to understand and heed the words of the vision (Revelation 2:7, 11, 17).

10 He that leadeth into captivity shall go into captivity: he that killeth with the sword must be killed with the sword. Here is the patience and the faith of the saints.

verse 10 “He that leadeth into captivity shall go into captivity / killeth . . . be killed” The Lord warns those who would follow the beast into sin that those who harm others will receive punishment to match their offenses. This statement also gives comfort to the saints: even though the beast will lead many of the saints into captivity, and even though he will kill many of them, in God’s perfect justice he will receive in the end the same judgment he metes out (see also Jeremiah 15:2; 43:11; Matthew 26:52).

“Here is the patience and the faith of the saints” Other translations (NIV, JB, RSV, NEB) clarify this phrase to indicate that the trials and persecution the saints face will require much patience and faith if they hope to endure. Still another reading is the saints know that even though some of them will suffer persecutions from those who worship the beast, in the end the Lord will execute his righteous judgments against the wicked.

verses 11-18 John sees a second beast, which has the same power as the beast that preceded it. The second beast appears to be like Christ (the lamb), but he really is like Satan, his master (the dragon). This beast also is a symbol of one or more kings or kingdoms of the earth. (See HC, 5:341.) The second beast causes the people of the world to worship (meaning, perhaps, to follow or to give allegiance to) the first beast. He performs great

miracles to deceive people, he gives life to the image of the first beast, and he kills many who will not worship that image. This beast (or kingdom) also controls the economy of the earth (buying and selling) and requires people to associate themselves with the beast if they wish to have part in that economy.

This beast truly is an anti-Christ: he pretends to be a lamb, he performs great miracles (including fire from heaven, which all men see), he brings an image of the first beast to life, he requires the people of the world to worship that image instead of God, he takes away the exercise of agency of the people of the world. This second beast is referred to as a “false prophet” later in Revelation (16:13; 19:20; 20:10). Perhaps this beast, as a “prophet,” represents religious philosophy and power, rather than the more political power of the first beast. Or perhaps he represents Satan’s sophisticated propaganda machine, designed to flood the world with lies and false political and religious doctrines. Like his counterpart, he will remain in power until the Lord comes (Revelation 19:19-20). His exact identity – whether as a kingdom or a false prophet – has not been revealed.

11 And I beheld another beast coming up out of the earth; and he had two horns like a lamb, and he spake as a dragon.

verse 11 “another beast coming up out of the earth” Whereas the first beast came from the sea, the second beast comes from the land, though it is uncertain why this might be significant. The precise identity of this beast is less important than what he symbolizes: earthly kingdoms that follow Satan and lead the world away from Christ, or political, economic, and religious ideologies that seduce institutions and kingdoms into following the way of the beast and the dragon.

“he had two horns like a lamb, and he spake as a dragon” This beast has the appearance of a lamb, like Jesus; outwardly he appears innocent and harmless. But when the beast speaks, his true nature is revealed – he speaks like his master, the devil. This false prophet is precisely like those the Lord warned against: “Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves” (Matthew 7:15).

12 And he exerciseth all the power of the first beast before him, and causeth the earth and them which dwell therein to worship the first beast, whose deadly wound was healed.

verse 12 “he exerciseth all the power of the first beast” The first beast had “power . . . and great authority” given it by the devil (Revelation 13:2). The first beast was so powerful that everyone feared war with it (Revelation 13:4). The first beast had power “over all kindreds, and tongues, and nations” (Revelation 13:7). The second beast exercised similar power in all these instances.

“causeth the earth and them which dwell therein to worship the first beast” True prophets of God seek diligently to bring people to believe in Christ and worship him. The second beast, a false prophet, likewise seeks diligently to bring people to worship the first

beast. His methods include wonders and miracles, threats of death (which are indeed carried out), and economic coercion. These methods are so effective that the beast succeeds in his efforts: the people of the world do indeed worship the beast. This is a continuation of the worship that started earlier (Revelation 13:8).

Here we see the false prophet acting as minister of propaganda for the beast, causing men to yield to it all that it desires. The false prophet is able to engender this submission by those miracles he has power to do “in the sight of the beast (verse 14). As the two witnesses in chapter eleven stand before the Lord and have power over fire, so the false prophet performs miracles as he stands before his lord. Both God and Satan have their servants upon the earth working miracles. Many who refuse to follow those whom God has appointed will fall under the spell of those whom Satan has.

One commentator writes, “[The] dragon, sea beast, and land beast are a satanic trinity that infiltrates the political world in order to deflect our worship from the God whom we cannot see to the authorities that we can see, and to deceive us into buying into a religion or belief-system that has visible results in self-gratification.” (As quoted in Mounce, The Book of Revelation, 256.)

verses 11-12 Having application to the time of John, some have suggested that this second beast which comes up out of the earth is the imperial priesthood established by Domitian to enforce the worship of himself as deity. Thus, this second beast “causeth the earth and them which dwell therein to worship the first beast, whose deadly wound was healed [Domitian].” The headquarters of this priesthood was not Rome but Pergamos – thus it came up out of the land.

13 And he doeth great wonders, so that he maketh fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men,

verse 13 “he doeth great wonders” This beast performs great miracles, just as the Lord’s true prophets performed miracles in earlier days (see, for example, Exodus 7-10) and as the two prophets will perform in Jerusalem (Revelation 11:5-6). The beast will even have power to make fire come down from heaven “in the sight of men” – a sign and wonder like that performed by Elijah (1 Kings 18:38). “There shall arise false Christs, and false prophets,” the Lord said, “and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect” (Matthew 24:24). And Paul warned against him “whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders” (2 Thessalonians 2:9).

14 And deceiveth them that dwell on the earth by the means of those miracles which he had power to do in the sight of the beast; saying to them that dwell on the earth, that they should make an image to the beast, which had the wound by a sword, and did live.

verse 14 “deceiveth them that dwell on the earth” Through the miracles the beast performs, he deceives the people of the world. The deception is that the beast should be

worshipped, rather than Christ, and that the power behind the beast is the power of God when in reality it is Satan's power.

"The Great Imitator is able to blind the eyes and deceive the hearts of men and to put his own seal of verity, that of false miracles, on his damning philosophies. Thus, those who place themselves wholly at his disposal have power to imitate the deeds of the prophets, as the magicians of Egypt imitated the miracles of Moses and as Simon the sorcerer sought to duplicate the works of Peter" (McConkie, *Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, 3:524).

The deception of the people of the world is a commentary on their spiritual state. Satan cannot deceive a person against that person's will – belief in the lies of Satan is always accompanied by choosing sin or choosing doubt in the work and message of the Lord.

"miracles which he had power to do in the sight of the beast" Some versions of the Bible say that the second beast was performing his miracles "in the presence" of the first beast (LB, RSV, GNB, NEB). Others say that the second beast was acting "in behalf of" the first beast (NIV, JB). The Greek (*enopion*) clarifies further, suggesting that the second beast was acting "through the authority" of the first.

"they should make an image to the beast" The second beast causes the people of the world to set up some kind of image of the first beast. We are not able to say what this means literally.

15 And he had power to give life unto the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak, and cause that as many as would not worship the image of the beast should be killed.

verse 15 "he had power to give life unto the image of the beast" In an amazing miracle, the second beast is able to cause the image of the beast to seem to come alive and speak. Many translations suggest that the second beast gives the "breath" of life to the image (LB, RSV, GNB, NIV, JB, NEB), another way in which the second beast acts as a counterfeit to God and his Spirit. We are not able to say what this prophecy means in literal terms.

"as many as would not worship the image of the beast should be killed" This phrase indicates a true division between the people of the world. There will be two categories: those who will worship (follow, give allegiance to) the beast, and those who will resist even when threatened with death. Those who resist are those who have overcome "by the blood of the Lamb" and "loved not their lives unto the death" (Revelation 12:11).

Some have suggested that this prophecy was fulfilled in the meridian of time. After the crucifixion of Christ, all members of the early Christian Church eventually died, were killed, or apostatized (one exception, of course, is John the Revelator himself, who was translated). Certainly, the demise of the meridian Church and the martyrdom of many members seem to fit at least parts of this prophecy. But many questions remain unanswered. For instance, what were the wonders and miracles performed by the Roman Empire, or its imperial priesthood, which persecuted the meridian Church? In what way did the Roman Empire have worldwide

influence, as implied in Revelation 12:16-17? Both of these clues seem to point elsewhere to the identity of the second beast.

If this passage also has a latter-day application, it is safe to say that not all the righteous saints will be killed – many will remain to establish Zion and to greet Christ when he returns. In this dispensation, the Church has been put on the earth to stay – it will not be removed from its place, though all powers of earth and hell be arrayed against it. But according to this prophecy, at some point many of the righteous will apparently live under the threat of a martyr's death: those who will not worship the image of the beast essentially have a death warrant on their heads. Thankfully, as Nephi saw, the saints will be “armed with righteousness and with the power of God in great glory” (1 Nephi 14:14), and they will emerge victorious.

16 And he causeth all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond, to receive a mark in their right hand, or in their foreheads:

verse 16 “he causeth all . . . to receive a mark” Earlier we saw that the righteous will receive the seal of the Lamb on their foreheads. This seal consists of the name of the Father and appears to protect the righteous from the judgments of God (Revelation 7:2-3; 14:1). In contrast, the wicked – all who worship the beast – receive the mark of the beast (his name: Revelation 13:17; 14:11; 16:2; 19:20) on their foreheads or right hands. This mark appears to distinguish the wicked and enables them to buy and sell (Revelation 13:17). Many have speculated on what the mark might be. Entire volumes have been written on the subject. But the Lord has not revealed the answer.

Here is one possibility, however, that may be more sound than most speculations. The seal of God is real, but it is also figurative – it cannot be seen, but those who have it know they are God's, and they are known by him. The seal is having one's calling and election made sure, being sealed up unto eternal life. That seal requires no outward mark or tattoo. It represents a way of life and its consequences.

Perhaps the mark of the beast is a parallel (though opposing) idea. Those who follow the beast do his will with their hands (symbolized by the mark on the hand) and accept and adhere to his philosophies with their minds (symbolized by the mark on the forehead).

Thus, those who give their lives to the beast and his philosophies constantly show whose they are – by the deeds of their hands and the words of their mouths (which reveal their thoughts).

Since refusal to wear the mark results in death, the only way to escape is to venerate the beast. But such homage does not bring peace or happiness. John states that those who worship the beast “have no rest day nor night” (Revelation 14:11). Though looking to a future state, John well describes the restless, nervous, and nearly exhausted existence of individuals who sell themselves to the idol of materialism.

17 And that no man might buy or sell, save he that had the mark, or the name of the beast, or the number of his name.

verse 17 “no man might buy or sell, save he that had the mark” Here we see the extent of the power of the second beast. In Revelation 13:15 we see that the beast kills those who will not worship the first beast. Now we see that he has another threat: he controls the world economy so much that only those with the mark can engage in the essential economic activities of buying and selling. Perhaps this means that one cannot prosper without taking part in the prevailing philosophy, which is inspired by Satan (For an interesting discussion on the economy of Babylon, see “What Is Zion? A Distant View,” in Hugh Nibley’s, *Approaching Zion*, Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1989, 25-62. Other essays in the volume are equally compelling.). Perhaps the saints will survive by living the law of consecration.

The second beast never comes fully into view but remains in the background, the deceptive distance catching those who might not otherwise be attracted to the first beast, and in this way, it betrays people into the worship of the latter. Indeed, its whole function seems to be to seduce mankind into this false worship. And what is the objective of this worship? In a word, materialism: the ability to buy and sell and to get gain.

Elder McConkie has noted that “the identity of these powers remains to be revealed,” but whatever they are, the only reason the beasts can gain control is because of the fallen and spiritually degenerate state brought about by evil being able to impose itself on mankind because of indifference and ambivalence toward the good.

“the name of the beast, or the number of his name” The beast’s name and number are synonymous. In many ancient alphabets, each letter had a numerical equivalent. A graffito uncovered in Pompeii reads, “I love her whose number is 545” (Deissmann, *Light from the Ancient East*, 277). Jewish rabbis enjoyed looking for hidden meanings in the scriptures; they called the practice of hiding numerical meanings in words gematria. For instance, we read in Genesis 14:14 that Abraham took 318 “trained servants” with him when he went to rescue Lot from his captors; according to gematria, the number 318 translates as Eliezer, the name of Abraham’s chief servant.

verses 16-17 In the days of John, perhaps the “mark in their right hand, or in their foreheads” was the card which Domitian decreed that every Roman citizen carry certifying that they worshipped Domitian.

18 Here is wisdom. Let him that hath understanding count the number of the beast: for it is the number of a man; and his number is Six hundred threescore and six.

verse 18 “Here is wisdom” John suggests that if we have understanding, we will be able to “count” the number of the beast, which will reveal his name. But lacking revelation, we are probably best served by not aligning ourselves too closely to any one interpretation.

“the number of the beast” The number of the beast, which number (or name, derived from the number) constituted the mark placed on people’s foreheads or right hands, was 666. The number is given as “the number of a man,” meaning, perhaps, that it was not a mystical number or name but an ordinary human number or name, or it may mean that the number was that of a particular individual. If that is so, the individual is likely only a representative symbol

of the beast, which goes beyond individual identities, reaching far into the past as well as into the future.

Another possibility is that the number is symbolic. The number seven indicates perfection; three sevens would suggest perfection to an emphatic level. Three sixes suggest a marked falling short of perfection. Seven could be a symbolic number for Christ; six could indicate the anti-Christ.

Most authorities interpret the number to mean the name Nero Caesar: when Nero's name is given in Hebrew (*nrwn qsr*), the numerical equivalent is 666 (Harrington, *Revelation*, 144; Mounce, *Book of Revelation*, 261; Glasson, *Revelation of John*, 83). Again, could John be using the myth of Nero *redivivus*? Other possibilities include the Roman emperors Domitian or Titus, all the Roman emperors combined, the ancient Romans as a group, or the Roman Catholic Church (Mounce, *Book of Revelation*, 261-62; Draper, *Opening the Seven Seals*, 150-51). The numerical equivalents of the names of each of these can be made to add up to 666. Many other individuals and organizations have been suggested as possibilities.

Some popular suggestions include, for an individual, the emperor Titus (Greek *teitan*, where t = 300, e = 5, i = 10, t = 300, a = 1, n = 50); for a nation, the Romans (Greek *lateinos*, where l = 100, a = 1, t = 300, e = 5, i = 10, n = 50, s = 200). There are other names that work as well, like the man's name *Euanthas*. Significantly *thrion*, the word John uses for the beast, also equals 666.

One popular suggestion is that the number refers to the Catholic Church because the Greek forms *Italika ekklesia* (Italian Church) and *hletana basileia* (the Latin Church) both add up to 666. Further, some claim that the inscription on the mitre of the Pope also yields the same number. If such an inscription exists, the Catholic Encyclopedia and other reference works on religious vestments used by the Catholics do not disclose it. The view that the beast is a church seems narrow, if not bigoted, especially since the idea behind the beast seems more state than church. The Adversary would probably like the wrong kingdoms to be pegged.

Taking the Greek as it stands, John's riddle points to "a man," that is, a single individual. Historically, the one man who has left his mark as the arch persecutor of the Christians is Nero, whom many have argued for as the man John had in mind. To derive the number, Nero's name is transliterated into Hebrew *nron ksr*. The breakdown is n = 50, r = 200, o = 6, n = 50, k = 100, s = 60, r = 200. Though the solution is ingenious, it is hard to believe that John would have put his readers through so much trouble. Also, Nero had been dead for nearly a quarter century before John wrote. However, in John's day there was another who bore the spiritual nature of Nero. This was Domitian. As emperor, he sought to exterminate the church of God. To John he may have seemed to be Nero reincarnate.

There are two complications with this approach. The first is that many early Greek manuscripts of the book of Revelation give the number as 61615 – which would yield totally different interpretations. The second complication is that the beast truly seems to transcend the normal life span of individuals and institutions. He reaches around the entire world. The second beast seems to be a symbol in which we find embodied the great forces that oppose

Christ and his people in the last days. Though we may not understand the interpretation of the number, we can seek to recognize the work of Satan in all its guises and then be willing to trust and follow Christ, our Savior, whatever the cost.

Even if we cannot tell who the number may literally point to, we understand the message of this passage: Satan sends forth philosophies and servants to do his work. Many who follow Christ and his perfection will suffer greatly for their opposition to Satan's program, but eventually the wicked will fall and the righteous will prevail.

There is much in chapter thirteen that awaits further revelation. When it is important for the Latter-day Saints to know specifics, the prophet will reveal them from God. In the meantime, an understanding of the message underlying the chapter sheds a little light. John's major concern is the question of worship, that is, to whom will men give their loyalty. Herein lies the message for those living in the last days when the beast will again actively recruit souls.

The monster is not Satan but the result of the unchecked work of Satan within institutions, communities, and countries. Wherever men refuse to be controlled by God or governed by truth, Satan rules; this is the danger of drive without humility. All spiritual aberrations are rooted here and are a result of the greatest of moral evils – pride. President Benson has warned the saints against pride. "The central feature of pride," he instructs, "is enmity – enmity toward God and enmity toward our fellowmen. Enmity means 'hatred toward, hostility to, or a state of opposition.' It is the power by which Satan wishes to reign over us." He goes on to state that "the proud cannot accept the authority of God giving direction to their lives (see Helaman 12:6). They pit their perceptions of truth against God's great knowledge, their abilities versus God's priesthood power, their accomplishments against His mighty works." The prophet further states that the proud man gets no joy out of having anything but only out of having more than others.

Thus, pride is competitive. It drives men on and on, never allowing satisfaction, all the while twisting their minds and souls into eternal selfishness. "I am the greatest," such insist, "therefore, what I want should happen. I'll step on anyone or anything that will not bow to my will." Sooner or later, such souls become saturated with the same poison that turned the son of the morning into the devil himself. Affected by the bite of the serpent from the sea, they carry his mark always with them. It affects both their labor (the mark on the hand) and their thought (the mark on the forehead). To these prideful, perverted souls, all men must eventually become slaves. Those who refuse are considered the enemy and soon become the persecuted. Since God will not submit to their program, will not follow their agenda, he becomes their ultimate enemy.

The beast does not work alone. He teams up with the false lamb, a treacherous religious system pushed by pseudo-prophets. The two beasts have produced the philosophical base and theological foundation for the satanic doctrine upon which the world feeds. The promise is always easy salvation, that property exists for the taking, that man can rejoice in sins and find joy. The doctrine is clearly enunciated by such men as Sherem (see

Jacob 7:1-18), Nehor (see Alma 1:3-5), and Korihor (see Alma 30:6-16). Each taught what was “pleasing unto the carnal mind,” and they “had much success” (Alma 30:53). But a lesson awaited each of these men.

There is an old saying that “you can’t get something for nothing.” But the truth behind the beasts is that you get nothing for something. That is Satan’s method of operation. His minions make satanically inspired but empty promises (“ye shall not surely die” – Moses 4:10), and then extract their payment. Note that it is neither the monster nor the false prophet who makes the image for the beast. The people do that. The image is made from the salt of their sweat, their toil, their tears, and even their blood. But in their hour of need, the beast will quickly abandon them: “and thus we see that the devil will not support his children at the last day, but doth speedily drag them down to hell” (Alma 30:60).

Revelation Chapters 14-16

These chapters describe a period of righteousness and of harvest of the saints in the last days prior to the wind-up scenes.

Revelation Chapter 14 The Lord and His Righteous Followers Will Endure

Chapter fourteen serves as yet another interlude. It presents a message of hope and encouragement just before vivid descriptions of destruction. In Revelation 13, we see the two beasts who serve Satan and enslave the people of the world; now, at the beginning of Revelation 14, we see the Lamb standing in triumph on his temple mount. In Revelation 13, we see the peoples of the earth, who worship the beast and receive his name in their foreheads (Revelation 13:4, 15-16); in Revelation 14, we see a powerful group of righteous followers of Christ, who worship him, who remain pure, and who stand faultless before God, having his name written in their foreheads (Revelation 14:1, 3-5). The spreading, pervasive power of the two beasts is so great that it appears that none can withstand it. But in the few verses of chapter 14, we see that the Lord and his true followers can and will withstand that power, and they will surely prevail in the end. The central, though less obvious, message of this section is a plea for the saints to follow the Lord even during periods of distress.

The chapter divides into three sections, each starting with the phrase “I looked” or “I saw” (verses 1, 6, 14). The first scene is of the Lamb and the saints in Zion; the second is of the three angels who both warn and comfort; and the last is of the harvest of the righteous on the earth. The final section is further divided into two parts: (1) the gathering of the righteous – the period of the harvest; and (2) the destruction of the wicked.

This chapter echoes the interlude between the sixth and seventh seals where the 144,000 were introduced (chapter 7). In this chapter, John sees them (the 144,000) standing with the Lamb on Mount Zion. Unlike the earlier vision, this one depicts their earthly station at the time judgment commences in earnest.

The vision has, at this point, prepared the reader for the onset of a great battle, but, as usual, God throws in a twist. The figure standing on Mount Zion is not a terrible warrior- king garbed in battle array, but instead, a lamb, the symbol of meekness and peace. Further, harmony and joy reign over all those in John’s view. These people do not know worry, distress, or the threat of war. The harmony of sweet music fills the region, reaching a climax as the heavens explode into the rhapsody of a new song – new not only because it has never been sung before, but also because it could never have been sung before. It signals a total victory that only now has become possible. For this reason, only the 144,000 – representing the sealed, those who have won the battle – are able to sing it.

1 And I looked, and, lo, a Lamb stood on the mount Sion, and with him an hundred forty and four thousand, having his Father’s name written in their foreheads.

verse 1 “a Lamb” The Lamb is Jesus Christ (Revelation 5:5-6).

“mount Zion” In the Old Testament Mount Zion (Psalm 48:1-3; 74:2; 78:68; 125:1; Isaiah 8:18) is located in Jerusalem. In Hebrews 12:22, Mount Zion (Sion is the New Testament form of Zion) is associated with “the heavenly Jerusalem,” which is another name for the portion of New Jerusalem that will descend from on high (Revelation 21:10). Modern revelation clarifies further that Mount Zion “shall be the city of New Jerusalem” (D&C 84:2; 133:18, 56). When the Lord stands on Mount Zion in the latter days, it appears he will be standing at the Mount Zion called New Jerusalem, which will be centered in Jackson County, Missouri. Yet he also will appear at Mount Olivet in Old Jerusalem, which is near the Mount Zion there, and the 144,000 may well be with him there as well (McConkie, *Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, 3:525).

Mount Zion also sometimes refers to the temple (D&C 84:32; Anchor Bible Dictionary, 6:1096); in this part of the vision, therefore, John has seen the Lamb standing on the temple mount or in the temple itself.

“an hundred forty and four thousand” As has been suggested, the term symbolizes priesthood authority in its fulness. This group of 144,000 consists of those who were sealed in Revelation 7:1-8. We learn in Revelation 14:3-5 that they have been “redeemed from the earth,” that they are “virgins,” that they “follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth,” that they are “the firstfruits unto God,” and that they are “without fault before . . . God.” See the commentary on Revelation 7:1-8; 14:3-5.

“having his Father’s name written in their foreheads” In Revelation 13:16-17, we saw that the people of the world had the name of the beast written on their foreheads. Here, the righteous have the Father’s name written on their foreheads. We are marked by the name of him to whom we give our true loyalty. The reception of the Father’s name is a fulfillment of the promise made to the valiant in Revelation 3:12, which records that the righteous also have written on them the name of God’s holy city, New Jerusalem, as well as the new name of Christ.

There is another way in which we may receive the name of the Father and the Son in our foreheads. A name stands for the person it belongs to. When Alma asked, “Can ye look up to God at that day [the day of judgment] . . . having the image of God engraven upon your countenances?” (Alma 5:19), he may have been referring to the same idea John is speaking of here. Perhaps the Father’s name is written on the righteous in a symbolic rather than a literal way.

2 And I heard a voice from heaven, as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of a great thunder: and I heard the voice of harpers harping with their harps:

verse 2 “a voice from heaven, as the voice of many waters, and . . . great thunder”

This voice may be that of the Lord (Revelation 1:15; D&C 110:3) or of the multitude of angels in heaven (Revelation 19:6). It is more likely the latter, as the angels join in the song mentioned in Revelation 14:3. The sound is so loud it is like the roar of the ocean or of a

rushing river; it is like the clapping of mighty thunder (see commentary on 1:15; see also Ezekiel 1:24; 43:2).

“the voice of harpers harping with their harps” John also hears the sound of harps accompanying the multitude in the song. Harps appear to be the instrument most often used by those in God’s heavenly kingdom (see also Revelation 5:8; 15:2).

3 And they sung as it were a new song before the throne, and before the four beasts, and the elders: and no man could learn that song but the hundred and forty and four thousand, which were redeemed from the earth.

verse 3 “they sung as it were a new song” The harpers, and perhaps others in heaven, are singing a song before the throne of God. The song and its setting are likely those described in D&C 84:96-102:

For I, the Almighty, have laid my hands upon the nations, to scourge them for their wickedness. And plagues shall go forth, and they shall not be taken from the earth until I have completed my work, which shall be cut short in righteousness—until all shall know me, who remain, even from the least unto the greatest, and shall be filled with the knowledge of the Lord, and shall see eye to eye, and shall lift up their voice, and with the voice together sing this new song, saying:

The Lord hath brought again Zion;
The Lord hath redeemed his people, Israel,
According to the election of grace,
Which was brought to pass by the faith
And covenant of their fathers.
The Lord hath redeemed his people;
And Satan is bound and time is no longer.
The Lord hath gathered all things in one.
The Lord hath brought down Zion from above.
The Lord hath brought up Zion from beneath.
The earth hath travailed and brought forth her strength;
And truth is established in her bowels;
And the heavens have smiled upon her;
And she is clothed with the glory of her God;
For he stands in the midst of his people.
Glory, and honor, and power, and might,
Be ascribed to our God; for he is full of mercy,
Justice, grace and truth, and peace,
Forever and ever, Amen.

Here we understand the triumphant nature of the song. The plagues of judgment have cleansed the earth. Only the redeemed remain. God and his saints have won the day, and Zion stands supreme.

“before the throne, and before the four beasts, and the elders” John reminds us that he is seeing a vision of the heavenly temple, with God’s throne (see also Revelation 4:2) before which are four beasts and exalted elders (Revelation 4:4, 6-10). The singers proclaim their song in the heavenly temple.

“no man could learn that song but the hundred and forty and four thousand” The song is sung by heavenly beings before the throne of God. But there are also some on earth who can learn the song – the 144,000 who stand on Mount Zion with Christ. Why are these the only ones who can learn the song? Perhaps it can be known only by revelation. Or perhaps such knowledge requires a certain relationship with God and his Spirit.

4 These are they which were not defiled with women; for they are virgins. These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth. These were redeemed from among men, being the firstfruits unto God and to the Lamb.

verse 4 “they are virgins” The term virgin (Greek *parthenos*) used by John to describe them emphasizes a spiritual quality. The image of “virgin” as applied to males was probably related to Israelite military practices. Soldiers were required to maintain ritual purity, including sexual abstinence, before going into battle. This state of ceremonial cleanliness for those engaged in war seems to be an excellent symbol for the moral purity that the saints must maintain during the spiritual war against the beasts (on conducting holy war, see Deuteronomy 20; 23:9-10; cf. 1 Samuel 21:5; 2 Samuel 11:11). For this reason, there should be neither concern for the epithet “virgins” pertaining to males, nor the idea that John is espousing celibacy.

The descriptions in Revelation 14:4-5 may apply to all who are exalted, though in this case they refer particularly to the 144,000. They are virgins in having refrained from entering into any unlawful sexual intercourse. They are also virgins in having remained true to Christ as their Bridegroom (Revelation 19:7; 21:9; see also Jeremiah 2:1-4) – in having refrained from entering into spiritual adultery (Ezekiel 16; Hosea 1-3). The Lord has often referred to his true people as virgins (2 Kings 19:21; Jeremiah 18:13; Lamentations 2:13; Amos 5:2; 2 Corinthians 11:2). These “virgins” are contrasted with the wicked who worship the beast in Revelation 13 and who join in consort with the “mother of harlots” that is Babylon (Revelation 17:5).

“follow the Lamb” Those who are chosen of Christ are those who follow him in all circumstances. These do as the man said in Luke, “Lord, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest” (Luke 9:57; see also Mark 8:34; Matthew 19:21).

“redeemed” Christ, the Redeemer, has paid the price for their sins, and they are redeemed from the demands of justice and the bonds of the devil (Mosiah 15:9; Alma 12:32-34; 34:15).

“the firstfruits unto God” Under the law of Moses, the firstfruits of the harvest were offered to God in sacrifice (Exodus 34:22, 26). As Jesus is the first fruits of all the dead, being the first to be resurrected (1 Corinthians 15:20), so are these 144,000 “the first fruits of the harvest of salvation” (see also Jeremiah 2:2-3).

5 And in their mouth was found no guile: for they are without fault before the throne of God.

verse 5 “in their mouth was found no guile” John makes the point that “in their [the virgins’] mouth was found no guile” (verse 5). The Greek word translated “guile” (*pseudos*) means “falsehood” in a broad sense, thus encompassing both lying and deceiving. However, John uses the term with a specific meaning. For him it is neither error nor lying but an active contesting against truth. Thus, the 144,000 are the antithesis of the beast and the false prophet. John’s context suggests that the men represented by the 144,000 are the true prophets. The whole picture captures the fidelity to Jehovah that the saints of God espouse. This characteristic is in contrast to the wicked, who include the liars (Revelation 21:8), who, as we saw in their worship of the beast in Revelation 13, “changed the truth of God into a lie” (Romans 1:25).

“without fault before the throne of God” A proper sacrifice had to be without blemish (Leviticus 1:3, 10; 22:21). These 144,000 are like the Lamb, “without blemish and without spot” (1 Peter 1:19; Hebrews 9:14). This purity and perfection, of course, is made possible through the sacrifice of that Lamb (Hebrews 13:20-21; Moroni 10:33).

verses 6-13 John sees three angels who proclaim or bring judgment upon the world. The first angel brings “the everlasting gospel” for “every nation” – and with it brings a warning that the hour of God’s judgment “is come.” The second angel proclaims that Babylon, the wicked world, has fallen. The third angel announces that all those who worship the beast will be “tormented with fire and brimstone . . . forever and ever.” Despite the troubles and destruction that will come to the wicked, the righteous will be blessed, and if they die, they will rest in the Lord.

6 And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people,

verse 6 “another angel fly in the midst of heaven” In latter-day revelation, the Lord clarifies that the angel John sees here has been sent to “commit” the gospel to man, suggesting that the gospel has been lost and would be restored:

And now, verily saith the Lord, . . . I have sent forth mine angel flying through the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel, who hath appeared unto some and hath committed it unto man, who shall appear unto many that dwell on the earth. And this gospel shall be preached unto every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people. And the servants of God shall go forth, saying with a loud voice: Fear God and give glory to him, for the hour of his judgment is come; and worship him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters – calling upon the name of the Lord day and night, saying: O

that thou wouldest rend the heavens, that thou wouldest come down, that the mountains might flow down at thy presence (D&C 133:36-40).

This angel is generally considered to be Moroni. We read in the Doctrine and Covenants that Moroni was the angel “whom I have sent unto you to reveal the Book of Mormon, containing the fulness of my everlasting gospel” (D&C 27:5). This angel is the angel who will sound the fifth trump at the time of the resurrection and the end of the world (D&C 88:103; see also verses 94-110); this may or may not be the same as the angel with the fifth trump in Revelation 9:1-12.

Elsewhere Joseph Smith taught:

All the testimony is that the Lord in the last days would commit the keys of the Priesthood to a witness over all people. Has the Gospel of the kingdom commenced in the last days? . . . I have read it precisely as the words flowed from the lips of Jesus Christ. John the Revelator saw an angel flying through the midst of heaven, having the everlasting Gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth.

The scripture is ready to be fulfilled when great wars, famines, pestilence, great distress, judgments, &c., are ready to be poured out on the inhabitants of the earth. John saw the angel having the holy Priesthood, who should preach the everlasting Gospel to all nations. God had an angel – a special messenger – ordained and prepared for that purpose in the last days. (*TPJS*, 364-65.)

Joseph Smith does not clearly identify the angel here, but the context suggests that the angel would come to “commit the keys of the Priesthood;” “John saw the angel having the holy Priesthood.” Moroni certainly had the priesthood, but he did not commit any priesthood keys – that was done by Peter, James, and John, Elijah, Moses, and others (D&C 110; 128:20).

Elder Bruce R. McConkie suggests that the angel seen by John in this verse was symbolic of many angels: “Paul makes the apt statement that the gospel consists of two parts: the word and the power (1 Thessalonians 1:5). . . Thus, the angel Moroni brought the message, that is, the word; but other angels brought the keys and priesthood, the power” (McConkie, *Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, 3:530).

D&C 77:8 lends credence to the idea that many angels joined together to accomplish the restoration of the gospel. Joseph Smith speaks there by revelation of “four angels sent forth from God . . . these are they who have the everlasting gospel to commit to every nation, kindred, tongue, and people.”

“having the everlasting gospel” The gospel with its laws, principles, and powers is eternal, lasting forever. The expression “everlasting gospel” or “everlasting covenant of the gospel” appears twenty-six times in the Doctrine and Covenants (see, for example, D&C 101:22, 39).

“to preach . . . to every nation” The gospel is destined to go forth to the entire world – “every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people.” This is the final divine commission the

Savior gave his apostles: “Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost” (Matthew 28:19).

7 Saying with a loud voice, Fear God, and give glory to him; for the hour of his judgment is come: and worship him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters.

verse 7 “loud voice” The angel’s “loud voice” is intended to be heard by all. See commentary on Revelation 12:9.

“Fear God, and give glory to him” The whole world has been worshipping the beast. But the angel tells them they must turn to God and reverence and honor him.

“the hour of his judgment is come” “Hour” here is probably not literal but may represent a short period of time, as if to say, “His judgment is about to begin.” Judgment does not refer to the Last Judgment but to the time when God will punish the world (send his judgments) for its wickedness. The judgment will be a time of terror for the wicked, but it will represent deliverance for the righteous from the rule of the wicked. This judgment and deliverance come through Christ. As he said in his final mortal days, so can Christ say again at his second coming: “Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out” (John 12:31).

This verse, in essence, is a call to the world to repent. This call – and reminder of the hour of the Lord’s judgment – was repeated early in the days of the restoration of the gospel, as seen by John. By command of the Lord, Joseph Smith placed these powerful words at the beginning of the Doctrine and Covenants:

Hearken, O ye people of my church, saith the voice of him who dwells on high. . . For verily the voice of the Lord is unto all men, and there is none to escape; and there is no eye that shall not see, neither ear that shall not hear, neither heart that shall not be penetrated. And the rebellious shall be pierced with much sorrow; for their iniquities shall be spoken upon the housetops, and their secret acts shall be revealed. . . Wherefore, fear and tremble, O ye people, for what I the Lord have decreed . . . shall be fulfilled. . . Wherefore the voice of the Lord is unto the ends of the earth, that all that will hear may hear: Prepare ye, prepare ye for that which is to come, for the Lord is nigh; And the anger of the Lord is kindled, and his sword is bathed in heaven, and it shall fall upon the inhabitants of the earth. . . . Wherefore, I the Lord, knowing the calamity which should come upon the inhabitants of the earth, called upon my servant Joseph Smith, Jun., and spake unto him from heaven, and gave him commandments; And also gave commandments to others, that they should proclaim these things unto the world; and all this that it might be fulfilled, which was written by the prophets” (D&C 1:1-3, 7, 11-13, 17-18).

“worship him that made heaven / earth / sea / fountains of waters” God has all power, even greater than the beast in Revelation 13. It is the true God that all mankind should worship, and none else (Exodus 20:2-6; Acts 14:15).

verses 8-20 Babylon to fall as God gathers out the righteous and harvests the wickedness of the earth.

8 And there followed another angel, saying, Babylon is fallen, is fallen, that great city, because she made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication.

verse 8 “there followed another angel” John sees a second angel of judgment. This angel has yet to come, because he proclaims the fulfillment of an event yet to occur.

“Babylon is fallen” Babylon, the city that was the epitome of the wicked, idolatrous, immoral world, was destroyed – and so will symbolic Babylon. This is her prophetic destiny, and it surely will occur, as many prophets have foreseen (Isaiah 21:9; Jeremiah 51:7-8; Daniel 5:25-28). The fall of Babylon is a direct result of the judgment of God declared in 14:7; the cause of that judgment follows: she induced the people of the world to join in “fornication,” which is a symbolic reference to worship of gods other than the true God. In a literal sense, the “fall of Babylon” means that the wicked world will cease to exist.

“that great city” Babylon is the great city of wickedness, standing in opposition to the great city of righteousness, New Jerusalem. Anciently, Babylon was a literal city, but in prophecy she stands as a symbol of the wicked world. The New Jerusalem will be a literal city in the future; she also stands as a symbol of the union of the righteous.

“she made all nations drink” Certainly Babylon did not force the people of the world to participate in sin. But through her inducements and enticements, she was able to seduce the world into accepting her godless philosophies and approaches to life. The term drink suggests that the wicked have truly internalized their sinfulness.

“the wine of the wrath of her fornication” This expression combines two phrases that are found elsewhere in Revelation: “the wine of the wrath of God” (Revelation 14:10) and “the wine of her fornication” (Revelation 17:2). The Jerusalem Bible seems to fit these meanings together well in its translation: “Babylon which gave the whole world the wine of God’s anger to drink.” The Revised Standard Version interprets wrath as passion: “made all nations drink the wine of her impure passion.” The New International Version gives the idea of madness: “made all the nations drink the maddening wine of her adulteries” (see also Jeremiah 51:7). Fornication here refers to the evil practice of leaving the true Bridegroom and going after other gods, as both the world and the Lord’s people too often do (Revelation 2:20). Fornication may also refer literally to sexual immorality, which often accompanies the grosser levels of wickedness on the earth. The underlying meaning is that Babylon (the wicked element of the world) has enticed the nations to become intoxicated with sin and that both Babylon and the nations of the world will be punished by God in his wrath. In bringing others to this fornication, Babylon is nothing less than a harlot (Revelation 17:1-6).

9 And the third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, If any man worship the beast and his image, and receive his mark in his forehead, or in his hand,

verse 9 “the third angel followed them” In this part of the vision, John sees the angels come in a trio, the first bearing the gospel, the second proclaiming the fall of Babylon, and the third warning of the fate of those who join with the beast.

“loud voice” See commentary on 12:9.

10 The same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation; and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb:

verses 9-10 “If any man worship the beast / shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God” In Revelation 13:15, we saw that all who refused to worship the beast were to be put to death. Here, in sobering contrast, we see that all who enter into such worship receive a much more terrible punishment – they receive the wrath of God into their very beings. God’s punishing anger is often depicted in the Old Testament as a symbolic drink made up of his wrath, which the wicked are forced to swallow (Job 21:20; Psalm 75:8; Isaiah 51:17; Jeremiah 25:15-28). Wine also symbolizes blood (3 Nephi 20:8; D&C 20:79) the wicked, who refuse the atoning blood of Christ, will be forced to drink of wine that typifies the blood of sinfulness (Isaiah 49:26; Jacob 1:19).

verse 10 “poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation” Speaking symbolically, God has a cup of mercy and blessing (Psalm 23:5; 116:13) and a cup of anger and vengeance (Revelation 16:19; Isaiah 51:17; D&C 29:17; 43:26). In the day of judgment, when “the cup of their [the world’s] iniquity is full” (D&C 101:11; 103:1), the Lord will pour out punishment into his cup of wrath, unmixed (or undiluted) with mercy, as wine was sometimes mixed – or not mixed – with water (Mounce, *Book of Revelation*, 273). The wicked will then be required to drink of the punishment in the Lord’s cup. He cannot give mercy (meaning, grant them the blessings of the atonement) because they did not repent.

“tormented with fire and brimstone” Isaiah described the destruction of Edom (another symbol for the world, as was Babylon) in similar terms:

The indignation of the Lord is upon all nations. . . For it is the day of the Lord’s vengeance. . . And the streams thereof shall be turned into pitch, and the dust thereof into brimstone, and the land thereof shall become burning pitch. It shall not be quenched night nor day; the smoke thereof shall go up for ever” (Isaiah 34:2, 5, 8-10). These images draw from the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, which is a type of the destruction of the world (Genesis 19:24-26).

The fate that has been prepared for the wicked, that of ceaseless burning and torment, was experienced to a degree by Zeezrom in the Book of Mormon: “Zeezrom lay sick . . . with a burning fever, which was caused by the great tribulations of his mind on account of his wickedness, for he supposed that Alma and Amulek were no more; and he supposed that they

had been slain because of his iniquity. And this great sin, and his many other sins, did harrow up his mind until it did become exceedingly sore, having no deliverance; therefore he began to be scorched with a burning heat" (Alma 15:3; 36:12).

Though the fire and brimstone appear to symbolize the endless spiritual and emotional torment of the wicked, the idea of a burning hell is nevertheless scriptural and was taught by Jesus himself (Mark 9:44; Luke 16:9-31; Revelation 20:10).

"in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb" It increases the torment of the wicked to see the bliss and blessings of "the holy angels" and "the Lamb." This expression likely refers to the presence of Christ and his angels when they descend at the second coming of Christ, the time of judgment referred to in this verse (Mark 8:38).

11 And the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever: and they have no rest day nor night, who worship the beast and his image, and whosoever receiveth the mark of his name.

verse 11 "the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever" The prayers and praise of the righteous are symbolized by the smoke of incense that ascends to heaven (see also Revelation 5:8). In contrast, the literal smoke of the burning of the city of Babylon – and the burning of the wicked – symbolizes the spiritual torment they suffer. Like the devil and his beast and false prophet, those who follow them – worshipping the beast and bearing his mark – will suffer torment "day and night for ever and ever" (Revelation 20:10). Again, the eternal nature of the punishment of the wicked stands in contrast to the eternal blessing of the righteous (Revelation 1:6; 11:15; Matthew 25:41, 46; Hebrews 1:8). Those who suffer the greatest eternal punishment, of course, are the sons of perdition (Hebrews 6:4-6; D&C 76:32-38). Those who inherit a lesser degree of glory than the celestial will also have eternal pangs of regret for that which they could have had, but chose, in sin, not to have.

"no rest day nor night" The torments of the damned continue without cessation and without rest forever (Isaiah 34:10; 57:20; Mark 9:43-49).

12 Here is the patience of the saints: here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus.

verse 12 "Here is the patience of the saints" In the midst of turmoil, the saints are enjoined to continue in patient trust in God and his plan, to keep God's commandments, and to be true to their faith in Jesus Christ (see commentary on Revelation 13:10; see also 1:9; James 5:7-11; Hebrews 6:12).

13 And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them.

verse 13 "a voice from heaven" The Lord or one of his angels bears testimony to the blessing that will come to those who are faithful unto death (Revelation 11:15).

“Write” Here John is given exact words to include in his revelation. This commandment emphasizes the importance of what he has heard – he is specifically told to record it – and is a continuation of that which he received in Revelation 1:19.

“Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth” This statement, proclaimed by a heavenly voice, is one of seven “beatitudes” given in this revelation (Revelation 1:3; 16:15; 19:9; 20:6; 22:7, 14). The reason these faithful are to be considered blessed is then given: “They may rest from their labors; and their works do follow them” (see also Psalm 116:15). Henceforth means “from this time forward.” Certainly, saints in all ages are blessed when they “die in the Lord.” Perhaps the use of henceforth underscores the truth that even though great trials lie ahead, those who continue faithful will be greatly blessed, even though they may die.

“saith the Spirit” The voice of the Spirit here may be different from the “voice from heaven.” But both voices proclaim eternal verities to the Lord’s people, truths that bless and comfort and lift the heart in the midst of trial.

“rest from their labours” For the righteous, the spirit world and the celestial world are places of peace and rest. There is no more sin or suffering, no pain or sickness or fatigue. And there is no longer need to work to earn our bread “in the sweat of [our] face” (Genesis 3:19; Job 3:17; Matthew 11:28; Philippians 1:21-23). As Alma taught, “The spirits of those who are righteous are received into a state of happiness, which is called paradise, a state of rest, a state of peace, where they shall rest from all their troubles and from all care, and sorrow” (Alma 40:12).

“their works do follow them” Our good works will be known in the world to come. Also, the blessings and positive consequences of our good works go with us as we move into the spirit world and then into a state of resurrected glory (Matthew 25:31-46; Revelation 20:12). In addition, Joseph Smith reportedly taught that a better translation of this phrase is “they shall continue their work” (Matthews, “A Plainer Translation,” 210). Though we may rest from earthly cares, the righteous in the spirit world and in a glorified celestial world will devote their new life and energy to the work of the kingdom.

verses 14-20 This section gives us scenes of the two-phase harvest of the earth. First, we see Christ with a sharp sickle, which he uses to select out the righteous as if they were wheat to be harvested. This harvest is that which was described by Jesus in his parable of the wheat field (see JST Matthew 13:24-30, 37-43; for a modern interpretation, see D&C 86:1-7).

Next, we see an angel gathering the wicked as if they were clusters of grapes and then casting them into a winepress that represents God’s wrath. We see the blood that comes from the winepress, as juice flows from crushed grapes – blood so deep it reaches to a horse’s bridle. Though this is a horrifying scene in John’s vision, it is a scene not of injustice and wrong but of setting things right and fulfilling the law of justice. Whatever God in his wisdom and love decides to do is best for his children, both individually and as a group; whatever God chooses to do is both just and merciful and right (Alma 42:15).

Joel saw a similar vision: "Let the heathen be wakened, and come up to the valley of Jehoshaphat: for there will I sit to judge all the heathen round about. Put ye in the sickle, for the harvest is ripe: come, get you down; for the press is full, the fats overflow; for their wickedness is great" (Joel 3:12-13).

14 And I looked, and behold a white cloud, and upon the cloud one sat like unto the Son of man, having on his head a golden crown, and in his hand a sharp sickle.

verse 14 "a white cloud" This scene is reminiscent of one beheld by Daniel long before: "I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven. . . And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom" (Daniel 7:13-14). Elsewhere we read of Christ coming "in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory" (Matthew 24:30; D&C 45:16, 44), but this appearance does not seem to be the second coming, when Christ returns in great power with his angels. Instead, he sits as a judge and conqueror upon the clouds in heaven. The cloud probably symbolizes Christ's glory (D&C 84:5). The whiteness of the cloud may symbolize victory, purity, and grace.

"upon the cloud one sat like unto the Son of man" The Son of man here is Christ (Revelation 1:12-20). After listing events of the last days, Jesus said, "And then shall they see the Son of man coming in the clouds with great power and glory. And then shall he send his angels, and shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from the uttermost part of the earth to the uttermost part of heaven" (Mark 13:26-27).

"on his head a golden crown, and in his hand a sharp sickle" The Greek tells us that the golden crown is instead a golden wreath (*stephanos*), such as victors would wear (Harrington, *Revelation*, 154). Christ comes victorious, with power to gather his saints unto himself. The sharp sickle, the instrument of the gathering, may symbolize the missionaries who go forth with his true gospel, bearing the priesthood and conveying ordinances, bringing the righteous, like sheaves, into the Lord's barn (Matthew 13:30).

15 And another angel came out of the temple, crying with a loud voice to him that sat on the cloud, Thrust in thy sickle, and reap: for the time is come for thee to reap; for the harvest of the earth is ripe.

verse 15 "another angel came out of the temple" This angel comes forth from the place where God is (Revelation 7:15; 11:15-19), bearing the message that it is time for the final harvest of the righteous on the earth, preparatory to the burning of the wicked.

"loud voice" See commentary on Revelation 12:9.

"Thrust in thy sickle, and reap" The reaping in this verse refers to the gathering of the righteous out of the field that is the world (JST Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43; D&C 86:1-7). The time for that gathering has come; it is the last days, and "the harvest of the earth is ripe." Ripe means fully ready; the righteous have proved themselves and are ready to be gathered into the arms of their Lord.

"Behold, the field is white already to harvest," the latter-day revelation says, "therefore, whoso desireth to reap, let him thrust in his sickle with his might, and reap while the day lasts, that he may treasure up for his soul everlasting salvation in the kingdom of God" (D&C 6:3). Gathering the people of the world in harvest – for safety in the barn (or bosom) of the Lord, or for punishment and burning – has long been an image used by the Lord and his prophets (Jeremiah 51:33; Hosea 6:11; Matthew 9:37-38; 13:30, 40-42; Mark 4:29; Luke 10:2; John 4:35-38).

16 And he that sat on the cloud thrust in his sickle on the earth; and the earth was reaped.

verse 16 "he that sat on the cloud thrust in his sickle on the earth; and the earth was reaped" Through his sickle (the righteous saints), the Lord reaches down and gathers his people from every part of the world. This gathering seems to be that of those who will come unto Christ; the gathering of the wicked is depicted in Revelation 14:19-20.

Through the prophet Joseph Smith, the Lord described the two parts of the gathering that will occur before the Millennium – the gathering of the righteous unto blessing, and the gathering of the wicked unto burning:

But behold, in the last days, even now while the Lord is beginning to bring forth the word, and the blade is springing up and is yet tender – behold, verily I say unto you, the angels are crying unto the Lord day and night, who are ready and waiting to be sent forth to reap down the fields; but the Lord saith unto them, pluck not up the tares while the blade is yet tender (for verily your faith is weak), lest you destroy the wheat also.

Therefore, let the wheat and the tares grow together until the harvest is fully ripe; then ye shall first gather out the wheat from among the tares, and after the gathering of the wheat, behold and lo, the tares are bound in bundles, and the field remaineth to be burned (D&C 86:4-7).

17 And another angel came out of the temple which is in heaven, he also having a sharp sickle.

verse 17 "another angel came out of the temple which is in heaven" That the angel comes out of the temple in heaven, where God is, suggests that he has first received his commission or assignment from God and then goes forth to accomplish it. "The temple which is in heaven" is John's name for the celestial kingdom.

"he also having a sharp sickle" If the sickle of the Lord (Revelation 14:16) is the saints' going forth to do his work of gathering, this sickle, in the hands of an angel, may also be mortal beings doing the harvesting work of the Lord, but they are harvesting the wicked, preparing them to be crushed in the winepress of God – or, as we read elsewhere, preparing them to be burned (Matthew 13:38-40; D&C 86:7). Perhaps this is done by bearing strong

testimony to all people, and those who refuse to repent are then judged worthy to be destroyed.

18 And another angel came out from the altar, which had power over fire; and cried with a loud cry to him that had the sharp sickle, saying, Thrust in thy sharp sickle, and gather the clusters of the vine of the earth; for her grapes are fully ripe.

verse 18 “another angel came out from the altar, which had power over fire” This angel also comes from the temple but specifically from the altar. This passage may have reference to the angel in Revelation 8:3-5, who stood at the altar of incense, which was offered with the prayers of the saints: “And the angel took the censer, and filled it with fire of the altar, and cast it into the earth” (Revelation 8:5). This angel, who has authority over the fire of the altar, commands the angel with the sickle to gather the wicked to be destroyed. Ultimately, that destruction will come by fire (Revelation 18:8).

“a loud cry to him that had the sharp sickle” The angel from the altar commands the angel with the sickle to thrust it down to earth, to cut down and gather the wicked. The wicked are “the clusters of the vine of the earth;” they are “fully ripe” in their wickedness (contrast with the ripeness of the righteous in Revelation 14:15).

19 And the angel thrust in his sickle into the earth, and gathered the vine of the earth, and cast it into the great winepress of the wrath of God.

verse 19 “the angel thrust in his sickle into the earth, and gathered the vine of the earth” The wheat that represents the righteous has been gathered, separated unto itself. The ripened grapes of the vine represent the wicked, those who bring forth evil fruit (Matthew 7:16-20), who are now ready to be harvested. The angel is the destroying angel, sent forth by God to perform his work of destruction and judgment. The gathering depicted here, however, is not the end of the world, for much must still transpire. Many details of the gathering are depicted in the chapters that follow.

For now, John seems to be giving us an overview, from the war in heaven to the great and final destruction, that the righteous may know with certainty the outcome of the great conflict between good and evil, between God and the devil.

“cast it into the great winepress of the wrath of God” As grapes were harvested, they were placed in a trough and trampled by foot; the juice then flowed through a duct into a lower basin. In symbolic terms, the winepress represents the great press of God’s wrath (meaning the execution of his judgments), which, according to justice, exacts the full terrible payment for sin. The grapes, which represent the sinner, are trodden under foot until nothing is left but pulp and wine – the wine being a symbol of the blood of the sinner.

In performing the atonement, Christ suffered that wrath for us, so that we might escape both the wrath and the consequent suffering if we would repent. In the time of judgment, all those who did not truly repent and come unto Christ will suffer the wrath of God themselves; it will be for them as if they themselves were cast into the winepress and trampled. “I have

trodden the winepress alone,” the Lord said through Isaiah, “I will tread them in mine anger, . . . and their blood shall be sprinkled upon my garments” (Isaiah 63:3). D&C 19:11-19 describes the suffering of Christ in performing the atonement – and the suffering of those unrepentant souls who will be cast into the winepress themselves (see also D&C 133:46-51; Revelation 14:8-11) (Parry, Parry, and Peterson, *Understanding Isaiah*, 555).

20 And the winepress was trodden without the city, and blood came out of the winepress, even unto the horse bridles, by the space of a thousand and six hundred furlongs.

verse 20 “the winepress was trodden without the city” Jesus suffered for the sins of the world outside the city of Jerusalem, in the Garden of Gethsemane and later on the cross at Golgotha (Hebrews 13:12; Luke 22:39-44; John 19:20). In the same way, the nations will come to their judgment outside the city of Jerusalem, with the destruction centered in the valley of Jehoshaphat. Jehoshaphat, a name meaning “Jehovah is judge” (see Joel 3:2, 12). According to tradition, this is synonymous with the Kidron valley between Jerusalem and the Mount of Olives and was near the place where the Son of Man suffered so that all who would come to him would not need to suffer (see John 19:20; Hebrews 13:12; D&C 19:16-18).

Because the wicked refused the blessings of the suffering of Christ – the benefits of the blood that was shed for them – they must now suffer for themselves, shedding their own blood.

“blood came out of the winepress, even unto the horse bridles . . . a thousand and six hundred furlongs” The language here is very plain: rather than using wine or red grape juice as a symbol for blood, John simply says, “blood came out of the winepress.” The slaughter of the wicked in the day of their judgment creates a flood of their blood. The depth of the flow of blood reaches up to the bridle of a horse. The length of the river of blood (sixteen hundred furlongs) is about 184 miles, or the approximate length of the land of Palestine. In this verse, the city seems to symbolize the holy places that are protected by God; the land outside the city may represent all the people of the world who are subjected to God’s terrible but righteous judgments (Mounce, *Book of Revelation*, 281).

This part of the vision does not seem to depict the final judgment that belongs to God alone (see Revelation 20:11-15) but the time of the return of the victorious Son, who has overcome all things and who takes his place as God of the earth. Upon his return, later in chapter nineteen, he will tread “the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God” (Revelation 19:15).

“And the winepress was trodden without the city, and blood came out of the winepress, even unto the horses’ bridles, by the space of a thousand and six hundred furlongs.” The JST adds the possessive form of horse.

John continues to use the pattern that shows first the protected state of the righteous and the indefensible position of the wicked. In this chapter, he symbolically shows that the gospel will be preached in all the world before the end comes; furthermore, he indicates that this preaching dooms Babylon. This is the time when the Church will move “out of the

wilderness of darkness, and shine forth fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners" (D&C 109:73). The onslaught of this mighty kingdom of righteousness will be invincible. But for a time, conditions will be rough and opposition heavy.

When the true saints are strong in the faith, when all peoples have clearly had a chance to hear the gospel proclaimed in their own tongue, when missionaries and Church officers are within reasonable reach of every soul, when temples dot the face of the lands, then the preparation for the first harvest will be complete. The actual harvest will commence in earnest when the world turns against the truth, actively persecuting righteousness because it is righteous, attacking the Saints of God and all who are good. The Son of Man will then gather the righteous out from among the wicked. Simultaneously the second harvest will begin. The angel of destruction will wield his sickle and cast those ripe in iniquity into the "great winepress of the wrath of God" (verse 19). Chapters fifteen through nineteen describe that harvest.

Revelation Chapter 15 Seven Angels Prepared to Pour Out Seven Judgments

verses 1-8 These verses describe the third interlude of heaven's preparation for the final assault upon the wicked. In this scene, John sees a vision of celestial glory. He sees those who have "gotten the victory over the beast" singing a song of praise to God. Paradoxically, many who gain victory over the beast were first slain by that beast (Revelation 13:7, 15); by standing firm in their testimonies, even unto death, they eventually emerge victorious. John also sees seven angels being prepared to pour out seven final judgments on the earth (Revelation 15:1, 7). We do not yet see what those judgments are (that is reserved for the next chapter), but they appear to be terrible: "In them is filled up the wrath of God" (Revelation 15:1).

1 And I saw another sign in heaven, great and marvellous, seven angels having the seven last plagues; for in them is filled up the wrath of God.

verse 1 "And I saw another sign in heaven, great and marvellous" Another sign gives us to understand that the scene in the vision has shifted. As with the other signs in John's vision, what he sees as a sign symbolizes a great truth. In this case, the truth is that God will indeed exact judgment against the wicked, a judgment that will be complete and terrible. The phrase "great and marvellous" suggests a sign that is absolutely overwhelming.

"seven angels having the seven last plagues" These seven last plagues are the Lord's final attempt to cause the hearts of the wicked to be softened and to turn to him. After these plagues, will come the actual fall of Babylon and the second coming of Christ. Because seven is a number signifying perfection, seven angels with seven plagues indicates perfect and complete judgment against the wicked of the earth. This prophecy is reminiscent of the curse the Lord gave against the wicked in Leviticus 26:21: "If ye walk contrary unto me, and will not hearken unto me; I will bring seven times more plagues upon you according to your sins." These plagues will be poured out in Revelation 16.

"in them is filled up the wrath of God" The plagues bring a full measure of God's wrath to the world but not the final consummation. That consummation comes in the chapters that follow. The term translated "filled up" (Greek tele) means to reach a consummation or perfection as well as to carry out, accomplish, perform, or fulfill. The Revelator's use of the word suggests that in these judgments the wrath of God achieves its goal.

2 And I saw as it were a sea of glass mingled with fire: and them that had gotten the victory over the beast, and over his image, and over his mark, and over the number of his name, stand on the sea of glass, having the harps of God.

verse 2 As already noted, John has a pattern of describing the peaceful condition of the faithful before presenting the horrors unleashed against the ungodly. His pattern continues

here as he briefly mentions the blessed condition of the saints before the vials of wrath are poured out upon the earth.

“a sea of glass mingled with fire” The sea of glass indicates a celestial sphere (D&C 130:6-7), and the presence of fire indicates the presence of God, who dwells amid everlasting burnings (Isaiah 33:14-16). We have already learned that the sea of glass represents the celestialized earth.

“them that had gotten the victory over the beast . . . stand on the sea of glass”

Those who have refused to bow to the beast, either physically or spiritually, inherit a celestial glory. These may be the same saints who were sealed in Revelation 7:1-8 and were named among the 144,000 in Revelation 14:1-5.

“harps of God” The harps symbolize an attitude of worship and giving glory to God (2 Samuel 6:5; Nehemiah 12:27; Psalm 92:1-3; Revelation 14:2).

3 And they sing the song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints.

verse 3 “And they sing the song of Moses . . . and the song of the Lamb” The song of Moses was sung by that great prophet and his followers after they were delivered from the great “beast” called Egypt (Exodus 15:1-19). The lyrics to the song spoken of in this verse include the words, “Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints.” These words are not found in the song of Moses in Exodus 15, but the common element is what is important: the Lord’s people were in bondage and trouble, and the Lord delivered them from their enemy.

This song is also the song of the Lamb, because he is the great Deliverer. The song of the Lamb will ultimately be sung by all true saints. On the day of resurrection, the scripture says, “The graves of the saints shall be opened; and they shall come forth and stand on the right hand of the Lamb, when he shall stand upon Mount Zion, and upon the holy city, the New Jerusalem; and they shall sing the song of the Lamb, day and night forever and ever” (D&C 133:56).

“King of saints” The phrase “King of the saints” as rendered in verse three of the KJV is highly questioned. The term *saints* is replaced by either ages (*aionion*) or nations(*ethnon*) in most ancient manuscripts. Because of a near parallel verse in Jeremiah 10:7, the favored translation is “King of nations.”

4 Who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name? for thou only art holy: for all nations shall come and worship before thee; for thy judgments are made manifest.

verse 4 “Who shall not fear thee / all nations shall come and worship before thee”

The saints cry out their praise and admiration to the Lord. Shouldn’t all nations fear and honor him? Yes, the time will come when “every knee shall bow, and every tongue confess” that the Lord is God (Romans 14:11; Mosiah 27:31; D&C 88:104).

The saints in our day sing a similar song:

How wondrous and great
Thy works, God of praise!
How just, King of Saints,
And true are thy ways!
Oh, who shall not fear thee
And honor thy name?
Thou only art holy,
Thou only supreme
(Hymns, 267).

"thy judgments are made manifest" The nations will acknowledge the power and supremacy of God as they see them manifest through the judgments he brings on the wicked of the earth. Nothing can stop the will of God from being done. He executes it through the course of history – thus, constructing that history. In the end, justice will be done, and judgment will have its total sway.

5 And after that I looked, and, behold, the temple of the tabernacle of the testimony in heaven was opened:

verse 5 "I looked" Again the vision shifts to a new scene.

"the temple of the tabernacle of the testimony in heaven was opened" The ancient tabernacle in the days of Moses was called the “tabernacle of witness” (Numbers 17:7), or “tabernacle of testimony,” because it contained the two stone “tables of the testimony” on which God had written (Exodus 32:15; Deuteronomy 10:5). A clearer way of stating this is found in the New International Version: “I looked and in heaven the temple, that is, the tabernacle of testimony, was opened.” The tabernacle of Moses served as a temple until Solomon’s day, when a more permanent structure was built (1 Kings 8:18-20). When John looked into the heavens again, he saw the temple in heaven open and seven angels came out.

6 And the seven angels came out of the temple, having the seven plagues, clothed in pure and white linen, and having their breasts girded with golden girdles.

verse 6 "the seven angels came out of the temple, having the seven plagues"

Apparently the seven angels received their charge in the temple and then emerged with the seven plagues. The number seven indicates that the judgments are perfect and complete. That the judgments come from the temple is a mark of their godly origin.

"clothed in pure and white linen / their breasts girded with golden girdles" The linen dress of the angels, pure and white, indicates that they hold a sacred and holy office (Ezekiel 9:2; Daniel 10:5). Linen also suggests the bride of Christ (Revelation 19:7-8) and the armies of heaven (Revelation 19:14). The high rank of the angels is deduced from the golden girdles (or sashes) they wear, which are like that worn by Christ himself (Revelation 1:13).

7 And one of the four beasts gave unto the seven angels seven golden vials [bowls] full of the wrath of God, who liveth for ever and ever.

verse 7 The KJV “vials” may more appropriately be translated bowls. See, for example, RSV, GNB, NIV, and JB.

“one of the four beasts” In Revelation 4:6-9 John saw four beasts at the throne of God. In Revelation 5:8 the beasts worship the Lamb. In Revelation 6:1, 3, 5, and 7 the beasts invite John to see the events that occur when the seals on the book are opened. Now one of these same beasts, which are intelligent creatures, gives the angels the bowls that contain the judgments that are to be poured out on the earth.

“seven golden [bowls] full of the wrath of God” The seven bowls contain the judgments that represent God’s wrath (Romans 1:18; Hebrews 10:30-31). These judgments are poured out in the following chapter. Golden bowls, or vials, are mentioned in Revelation 5:8, symbolizing the prayers of the saints. Perhaps the saints’ pleading for justice and deliverance is answered in the judgments in the seven golden bowls here.

“who liveth for ever and ever” This interjection reaffirms the power and dominion of God (Revelation 4:9; 10:6). As one who lives forever, unlike the mortals on the earth, God has full power to accomplish all his will against the wicked of the world.

8 And the temple was filled with smoke from the glory of God, and from his power; and no man was able to enter into the temple, till the seven plagues of the seven angels were fulfilled.

verse 8 “the temple was filled with smoke” The source of the smoke is “the glory of God, and . . . his power.” Smoke or a cloud is a typical sign of the presence of God. When the Lord descended on Mount Sinai “in fire,” the mount “was altogether on a smoke, . . . and the smoke thereof ascended as the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mount quaked greatly” (Exodus 19:18; see also Isaiah 6:4; Ezekiel 10:4).

“no man was able to enter into the temple” Because God is present in the heavenly temple, filling it with his glory, no one is able to go into it until the seven plagues are completed. This expression evidently indicates that God continues to actively exercise his power in judgment until the wicked are destroyed. No one can approach him, pleading mercy.

We read in the Old Testament of another circumstance in which God’s power prevented man from entering His temple: “Then a cloud covered the tent of the congregation, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle. And Moses was not able to enter into the tent of the congregation, because the cloud abode thereon, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle” (Exodus 40:34-35; see also 1 Kings 8:10-11).

This chapter celebrates not the God of mercy but the God of justice. John shows that justice must have its day. “For behold, justice exerciseth all his demands” (Alma 42:24). They who “bring forth evil fruit . . . must be hewn down and cast into the fire” (Jacob 6:7). This “according to the power of justice, for justice cannot be denied” (verse 10) because “on such the plan of redemption could have no power, for the works of justice could not be destroyed,

according to the supreme goodness of God" (Alma 12:32). John has aptly shown that the world has had its chance to repent but refused. As a result of its recalcitrance, the world forfeited mercy. Now according to the "goodness of God," justice must be satisfied.

Chapter fifteen makes two points: first, that the plagues are inexorable once they commence; and second, that God executes them in justice and vengeance upon the world. Though punishment comes without mitigation, it is both just and righteous. In modern times the Lord has declared that the testimony of his witnesses "shall also go forth unto the condemnation of this generation if they harden their hearts against them; for a desolating scourge shall go forth among the inhabitants of the earth, and shall continue to be poured out from time to time, if they repent not, until the earth is empty, and the [wicked] inhabitants thereof are consumed away and utterly destroyed by the brightness of my coming" (D&C 5:18-19). Further, he has warned: "Lo, vengeance cometh speedily upon the ungodly as the whirlwind; and who shall escape it? The Lord's scourge shall pass over by night and by day, and the report thereof shall vex all people; yea, it shall not be stayed until the Lord come; for the indignation of the Lord is kindled against their abominations and all their wicked works" (D&C 97:22-24).

Once the plagues begin, there is no way to stop them. But what of the saints? The Lord has both warned and promised them: "Nevertheless, Zion shall escape if she observe to do all things whatsoever I have commanded her" (D&C 97:25). Here the Lord states his conditions: obedience will bring safety and security, disobedience will bring wrath. No unrighteousness is exempt even if found within the Church. The saints must never forget the Lord's declaration:

Vengeance cometh speedily upon the inhabitants of the earth, a day of wrath, a day of burning, a day of desolation, of weeping, of mourning, and of lamentation; and as a whirlwind it shall come upon all the face of the earth, saith the Lord. And upon my house shall it begin, and from my house shall it go forth, saith the Lord; first among those among you, saith the Lord, who have professed to know my name and have not known me, and have blasphemed against me in the midst of my house, saith the Lord (D&C 112:24-26).

Under the power of judgment, the mask of pretended righteousness will be ripped off and all hypocrisy fully revealed. The rebellious Latter-day Saint will not escape the justice of God.

Revelation Chapter 16 Seven Angles Pour Out Seven Plagues

In this chapter the vision resumes and the seven plagues are poured out.

The day of God's judgment is a day of God's wrath – and that day is fast approaching. "Vengeance cometh speedily," the Lord says, "as a whirlwind it shall come upon all the face of the earth" (D&C 112:24).

The righteous will be blessed with a degree of protection: "Zion shall escape if she observe to do all things whatsoever I have commanded her" (D&C 97:25). But those among the saints who are hypocrites have no such promise; indeed, they will be the first to be judged: "Upon my house shall it [the day of vengeance] begin, and from my house shall it go forth, saith the Lord; first among those among you, saith the Lord, who have professed to know my name and have not known me, and have blasphemed against me in the midst of my house, saith the Lord" (D&C 112:25-26).

This chapter of Revelation details the scourges and plagues that will afflict mankind in the day of the final judgments – plagues that will smite the land, the sea, the rivers, the sun, and the kingdoms of spiritual darkness. Through the power of God, the very foundations of the earth are shaken, and Babylon is prepared to be totally destroyed. These plagues may well fit the description the Lord gave us elsewhere in modern revelation: "For behold, and lo, vengeance cometh speedily upon the ungodly as the whirlwind; and who shall escape it? The Lord's scourge shall pass over by night and by day, and the report thereof shall vex all people; yea, it shall not be stayed until the Lord come; for the indignation of the Lord is kindled against their abominations and all their wicked works" (D&C 97:22-24).

And again: "Their testimony [the elders] shall also go forth unto the condemnation of this generation if they harden their hearts against them; for a desolating scourge shall go forth among the inhabitants of the earth, and shall continue to be poured out from time to time, if they repent not, until the earth is empty, and the inhabitants thereof are consumed away and utterly destroyed by the brightness of my coming" (D&C 5:18-19).

Some commentators believe that the judgments in this chapter are a repetition of the plagues seen in Revelation 8, 9, and 11 (Draper, *Opening the Seven Seals*, 251). That is one possible reading; there are remarkable parallels between the two sections. But it seems more likely that Revelation 16 represents a later and more severe occurrence of plagues. In Revelation 8, for instance, a third of the sea becomes blood and a third of the creatures in the sea die (verses 8-9). But in Revelation 16, all of the sea becomes blood and all creatures therein die (verse 3). A comparison of the plagues in both sections shows a similar progression – as God continues to plead with and to punish the earth through his judgments, those judgments become more severe.

1 And I heard a great voice out of the temple saying to the seven angels, Go your ways, and pour out the vials [bowls] of the wrath of God upon the earth.

verse 1 “I heard a great voice out of the temple” In Revelation 15:8 we learned that no one could enter the temple until the next seven plagues were completed. This voice might be the voice of God himself, commanding the seven angels to act.

“Go your ways” The voice tells the angels to move ahead with their commission to administer plagues to the earth.

“pour out the [bowls] of the wrath of God” Under the law of Moses, the priests used a sacred bowl to capture the blood of the sacrifice. As part of the ritual, the priest then sprinkled the blood around the altar (Leviticus 1:5; 3:8). Perhaps in this part of the vision John is seeing a reversal of this ritual – rather than blood coming from the bowls to save the people, John sees something come from the bowls that sheds blood and punishes the people. That which is poured from the bowls represents different manifestations of God’s wrath.

2 And the first went, and poured out his vial [bowl] upon the earth; and there fell a noisome and grievous sore upon the men which had the mark of the beast, and upon them which worshipped his image.

verse 2 “the first . . . poured out his [bowl] upon the earth; and there fell a noisome and grievous sore” The first plague, which is directed at the wicked, is of “disgusting and virulent sores” (JB). This plague parallels the sixth plague that fell on the Egyptians in the time of Moses (Exodus 9:8-12). The contents of this bowl are poured out on the earth itself; and the affliction falls on those who dwell on the earth. The wicked have earlier worn the mark of the beast; now they will wear the mark of the wrath of God (Mounce, *Book of Revelation*, 293). Noisome (from *kakos*) is often translated “evil.” The word emphasizes the pernicious and destructive nature of the sores that plague the mind as well as the body. Grievous (from *ponros*) suggests their virulent and serious nature. The sores themselves are open abscesses or ulcers.

Zechariah prophesies a plague that may be similar: “This shall be the plague wherewith the Lord will smite all the people that have fought against Jerusalem; their flesh shall consume away while they stand upon their feet, and their eyes shall consume away in their holes, and their tongue shall consume away in their mouth” (Zechariah 14:12). And we read in latter-day revelation: “Their tongues shall be stayed that they shall not utter against me; and their flesh shall fall from off their bones, and their eyes from their sockets” (D&C 29:19). These descriptions sound very much like some of the effects of nuclear war (The horrific results of atomic warfare can be read in Hersey’s, *Hiroshima*.).

3 And the second angel poured out his vial upon the sea; and it became as the blood of a dead man: and every living soul died in the sea.

verse 3 “the second angel poured out his [bowl] upon the sea; and it became as . . . blood / every living soul died in the sea” This plague and that which follows parallel the first plague that the Lord brought on the ancient Egyptians – the waters turned to blood (Exodus 7:19-21). In Revelation 8:8-9, a third of the waters were afflicted; here, the polluted

water kills every creature. This may have connection with words of the Lord given in our dispensation: "Behold, there are many dangers upon the waters, and more especially hereafter; for I, the Lord, have decreed in mine anger many destructions upon the waters" (D&C 61:4-5). We can only speculate on the cause of this destruction; it may be related to the fallout from nuclear war.

There may be another meaning to sea in this passage. In Revelation 17:15, the waters symbolize "peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues." Perhaps here, as well, the sea represents the wicked people of the world, all of whom are eventually destroyed.

"as the blood of a dead man" A person's blood gives life to the body, as water gives life to the world and the creatures thereof. But a dead man's blood is corrupted and coagulated, no longer able to help sustain life. So shall it be with the waters of the seas as a result of this plague.

4 And the third angel poured out his vial upon the rivers and fountains of waters; and they became blood.

verse 4 "the third angel poured out his [bowl] upon the rivers . . . they became blood" This plague (like that of Revelation 16:3) parallels the one found in Exodus 7:19-21 (see also Psalm 78:44). In Revelation 8:10-11, a burning star turned a third of the rivers and fountains of waters bitter. Here, all the rivers and fountains are polluted, though the result is not given.

5 And I heard the angel of the waters say, Thou art righteous, O Lord, which art, and wast, and shalt be, because thou hast judged thus.

verse 5 "the angel of the waters" Anciently, the Jews believed that different angels had charge of different elements of nature. The vision of John seems to support this belief. In Revelation 7:1 we see four angels who have power over "the four winds of the earth." In Revelation 14:18 we read of an angel who has "power over fire." Here we have one or more angels who seem to have power over the fate of the waters. Or, if we read this verse more simply, we might understand that it refers only to the angel who, in Revelation 16:4, poured his bowl out upon the rivers.

"Thou art righteous, O Lord, . . . because thou hast judged thus" Even though the judgments on the earth are terrible, the angel proclaims that the Lord is righteous and correct to have so judged (see Psalm 119:137). Why? The answer is given in the next verse. Not only have the people chosen lives of sin, but they have slain those who desired to follow the Lord. For such great sin, the Lord rightly punishes them with devastating judgments.

"which art, and wast, and shalt be" See commentary on Revelation 1:4 (see also 1:8; 4:8; 11:17).

6 For they have shed the blood of saints and prophets, and thou hast given them blood to drink; for they are worthy [deserving].

verse 6 “For they have shed the blood of saints and prophets / given them blood to drink” The motif of blood continues as we are reminded that the wicked have slain many of the righteous (Revelation 13:7, 15; 17:6; 18:24) – and learn that, in a punishment that fits the crime, the wicked will themselves be forced to drink blood (Isaiah 49:26). “To be drunk with blood . . . signifies slaughter by the sword” (Davidson, *New Bible Commentary*, 1187). The King James Version says the wicked are “worthy” of this punishment; a more accurate translation may be “deserving” (See note “c” to Revelation 16:6 in the LDS edition of the KJV).

The scriptures tell of many specific instances of martyrdom (1 Kings 18:13; 2 Kings 24:20-21; Mark 6:25-28; Acts 7:57-60; 12:1-2; Revelation 2:13; 11:7; Mosiah 17:20; Alma 25:7). They also record many general statements documenting the rejection and killing of the Lord’s prophets (1 Thessalonians 2:15; Hebrews 11:37; Revelation 6:9; 12:11; 16:6; Helaman 13:24; 3 Nephi 10:15). The mortal Jesus prophesied that martyrdom was precisely what many of his followers would suffer (Matthew 23:29-38; 24:9).

7 And I heard another out of the altar say, Even so, Lord God Almighty, true and righteous are thy judgments.

verse 7 “I heard another [angel who came out from the altar]” Almost without exception, the altar in Revelation is connected with the judgments of God (Revelation 8:3-5; 9:13-14; 14:18; the one exception is Revelation 11:1). The angel declares that God’s judgments are indeed “true and righteous” (see also Revelation 15:3-5; Psalm 19:9) – as is the case with all his works.

“And I heard another angel who came out from the altar saying, Even so, Lord God Almighty, true and righteous are thy judgments.”

8 And the fourth angel poured out his vial upon the sun; and power was given unto him to scorch men with fire.

verse 8 “the fourth angel poured out his [bowl] upon the sun / scorch men with fire” The righteous are promised in Revelation 7:16 that “neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat,” meaning that they will not suffer from the heat of the sun. But here the wicked suffer from intense heat, perhaps from the sun. This may result from a breakdown of the ozone layer of the atmosphere, which could result from a nuclear blast and which would remove much of our protection from the sun’s potentially deadly rays, or it may have a cause that we cannot yet imagine. (For a discussion of the effects of nuclear war on the ozone layer, see Schell, *Fate of the Earth*, 20-21, 79-92.) The scriptures often connect fire with judgment (Deuteronomy 28:22; 1 Corinthians 3:13; 2 Peter 3:7) this fire prefigures the scorching fire of the last judgment (Malachi 4:1). The fourth angel acts under the direction of God and by “power” that “was given unto him.”

9 And men were scorched with great heat, and blasphemed the name of God, which hath power over these plagues: and they repented not to give him glory.

verse 9 “men were scorched with great heat / blasphemed the name of God / repented not to give him glory” The heat of this plague is here described as “great,” and the idea of “scorching” is repeated, perhaps for emphasis. But rather than acknowledge their guilt, the wicked appear to blame God for their troubles, speaking evil of him and his righteousness. Blasphemy is a recurring accusation against the wicked in Revelation (Revelation 2:9; 16:11, 21). Even at this late hour in the world’s history, men have an opportunity to repent – but still they refuse (Revelation 9:20-21; 16:11; see the contrast in 11:13). An angel in Revelation 14:7 admonished the world to “fear God, and give glory to him,” but the great body of people on earth choose their sin instead.

10 And the fifth angel poured out his vial upon the seat of the beast; and his kingdom was full of darkness; and they gnawed their tongues for pain,

verse 10 “the fifth angel poured out his [bowl] upon the seat of the beast / his kingdom was full of darkness” In the ninth plague that Moses proclaimed in Egypt, the whole kingdom was stricken with thick darkness (Exodus 10:21-23). Here, darkness fills the kingdom of the beast (Isaiah 60:2; D&C 82:5; 84:49; 112:23). The darkness may be literal or spiritual – or both. Most likely, because the darkness results from an action of an angel of God, who would not be the source of spiritual darkness, it is probably a literal darkness that reflects the spiritual darkness in the beast’s kingdom. The “seat of the beast” may more accurately be translated the “throne of the beast” (RSV, NEB, JB, NIV). The idea is that the Lord will attack the beast at his very headquarters, striking at his power and authority.

This plague may be a fulfillment of a curse that the Lord pronounced on the wicked in the times of Moses: “The Lord shall smite thee with madness, and blindness, and astonishment of heart: and thou shalt grope at noonday, as the blind gropeth in darkness, and thou shalt not prosper in thy ways: and thou shalt be only oppressed and spoiled evermore, and no man shall save thee” (Deuteronomy 28:28-29).

11 And blasphemed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores, and repented not of their deeds.

verses 10-11 “they gnawed their tongues for pain / blasphemed the God of heaven / repented not of their deeds” The terrible pain that men suffer may be a result of the sores in Revelation 16:2, combined with the lack of clean water in Revelation 16:4 and the scorching heat of the sun in Revelation 16:9. The darkness into which they are plunged can only exacerbate their plight. Again, they follow their leader, the beast, in blaspheming God (Revelation 13:1, 5-6; 17:3), blaming him for their pains and sores. And still they will not repent. It seems incredible that people would not turn to God with humble spirits after suffering so much, but they follow the pattern of a scriptural type of long ago: despite all that he and his people suffered, the Egyptian pharaoh in the time of Moses only hardened his heart (JST Exodus 7-10). The plagues of this angel may also be connected with nuclear war.

The core of John's message centers on the reaction of men to the plagues. They recognize God as the one who controls the plagues, and they curse him because of their pains and anguish, but they do not repent (see Revelation 9:20-21). Instead, they blaspheme their maker. This point is significant. Before, only the beast has spoken blasphemy. In chapter sixteen, men are the ones who thrice curse God (verses 9, 11, 21). John seems to be showing that these men have wholly taken on the character of the beast they serve. The mark of the monster has become indelible not only on their bodies, but also upon their souls, resulting in a sickness that can only reap the reward for which it has blindly sought: reprobation and annihilation (see Revelation 14:10-11; 20:15; 21:8; 22:15).

12 And the sixth angel poured out his vial upon the great river Euphrates; and the water thereof was dried up, that the way of the kings of the east might be prepared.

verse 12 “the sixth angel poured out his [bowl] upon the great river Euphrates / the water thereof was dried up” In the days of Moses and Joshua, the Lord divided and dried up a passage through two different bodies of water to enable his people to be delivered from bondage and then to inherit their land of promise (Exodus 14:21; Joshua 3:13-17). But in John's vision, the Lord through his angel will dry up the water of a river to clear the way for destruction and war. The Euphrates formed the eastern and northeastern boundary of the land the Lord gave to Abraham and his descendants (Genesis 15:18; Deuteronomy 1:7-8; Joshua 1:3-4) and served as a natural barrier to the enemies of Israel. When that barrier is removed, the enemies of Israel can begin their march. The Old Testament speaks often of the Lord drying up waters to accomplish his purposes (Exodus 14:21; Joshua 3:13- 17; Isaiah 11:15-16; 44:27; Jeremiah 51:36; Zechariah 10:11).

“that the way of the kings of the east might be prepared” It is uncertain who the kings of the east are. One commentator notes that there have been more than fifty different interpretations of this expression (Walvoord, *Revelation of Jesus Christ*, 236). What most agree on is that the kings are enemies of the Lord's people and of the Lord himself and that they are prepared to go forth to war.

13 And I saw three unclean spirits like frogs come out of the mouth of the dragon, and out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet.

verse 13 “I saw three unclean spirits like frogs come out of the mouth of the dragon / beast / false prophet” The “satanic trinity” (Harrington, *Revelation*, 166) of the dragon, the beast, and the false prophet send forth evil spirits, or devils, to do their work. Their emergence from the mouths of the devil and his helpers suggests that these evil spirits are symbolic of false communications, lies, and propaganda designed to deceive the people of the world. Similarly, in Revelation 12:15, a river that may represent lies comes from the mouth of the dragon; in Revelation 13:5, blasphemies come from the mouth of the beast; and in Revelation 13:14, the false prophet, or second beast, seems to speak threats and ungodly commands.

Frogs, to which the spirits are compared, are unclean animals under the law of Moses (Leviticus 11:10). One of the plagues that Moses and Aaron brought on Egypt was a plague of frogs (Exodus 8:2-6). Interestingly, Pharaoh's magicians, using Satan's power, duplicated this plague (Exodus 8:7). In nearby Persia, which was east of the Euphrates (Revelation 16:12), frogs were "considered to be the instrument of Ahriman, the god of darkness." (Schick, Revelation of St. John, 2:51.) Further, Ahriman had power to change his shape – and the animal form that fit him most naturally was that of a frog (*Interpreter's Bible*, 12:485).

The fact that three unclean spirits come forth from three different evil beings suggests that each of those beings (the dragon, the beast, and the false prophet) may send forth one of the spirits. These evil spirits are the agents and representatives of those who send them forth. As righteous men on earth can stand for God by virtue of the priesthood they hold, so can these unclean spirits stand for Satan through the evil power he bestows on them.

14 For they are the spirits of devils, working miracles, which go forth unto the kings of the earth and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty.

verse 14 “For they are the spirits of devils” Here we learn definitively who the three unclean spirits of 16:13 are – spirits of devils. Devils, of course, are not body and spirit combined but are only spirits. Perhaps a better translation would be “spirits that are devils.”

The Lord has told us: “Hearken, O ye elders of my church, and give ear to the voice of the living God; and attend to the words of wisdom which shall be given unto you, according as ye have asked and are agreed as touching the church, and the spirits which have gone abroad in the earth. Behold, verily I say unto you, that there are many spirits which are false spirits, which have gone forth in the earth, deceiving the world. And also, Satan hath sought to deceive you, that he might overthrow you” (D&C 50:1-3).

“working miracles” Jesus Christ prophesied that “there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect” (Matthew 24:24; see also commentary on Revelation 13:14). These evil spirits are part of the fulfillment of that prophecy. The miracles of Satan and the miracles of God may often be indistinguishable from one another to the outward senses. Only through the discernment given by the Spirit of God can we know the difference.

Elder Orson Pratt wrote, “The reason the Lord will suffer the devil to work miracles to deceive ‘the kings of the earth and of the whole world,’ is because they will previously have rejected ‘the everlasting gospel;’ therefore the devil will deceive them, and lead them on to destruction, as he did the Egyptians.” (Pratt, Divine Authenticity of the Book of Mormon, number 5 [1851]: 66.)

“go forth unto the kings of the earth and of the whole world” The deceiving spirits sent forth by Satan will have worldwide influence, including with the rulers of the nations of the earth. The spirits will cause the gathering of the kings and their armies together to battle.

“to gather them to the battle” This battle is the great final battle at Armageddon, which will be fought by the armies of the earth (Revelation 16:16). That battle, perhaps when it reaches its crisis point, will be interrupted by the coming of the Lord (Zechariah 14:1-4), “the great day of God Almighty.”

“great day of God Almighty” See commentary on Revelation 6:17.

“For they are the spirits of devils, working miracles, which go forth unto the kings of the earth and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of the great day of God Almighty.”

15 Behold, I come as a thief. Blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame.

verse 15 “Behold, I come as a thief” See commentary on Revelation 3:3.

“Blessed is he that watcheth” We have often been commanded to be alert and to watch the signs of the times as the day of Christ’s return draws closer (Matthew 24:42-51; 25:1; D&C 45:44; 133:10). Watching also implies being obedient and prepared (Matthew 24:45-46, 48-51; 25:3, 8-9). Specifically, latter-day revelation tells us we need to be prepared by having the Holy Spirit for our guide (D&C 45:56-57).

“keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked and they see his shame” To keep one’s garments is to be ready for any eventuality (specifically, here, the coming of the Lord). If a soldier does not know when the battle will begin, he needs to keep the proper clothing (armor) at hand for any eventuality. If he does not, he might be caught unawares and have to go forth naked (Mounce, *Book of Revelation*, 300).

But there is a deeper meaning, suggested by a similar statement in Revelation 3:3-5. There we read the warning that the Lord will come as a thief and the promise that those who have “not defiled their garments . . . shall walk with me in white” (Revelation 3:4). To keep one’s garments in this sense is to keep them pure, to avoid and resist sin. It is to keep the covenants and promises one made in the temple. As Alma said, “And may the Lord bless you, and keep your garments spotless, that ye may at last be brought to sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and the holy prophets who have been ever since the world began, having your garments spotless even as their garments are spotless, in the kingdom of heaven to go no more out” (Alma 7:25).

This verse is an interjection, a parenthetical warning and word of comfort to the Saints: The terrors of the last days will continue and worsen. Those who yield themselves to sin will be exposed, but those who remain prepared and pure will be blessed.

16 And he gathered them together into a place called in the Hebrew tongue Armageddon.

verse 16 “he gathered them together / Armageddon” Armageddon is the site of the last great battle before the coming of the Lord. The person gathering the armies together is

not identified, but it is likely Satan, working through the evil spirits he sends to the earth (Revelation 16:14).

John calls this place “Armageddon.” Just what he had in mind is unclear due to ambiguity with the term. The Greek form is *Harmagdn*. John states that this is a transliteration of a Hebrew word, but he does not supply the word. Many feel it should be “har-magedon,” meaning “the mount of Megiddo.” If this is the case, then the reference would be to an ancient fortress that guarded one of the major highways going through the Jezreel valley to and from Jerusalem. Megiddo was the site for a number of famous battles, perhaps the most celebrated being the defeat of Sisera and his army when “the stars in their courses fought against Sisera” (Judges 5:19-20). Also in the valley Esraelon (Jezreel), Gideon’s three hundred soldiers roundly defeated the Midianites (see Judges 7); Saul and Jonathan met their end (see 1 Samuel 31:1-6); and king Josiah fought Pharaoh-necoh and was killed (see 2 Kings 23:29-30).

A problem arises in that there is no reference to a “Mount Megiddo” in any ancient writing. Scriptural references abound for Megiddo and its three small towns (see Joshua 17:11; Judges 1:27), to “the waters of Megiddo” (Judges 5:19), and even to “the valley of Megiddo” (2 Chronicles 35:22; Zechariah 12:11), but there is not a whisper about a mount with the name Megiddo. In John’s day, the site of the city would have been little more than seventy feet above the plain. That hardly qualifies for the epithet “mountain.”

Other scholars have suggested that “Har” identifies Mount Carmel and “Megadon” as the citadel Megiddo, both being alluded to in the same breath. Others translate the expression as the mount of assembly mentioned in Isaiah 14:13; or “his [Jehovah’s] fruitful field,” or “the desirable city” meaning Jerusalem, still others as the “marauding mountain” paralleling Jeremiah’s destroying mountain (see 51:25).

Whatever John had in mind, one thing seems clear: as with his other names, the intent is symbolic. The final battle is not to end in northern Israel but at Jerusalem. Zechariah connects Jerusalem and Megiddo in this context (see 12:10-11). The mountain that is the object of the battle must be the Mountain of the Lord’s House, for, as has been shown, the battle is essentially religious: one ideology and theology against another. Therefore, the beast must eventually destroy the Mountain of the Lord’s House, the seat of God’s power on earth, if he is to reign supreme.

The great battle of Armageddon will not be a localized conflict but the center of a worldwide war. Elder Bruce R. McConkie explained, “The center of the battle will be on the mount and in the valley of Megiddo and on the plains of Esraelon, though, since all nations are involved, it cannot be other than a worldwide conflict” (McConkie, *Millennial Messiah*, 397).

The battle of Armageddon was seen and prophesied anciently by Joel and Zechariah (see also Luke 21:20-23):

Prepare war . . . Beat your plowshares into swords, and your pruninghooks into spears: let the weak say, I am strong. Assemble yourselves, and . . . come up to the valley of Jehoshaphat: for there will I sit to judge all the heathen round about. Put ye in the sickle, for the harvest is ripe: come, get you

down; for the press is full, the fats overflow; for their wickedness is great. Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision: for the day of the Lord is near in the valley of decision (Joel 3:9-14).

For I will gather all nations against Jerusalem to battle; and the city shall be taken, and the houses rifled, and the women ravished; and half of the city shall go forth into captivity. . . Then shall the Lord go forth, and fight against those nations, as when he fought in the day of battle. And his feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem on the east, and the mount of Olives shall cleave in the midst thereof toward the east and toward the west. . . And ye shall flee to the valley of the mountains . . . and the Lord my God shall come, and all the saints with thee" (Zechariah 14:2-5).

Ultimately, the objective of Satan and his armies is not the conquest of northern Israel nor of Jerusalem but the destruction of the Lord's temple and the Lord's work (McConkie, *Millennial Messiah*, 476-94).

verses 14-16 The great final cleansing battle of Armageddon is mentioned where "all nations" will gather "against Jerusalem to battle" (Zacharias 11-14).

17 And the seventh angel poured out his vial into the air; and there came a great voice out of the temple of heaven, from the throne, saying, It is done.

verse 17 "the seventh angel poured out his [bowl] into the air" Other angels poured their bowls out upon the earth, the sea, the rivers, the sun, the seat of the beast, and the Euphrates. By pouring his bowl out into the air, the angel seems to be affecting all of earth through its all-encompassing atmosphere. The sounding of the last trumpet and the pouring forth of the last bowl are quite similar in their results, both signifying the end of earth's history.

"the temple of heaven" This is John's name for the celestial kingdom.

"great voice out of the temple of heaven, from the throne, saying, It is done"

Because this voice comes from the throne in the temple of heaven, it must belong to God the Father, who is seated on that throne and rules over all. By saying "It is done," he announces that all things have been accomplished and the time has come for the final destruction of Babylon and of the earth.

A comparison between the events following the sounding of the trumpet and the pouring forth of God's wrath from the bowl:

Trumpet	Bowl
the Lord's kingdom is established (11:15)	God's purpose is accomplished (16:17)
the time of judgment is announced (11:18)	judgment falls on the earth (16:19-20)
the temple in heaven is opened (11:19)	a great voice comes from the temple in heaven (16:17)

there are lightnings, voices, thunderings,
a great earthquake, and
a hailstorm (11:19)

there are voices, thunders, lightnings, a great
earthquake, and hail (16:18, 21)

Though there are parallels these two events may well be different, occurring at different times. The first series seems to prefigure the second.

18 And there were voices, and thunders, and lightnings; and there was a great earthquake, such as was not since men were upon the earth, so mighty an earthquake, and so great.

verse 18 “there were voices, and thunders, and lightnings” The thunders and lightnings may indicate that all nature is in an uproar as a result of the judgments poured forth from the last bowl. The voices may be God’s proclamations of judgment and command as we see in the Doctrine and Covenants, where he prepares the earth to return to its paradisiacal glory: “And he shall utter his voice out of Zion, and he shall speak from Jerusalem, and his voice shall be heard among all people; and it shall be a voice as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of a great thunder, which shall break down the mountains, and the valleys shall not be found. He shall command the great deep, and it shall be driven back into the north countries, and the islands shall become one land; and the land of Jerusalem and the land of Zion shall be turned back into their own place, and the earth shall be like as it was in the days before it was divided. And the Lord, even the Savior, shall stand in the midst of his people, and shall reign over all flesh” (D&C 133:21-25). See commentary on Revelation 4:5; see also Revelation 8:5; 11:19.

“there was a great earthquake” This earthquake is different from the ones mentioned in Revelation 6:12 and 11:13-14. The earthquake in Revelation 6:12 was so great that the mountains and islands are “moved out of their places” (Revelation 6:14), but that earthquake occurred in the period of the sixth thousand years (D&C 77:6-7). The earthquake in Revelation 11:13-14 was the first in the seventh thousand-year period; it is of indeterminate size and intensity. The earthquake in Revelation 16:18 is described as the greatest in the history of the world. It is so great, as we read in 16:20, that it appears to be connected with the flattening of the mountains and the unifying of the continents.

Elder Bruce R. McConkie wrote:

One of the plainest and most oft-repeated statements about the ushering in of the Millennium is the promise of a great shaking of the earth, of earthquakes that are everywhere at one and the same time, and of mountains and valleys and seas and landmasses that move. ‘Yet once, it is a little while,’ saith the Lord, ‘and I will shake the heavens, and the earth, and the sea, and the dry land; and I will shake all nations, and the desire of all nations shall come.’ (Haggai 2:6-7.) Christ, the Desire of all nations, shall come amid the greatest shaking of the earth and of all things that there has ever been or ever will be in the entire history

of this planet. Everything on earth – the historical events then in progress, the beasts and all forms of life, and the inanimate objects that do not act for themselves – everything on earth will be affected by the great shaking (*Millennial Messiah*, 620-21; see also Ezekiel 38:19- 20; Joel 3:16; D&C 133:31).

In vivid language, John describes the power God unleashes against the wicked: thunder, lightning, tumult, and finally an earthquake of unprecedented proportions (cf. Daniel 12:1). “For, with you saith the Lord Almighty, I will rend their kingdoms; I will not only shake the earth, but the starry heavens shall tremble” (D&C 84:118). In reality, all this is nothing less than the preparation of the earth for its paradisiacal state.

He shall utter his voice out of Zion, and he shall speak from Jerusalem, and his voice shall be heard among all people; and it shall be a voice as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of a great thunder, which shall break down the mountains, and the valleys shall not be found. He shall command the great deep, and it shall be driven back into the north countries, and the islands shall become one land; and the land of Jerusalem and the land of Zion shall be turned back into their own place, and the earth shall be like as it was in the days before it was divided. And the Lord, even the Savior, shall stand in the midst of his people, and shall reign over all flesh (D&C 133:21-25).

19 And the great city was divided into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell: and great Babylon came in remembrance before God, to give unto her the cup of the wine of the fierceness of his wrath.

verse 19 “the great city was divided into three parts” The great city seems to be Babylon, which at the end times is not a literal city but a figurative city, representative of all the wicked societies of the earth. The division into three parts suggests that the city is fully weakened and prepared for the final destructive blow.

“the cities of the nations fell” The cities of the nations fall in the earthquake, but this passage also seems to refer to the destruction of governments. The events in these verses bring about the fulfillment of the latter-day prophecy made by Joseph Smith: “With the sword and by bloodshed the inhabitants of the earth shall mourn; and with famine, and plague, and earthquake, and the thunder of heaven, and the fierce and vivid lightning also, shall the inhabitants of the earth be made to feel the wrath, and indignation, and chastening hand of an Almighty God, until the consumption decreed hath made a full end of all nations” (D&C 87:6).

“great Babylon came in remembrance before God” See commentary on Revelation 14:8.

“the cup of the wine of the fierceness of his wrath” See commentary on Revelation 14:10.

20 And every island fled away, and the mountains were not found.

verse 20 “every island fled away/the mountains were not found” This passage describes the great leveling of the earth as the Lord prepares it for the millennial era. This leveling will occur as a result of the tremendous earthquake in Revelation 16:18. As we read in the Doctrine and Covenants, “Continue in steadfastness, looking forth for the heavens to be shaken, and the earth to tremble and to reel to and fro as a drunken man, and for the valleys to be exalted, and for the mountains to be made low, and for the rough places to become smooth – and all this when the angel shall sound his trumpet” (D&C 49:23; 109:74; 133:21).

Elder Parley P. Pratt wrote of this event:

From these verses [Isaiah 40:1-5] we learn, first, that the voice of one shall be heard in the wilderness, to prepare the way of the Lord, just at the time when Jerusalem has been trodden down of the Gentiles long enough to have received, at the Lord's hands, double for all her sins, yea, when the warfare of Jerusalem is accomplished, and her iniquities pardoned. Then shall this proclamation be made as it was before by John [the Baptist], yea, a second proclamation, to prepare the way of the Lord, for his second coming; and about that time every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low, and the crooked shall be made straight, and rough places plain, and then the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together, for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it. . . .

Having restored the earth to the same glorious state in which it first existed – leveling the mountains, exalting the valleys, smoothing the rough places, making the deserts fruitful, and bringing all the continents and islands together, causing the curse to be taken off, that noxious weeds, and thorns, and thistles shall no longer be produced; the next thing is to regulate and restore the brute creation to their former state of peace and glory, causing enmity to cease from off the earth. But this will never be done until there is a general destruction poured out upon man, which will entirely cleanse the earth, and sweep all wickedness from its face (Pratt, *Voice of Warning*, 159-60, 162).

21 And there fell upon men a great hail out of heaven, every stone about the weight of a talent: and men blasphemed God because of the plague of the hail; for the plague thereof was exceeding great.

verse 21 “there fell upon men a great hail out of heaven” Deadly hailstones are one of the elements of nature God periodically uses to assist the righteous in their battles and to punish the wicked (Joshua 10:11; Mosiah 12:6), and hailstorms are often prophesied among the troubles to come (Ezekiel 13:13; 38:22; Revelation 11:19; D&C 29:16). A “very grievous hail” was one of the plagues sent upon Egypt in the days of Moses (Exodus 9:18).

“every stone about the weight of a talent” Each of these hailstones weighs between forty-five and ninety pounds (the exact weight of a talent is uncertain) (Douglas, ed., *New Bible*

Dictionary, 1324). The point is that these hailstones are tremendous in size and catastrophic in their effect.

“men blasphemed God because of the plague of the hail” Not only do the people of the world fail to repent but they speak evil of God for that which he does in perfect justice. Obviously, the pounding hailstorm does not bring penitence. Once again John notes how hardened these men have become who can only curse God and wish to die and who never for a second consider repentance. Little wonder that the angels declared that God’s judgments against the wicked were entirely true and just.

After bringing his reader three times to the point of judgment, John finally shows its execution. Sandwiched between all the symbolically graphic material is a warning to the saints: watch and be prepared (see verse 15). Now is the time to set that watch. The Lord has charged his prophets to “prepare the saints for the hour of judgment which is to come; that their souls may escape the wrath of God, the desolation of abomination which awaits the wicked, both in this world and in the world to come” (D&C 88:84-85). To the saints, he commands: “Entangle not yourselves in sin, but let your hands be clean, until the Lord comes. For not many days hence and the earth shall tremble and reel to and fro as a drunken man. . . [For] after your testimony cometh wrath and indignation upon the people” (D&C 88:86-88).

The world must respond to the cry of repentance or face the consequences. Chapter sixteen describes what will happen to those who will not repent. Ironically, their refusal to repent is the very thing that continues the plagues. They curse God when they should be blaming themselves. God is not the cause of their misery – they are. But they are too blinded, too hardened, too spiritually dead to see it. They bring upon themselves the fires of Hades even in mortality. Yet while they hate it, their minds have become so perverted that the filth of hell seems better than the purity of heaven. And thus, they die.

Revelation Chapter 17 Abominations of Babylon Established Throughout the World

This chapter, along with chapter 18, is a teaching interlude that shows John (and us) why the judgments in chapter 16 are righteous and just. We see, in symbolic form, the depths of the evil world and we understand why God's wrath is so strong against it. We also see the source of Babylon's destruction – not God, but Babylon's own wicked lovers.

As chapter 17 begins, John is invited to see the judgment of "the whore," but first he sees her arrayed in her power. The angel bears witness that the whore has power over all the earth ("many waters") and that she has influence over the kings and people of the world. Through the power of the Spirit, John actually sees the whore, though he is seeing a symbol surrounded by other symbolic layers of meaning. He sees her excesses in her lust for wealth and pleasure, as shown by her clothing and jewelry. He sees her pride, as shown by the name on her forehead. He sees her wickedness by that name and by her murder of the righteous.

Centuries earlier, Nephi saw a similar vision. "Many generations" after the time of peace that followed the coming of Christ to the Americas, Nephi saw the "whore of all the earth." This part of his vision clearly concerns the time of the Great Apostasy and the last days. What he saw helps us understand what John saw and recorded, particularly chapters 13, 17, and 18 of John's revelation.

As 1 Nephi 13 opens, Nephi sees "the nations and kingdoms of the Gentiles" (verse 3). Among those nations, he sees "the formation of a church which is most abominable above all other churches, which slayeth the saints of God, yea, and tortureth them and bindeth them down, and yoketh them with a yoke of iron, and bringeth them down into captivity" (verse 5). The founder of "this great and abominable church" is the devil himself (verse 6). "And I also saw gold, and silver, and silks, and scarlets, and fine-twined linen, and all manner of precious clothing; and I saw many harlots," which, the scripture explains, "are the desires of this great and abominable church" (verses 7-8).

Next, Nephi sees Columbus discovering America (verse 12), followed by the Revolutionary War (verses 17-19), which further helps to place the prophecies in the time of the Great Apostasy. Nephi learns that the "great and abominable church, which is most abominable above all other churches" was formed after the Bible went forth "from the Jews unto the Gentiles" (verse 26). Further, he sees that the great and abominable church takes "away from the gospel of the Lamb many parts which are plain and most precious; and also many covenants of the Lord" (verse 26). Their motive is malicious: "And all this have they done that they might pervert the right ways of the Lord, that they might blind the eyes and harden the hearts of the children of men" (verse 27). "Because of these things which are taken away out of the gospel of the Lamb, an exceedingly great many do stumble, yea, insomuch that Satan hath great power over them" (verse 29).

In the verses that follow, Nephi learns that the "abominable church . . . is the mother of harlots" (verse 34); that that church had dug a "great pit . . . for the destruction of men" (1

Nephi 14:3); and that “that great and abominable church . . . is the mother of abominations” (verse 9). Nephi learned that there are finally only two churches on the earth, “the one is the church of the Lamb of God, and the other is the church of the devil; wherefore, whoso belongeth not to the church of the Lamb of God belongeth to that great church, which is the mother of abominations; and she is the whore of all the earth” (verse 10). “The whore of all the earth . . . sat upon many waters; and she had dominion over all the earth, among all nations, kindreds, tongues, and people” (verse 11). Because of that dominion, and “because of the wickedness and abominations of the whore,” the numbers of the church of the Lamb of God “were few” (verse 12).

“And it came to pass,” Nephi wrote, “that I beheld that the great mother of abominations did gather together multitudes upon the face of all the earth, among all the nations of the Gentiles, to fight against the Lamb of God. . . And it came to pass that I beheld that the wrath of God was poured out upon that great and abominable church, insomuch that there were wars and rumors of wars among all the nations and kindreds of the earth. . . And when the day cometh that the wrath of God is poured out upon the mother of harlots, which is the great and abominable church of all the earth, whose founder is the devil, then, at that day, the work of the Father shall commence, in preparing the way for the fulfilling of his covenants, which he hath made to his people who are of the house of Israel” (verses 13, 15, 17).

This great and abominable church is the church of the devil. It is the “mother of abominations.” It is the “whore of all the earth.” It is Babylon.

Elder Bruce R. McConkie gave a powerful description of that church: “What is the church of the devil in our day, and where is the seat of her power? If we accept the angelic word, if we believe as Nephi believed, and if, the Lord willing, we see what Nephi saw, then we shall accept without question the reality around us. The church of the devil is every evil and worldly organization on earth. It is all of the systems, both Christian and non-Christian, that have perverted the pure and perfect gospel; it is all of the governments and powers that run counter to the divine will; it is the societies and political parties and labor unions that sow strife and reap contention. It is communism; it is Islam; it is Buddhism; it is modern Christianity in all its parts. It is Germany under Hitler, Russia under Stalin, and Italy under Mussolini. It is the man of sin speaking in churches, orating in legislative halls, and commanding the armies of men. And its headquarters are everywhere – in Rome and Moscow, in Paris and London, in Teheran and Washington – everywhere that evil forces, either of church or state or society, can be influenced. The immanent and all-pervading presence of evil in high places is one of the signs of the times” (McConkie, *Millennial Messiah*, 54-55).

verses 1-18 The nature of Babylon and the cause of her fall.

1 And there came one of the seven angels which had the seven vials, and talked with me, saying unto me, Come hither; I will shew unto thee the judgment of the great whore that sitteth upon many waters:

verse 1 “one of the seven angels” One of the angels with one of the bowls of the wrath of God (Revelation 15:7) approaches John and invites him to see the judgment of “the great whore.”

“talked with me” John is not merely observing things in his vision, for the angel is interacting with him, apparently speaking with him as one man does with another. The angel offers to show John the whore that represents the fountain of evil in the world; in Revelation 21:9 an angel (possibly the same one) takes John to see the “bride of the Lamb.” In both cases, John sees the woman as a city: the first as the wicked city of Babylon, the second as the holy city of New Jerusalem.

“the judgment of the great whore” The image of prostitution was commonly used in the Old Testament to depict extreme apostasy not only from religion but from all that is godly and good (Isaiah 1:21; 23:16; Jeremiah 2:20-31; 13:27; Ezekiel 16:15, 28-29; Hosea 2:5; Nahum 3:4).

Nephi gives us a definition of who the great whore is: “He that fighteth against Zion, both Jew and Gentile, both bond and free, both male and female, shall perish; for they are they who are the whore of all the earth; for they who are not for me are against me, saith our God” (2 Nephi 10:16). The “judgment of the great whore” means, simply, the punishment of the world of wickedness. The judgment is described in detail in Revelation 17 and 18.

Nephi also saw that great judgment:

The blood of that great and abominable church, which is the whore of all the earth, shall turn upon their own heads; for they shall war among themselves, and the sword of their own hands shall fall upon their own heads, and they shall be drunken with their own blood.

And every nation which shall war against thee, O house of Israel, shall be turned one against another, and they shall fall into the pit which they digged to ensnare the people of the Lord. And all that fight against Zion shall be destroyed, and that great whore, who hath perverted the right ways of the Lord, yea, that great and abominable church, shall tumble to the dust and great shall be the fall of it.

For behold, saith the prophet, the time cometh speedily that Satan shall have no more power over the hearts of the children of men; for the day soon cometh that all the proud and they who do wickedly shall be as stubble; and the day cometh that they must be burned.

For the time soon cometh that the fulness of the wrath of God shall be poured out upon all the children of men; for he will not suffer that the wicked shall destroy the righteous. . .

Behold, my brethren, I say unto you, that these things must shortly come; yea, even blood, and fire, and vapor of smoke must come; and it must needs be upon the face of this earth; and it cometh unto men according to the flesh if it so

be that they will harden their hearts against the Holy One of Israel (1 Nephi 22:13-16, 18; see also D&C 88:94).

“sitteth upon many waters” The interpretation of the expression “many waters” is given in Revelation 17:15: “The waters which thou sawest, where the whore sitteth, are peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues.” As Nephi saw, “[the whore] had dominion over all the earth, among all nations, kindreds, tongues, and people” (1 Nephi 14:11). The imagery rests on Jeremiah 51:13, where the prophet describes ancient Babylon as the city that “dwellest upon many waters, abundant in treasure.” The waters the woman sits upon represent “peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues” whom the harlot rules (verse 15). Little wonder that the angel calls her “great,” an adjective denoting quantity not quality.

And there came one of the seven angels which had the seven bowls, and talked with me, saying unto me, Come hither; I will show unto thee the judgment of the great whore that sitteth upon many waters:

2 With whom the kings of the earth have committed fornication, and the inhabitants of the earth have been made drunk with the wine of her fornication.

verse 2 “With whom the kings of the earth have committed fornication” The rulers of the earth, who ought to lead in righteousness, instead lead the people into sin. They “commit fornication” with the whore by selling that which is good and right and true, even their very souls, for the pleasure and power the whore will give them. They commit fornication by turning from their true husband, or at least him to whom they are betrothed – God himself – to Babylon.

“the inhabitants of the earth have been made drunk with the wine of her fornication” Drunkenness here is a symbol of apostasy, in which the people lose the power of good judgment because of their unwise choices. “They are drunken, but not with wine,” Isaiah prophesied, “they stagger, but not with strong drink” (Isaiah 29:9; see Jeremiah 51:6-9). The wine that makes them drunk is not the fornication of sexuality but that of unfaithfulness to God (see commentary on Revelation 14:8).

3 So he carried me away in the spirit into the wilderness: and I saw a woman sit upon a scarlet coloured beast, full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns.

verse 3 “So he carried me away in the spirit” Nephi (son of Lehi) received the same blessing when he experienced his vision of the last days (1 Nephi 14:30; 15:1; 2 Nephi 4:25), as did Jesus in the days of his temptation (JST Matthew 4:8). It appears that in these instances the Spirit, or the Holy Ghost, may carry a person to another location, while at the same time enabling him to transcend his physical limitations to rend the veil. In the years before the coming of Christ to the Americas, the prophet Nephi (son of Helaman) was cast into prison – but by “the power of God . . . he was taken by the Spirit and conveyed away out of the midst of them. And it came to pass that thus he did go forth in the Spirit, from multitude to multitude, declaring the word of God” (Helaman 10:16-17). Others in the scriptures who

received this blessing include Adam (Moses 6:64), Lehi (1 Nephi 1:8), Ezekiel (Ezekiel 37:1), and Mary, the mother of Jesus (1 Nephi 11:19).

“into the wilderness” In Revelation 12 we saw the woman who represented the church of God, the bride of Christ, go into the wilderness for safety. Now we see her counterfeit, the woman who represents the church of the devil, dwelling in the wilderness. In the first instance, the wilderness symbolized a place of refuge; here it symbolizes the dryness and desolation of sin.

“I saw a woman sit upon a scarlet coloured beast” This beast is most likely the same as that found in Revelation 13:1 – both have seven heads and ten horns (see commentary there). The woman is the whore spoken of in Revelation 17:1.

The beast that supports the woman appears to be the monster that came up from the sea. Its color, horns, and heads are the same as the dragon’s, but it is more closely associated with blasphemy. In chapter thirteen John states that the monster wore “upon his heads the name of blasphemy” (verse 1) and that he “opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme his name” (verse 6). The beast in the wilderness is “full of the names of blasphemy” (Revelation 17:3, alternate translation). Clearly the beast that supports the mistress has become the embodiment of sacrilege.

This does not mean that it merely defiles and reviles the name of God. It goes even further by claiming the very attributes of deity; indeed, of being deity itself. Second Thessalonians 2:3-4 tells us that the “son of perdition . . . opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God.” The special form this blasphemy takes is the claim of savior. But the salvation the dragon offers is the momentary thrill – the cheap pleasure of the prostitute that is fleeting, empty, and immoral. The beast’s seductive promises are anchored solely in the illusion that one can find happiness and security in iniquity.

The scarlet color of the beast is the same color as the ribbon that was tied around the neck of the scapegoat on the Day of Atonement; the ribbon represented the sins of Israel. In the same way, the scarlet of the beast seems to represent sin (Isaiah 1:18).

“full of names of blasphemy” This phrase repeats the description of the beast in Revelation 13:1. But in the earlier reference, the beast had the name of blasphemy on his seven heads; here the beast is full of those names.

“having seven heads and ten horns” As we learn in Revelation 17:9-10, the seven heads represent seven mountains and seven kings. The ten horns represent ten kings that are yet to come. These numbers may well be symbolic rather than literal. See commentary on Revelation 13:1; 17:9-12.

4 And the woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet colour, and decked with gold and precious stones and pearls, having a golden cup in her hand full of abominations and filthiness of her fornication:

verse 4 “And the woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet colour” Purple clothing symbolizes royalty (Judges 8:26), and scarlet clothing symbolizes wealth and nobility (2 Samuel 1:24; Proverbs 31:21; Lamentations 4:5; Daniel 5:7; Matthew 27:28-29). The woman’s clothing indicates her position of wealth and power in the world.

But there is a deeper significance. In the Old Testament, purple and scarlet appear together only in Exodus (occurring twenty-six times), and in every instance the colors are used, together with blue and white linen, to describe the tabernacle of the Lord and the clothing of the high priest (see, for example, Exodus 26:1, 31, 36). Purple and scarlet were used in the curtains of the tabernacle, the hanging for the door, the hanging for the gate of the court, and the veil itself. They were used for the ephod (linen apron) of the high priest, as well as for his girdle, the hems of his robe, the breastplate, and the cloths used in the temple rituals. Thus, the woman is standing as counterfeit for the most sacred elements of the true religion – the high priest who presided over all the people, and the temple. She is trying to supplant the religion of God with a false religion, one that points the people to sin and excess and ultimately to a worship of Satan himself (Revelation 13:4).

The woman who is Babylon is not only wickedness but also political power, and moreover, not only political power but religious systems that entice all men to turn their hearts to Satan. She seems to combine elements of the first and second beasts and the false prophet.

Even with all her worldly trappings, the glory of this woman pales when compared to the “woman clothed with the sun” in Revelation 12:1 and the simple beauty of the bride of the Lamb in Revelation 19:7-8.

“decked with gold and precious stones and pearls” These are symbols of wealth. The word decked indicates that the woman wears an excessive amount of this jewelry. In fact, everything about the woman speaks of pride, worldliness, and excess.

“having a golden cup in her hand full of abominations and filthiness of her fornication” A golden cup indicates wealth – and one seeing such a cup would expect to find in it something pleasurable to drink. Instead, the woman’s cup is filled with “abominations and filthiness,” which stem from the woman’s “fornication” in turning her heart from God to Satan (Jeremiah 7:8; D&C 10:20-22). Abominations are offenses against God that are particularly vile and disgusting.

5 And upon her forehead was a name written, MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH.

verse 5 “And upon her forehead was a name written” The book of Revelation mentions a mark on the forehead seven times. We read in Revelation 13:16, 14:9, and 20:4 of the mark of the beast on the forehead or in the hands of those who follow him. In Revelation 7:3, 9:4, 14:1, and 22:4 we read of the righteous receiving the name or seal of God on their foreheads. But here the woman has her own name written on her forehead. Some authorities

believe it was common in ancient Rome for prostitutes to write their names on their foreheads, probably on a headband (Mounce, *Book of Revelation*, 311).

John paints the picture of a priestess-harlot standing as a counterfeit high priest. The woman, therefore, represents more than rulers or nations with their attendant power (the beast's heads and its horns do that). The woman epitomizes a religious-philosophical or theological system through which men are seduced to worship the dragon. For this reason, she combines elements of both the first and second beast but more especially those of the false prophet.

“Mystery” The righteous know the hidden things of God, called the “mysteries.” The greatest mysteries are reserved for those who receive the keys to such mysteries in the temple, who keep their temple covenants, and who hunger and thirst after the things of godliness. The woman here is the embodiment of the mysteries of Satan, the counterfeit of the mysteries of God. These mysteries are found in false religious creeds, in “the secret works of darkness” (2 Nephi 10:15; 9:9; 26:22; 28:9), and in secret combinations, “which . . . is most abominable and wicked above all, in the sight of God” (Ether 8:18; Helaman 6:22- 23; Moses 5:51).

“Babylon the Great” “Babylon the great is the church of the devil; it is the world with all its evil and carnality; it is every organization of every kind, sort and form – whether religious, civic, political, fraternal, or otherwise – which espouses a philosophy or promotes a cause which leads men away from salvation and toward the kingdoms of lesser glory in the eternal world” (McConkie, *Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, 3:558). As the Lord says in latter-day revelation, Babylon is “the midst of wickedness” (D&C 133:14).

“mother of harlots and abominations” Babylon not only is a prostitute herself but is the mother of other prostitutions, other harlots on the earth. Not only does the woman embody one form of great wickedness on the earth, but she fosters organizations, religions, governments, philosophies, and attitudes that embrace the devil and his world.

In the Bible, the term abomination describes those things so vile that they rouse the instant wrath of God. In their worse form, they are called “the abomination of desolation” and are associated with the corruption of the temple (cf. Daniel 11:31; Matthew 24:15). Their presence in the temple causes God’s spirit to withdraw, leaving the sanctuary fully exposed to destruction. In particular, the Greek form of the word bdelugma denotes idolatry and harlotry, especially when combined to create a maleficent worship (see Deuteronomy 29:26; 2 Chronicles 28:3).

The abominations here include those spoken of in Daniel, where the temple and other sacred things are desecrated and corrupted (Daniel 11:31; Matthew 24:15). And they include the evil practice of combining harlotry with idolatry (Hosea 4:12-14). In the scriptures, the Lord calls all of the following an abomination; all are engendered by Babylon, the mother of such things:

incest (Leviticus 18:6-16, 26-27)

homosexuality (Leviticus 18:22)

bestiality (Leviticus 18:23, 26-27)
idolatry (Deuteronomy 7:25; 12:29; Malachi 2:11)
offering an impure sacrifice to God (Deuteronomy 17:1)
offering human sacrifice (Deuteronomy 18:10, 12)
using those who practice divination, enchantments, witchcraft (Deuteronomy 18:10, 12)
using wizards, necromancers (Deuteronomy 18:11-12)
using those who cast spells or consult the dead (Deuteronomy 18:11-12)
transvestism (Deuteronomy 22:5)
taking money earned as a prostitute into the temple to pay a vow (Deuteronomy 23:18)
being dishonest in financial dealings (Deuteronomy 25:13-16; Proverbs 11:1)
making idols (Deuteronomy 27:15)
sodomy (1 Kings 14:24)
being prideful (Proverbs 6:17; 16:5; Jacob 2:13, 16; Helaman 4:11-12)
lying (Proverbs 6:17, 19; 12:22)
murder (Proverbs 6:17)
contentiousness (Proverbs 6:19)
justifying the wicked and condemning the just (Proverbs 17:15)
offering sacrifice in wickedness (Proverbs 21:27)
adultery (Ezekiel 18:11; 22:11)
oppressing the poor and needy (Ezekiel 18:12; Helaman 4:11-12)
wilfully failing to pay debts (Ezekiel 18:12)
whoredoms (Jacob 2:28)
fornication (Alma 39:3-5)
secret combinations (Helaman 7:25)
cannibalism (Moroni 9:10)
rape (Moroni 9:9)
the creeds of apostate churches (JS-H 1:18-19)

6 And I saw the woman drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus: and when I saw her, I wondered with great admiration.

verse 6 “drunken with the blood of the saints / martyrs” Babylon is the name of the spirit that comes over those who kill the prophets. That spirit has infected much of the world. (See commentary on Revelation 16:6; also, see Revelation 18:24; Matthew 23:34-35; 2 Corinthians 4:8-11; Hebrews 9:16.) The word drunken suggests that through the ages the righteous have been victims of a great slaughter – a slaughter that was intoxicating to the perpetrators.

“when I saw her, I wondered with great admiration” John does not “admire” this embodiment of great wickedness. A better translation of the Greek word here would be “astonishment” (See note c to Revelation 17:6 in the LDS edition of the KJV.), John is amazed or astonished at the extreme level of Babylon’s wickedness.

verses 7-18 The angel interprets some of the symbols John has seen in his vision, particularly in chapters 13 and 17: the woman, the beast, the seven heads of the beast, and the ten horns on those heads. Although the horns of the beast, which symbolize kings, make war with the Lamb, they also, in the end, turn on the woman and destroy her. In turn, the horns of the beast are “overcome” in their war with the Lamb.

7 And the angel said unto me, Wherefore didst thou marvel? I will tell thee the mystery of the woman, and of the beast that carrieth her, which hath the seven heads and ten horns.

verse 7 “And the angel said unto me, Wherefore didst thou marvel? I will tell thee the mystery” The angel serves as a guide and interpreter for John (and for us) through John’s vision, offering to explain the mystery of the woman, the beast on which she sits, and the seven heads and ten horns of the beast (For other examples of angels filling this role, see Daniel 7:15-16; 8:15; 1 Nephi 11-14.).

8 The beast that thou sawest was, and is not; and shall ascend out of the bottomless pit, and go into perdition: and they that dwell on the earth shall wonder, whose names were not written in the book of life from the foundation of the world, when they behold the beast that was, and is not, and yet is.

verse 8 “The beast that thou sawest was, and is not / shall ascend out of the bottomless pit” The beast that John saw in Revelation 13 received what seemed to be a mortal wound; but he was healed and given life again, to the astonishment of the world. That beast was, meaning at one time it existed, but it is not, meaning that at the time of John’s vision it no longer existed on the earth. So, where was it? Perhaps in the bottomless pit, which is a symbol of the prison in which Satan will be kept. Yet, sometime after John’s vision, the beast will come forth from the bottomless pit to continue to work his evil work on the earth. For instance, after the two witnesses have completed their work on earth, the beast who ascended from the bottomless pit will “make war against them . . . and kill them” (Revelation 11:7). See commentary on Revelation 9:1-2; 13:1-8.

“go into perdition” Perdition is the eternal dwelling place of Satan and those who consciously choose him instead of the light. One of Satan’s names is Perdition (D&C 76:26; Moses 5:24) these followers are called the sons of perdition (D&C 76:31-48). Perdition is used to translate the Greek apoleia, which means “destruction” and which likely stems from apollumi, which means ruin or loss (Strong, *Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible*, “Greek Dictionary of the New Testament,” numbers 622, 684). In the end, the beast (meaning all those people who embrace and support that which the beast does) will be cast into perdition with Satan, his master.

“they that dwell on the earth shall wonder” In Revelation 13:3 we read that “all the world wondered after the beast” when he was healed of his fatal wound. This seems to be a repetition of that same incident.

“whose names were not written in the book of life” This phrase helps us to identify those who will wonder at the beast: all those who have not truly come unto Christ and been claimed as his. We have the same qualifier in Revelation 13:8, which says that all people on earth will worship the beast except those whose names are written in “the book of life of the Lamb.” See commentary on Revelation 3:5.

“from the foundation of the world” The foundation of the world is the Creation – those whose names have been written in the book of life from the Creation will not “wonder” at the beast. Perhaps this passage refers to the Lord’s foreknowledge of those who will come unto exaltation (1 Peter 1:2; Alma 13:3, 7). Or it may refer to the collective group of the righteous, whose names were written in the book of life beginning with Adam and Eve.

“when they behold the beast that was, and is not, and yet is” We read at the beginning of the verse that the beast “was, and is not.” Here we read that the beast “yet is.” He lived, he died, and now he lives again. See commentary on Revelation 3:3.

“This is an obvious parody of the Lamb, who was put to death yet came back to life and now is alive forevermore (Revelation 1:18; 2:8). The description is also an intentional antithesis to the One ‘who is, and who was, and who is to come’ (Revelation 1:4, 8; 4:8). In the broadest sense the beast is that satanically inspired power which, although having received the stroke of death, returns to hurl himself with renewed fury against the forces of God. It is this incredible power of resuscitation that causes the inhabitants of the earth to stand in awe. He is the beast of chapter 13 who had received a death-stroke in one of his heads and yet survived (Revelation 13:3, 12, 14). Down through history he repeatedly ‘comes up out of the Abyss’ to harass and, if it were possible, to destroy the people of God. He is the little horn of Daniel 7 (Antiochus Epiphanes) who rises out of the fourth kingdom (the ‘most terrifying’ fourth beast, Daniel 7:19) to make war against the saints (Daniel 7:21). He is Nero, who instigates a persecution of the Christians to avert suspicion that he is responsible for the burning of Rome. The beast was; at the moment he is not. John wrote under the shadow of an impending persecution. The beast is about to come again. This coming will be his last, for now the King of kings and Lord of lords will throw him (along with the false prophet) alive into the fiery lake of burning sulfur (19:20)” (Mounce, *Book of Revelation*, 314).

9 And here is the mind which hath wisdom. The seven heads are seven mountains, on which the woman sitteth.

verse 9 “And here is the mind which hath wisdom” This expression is similar to that found in a comparable setting in Revelation 13:9: “If any man have an ear, let him hear.” In other words, wisdom and thoughtful searching will bring the understandings in this chapter.

“The seven heads are seven mountains, on which the woman sitteth” The beast (or political / philosophical / economic / religious power) that gives the woman her

headquarters or base of operations has seven heads, which the angel tells us represent seven mountains. Rome is the traditional “city on seven hills” (Virgil, *Aeneid*, 6:782; Martial, *Epigrams*, 4:64; Cicero, *Letters to Atticus*, 6:5). Yet John may be referring not to literal Rome but to Rome as a symbol of all that is powerful and corrupt in the world. The number seven indicates perfection or completion – in this case, complete corruption or perfectly evil power. In other words, the woman’s headquarters in any age is an evil power, as Rome was in John’s day.

10 And there are seven kings: five are fallen, and one is, and the other is not yet come; and when he cometh, he must continue a short space.

11 And the beast that was, and is not, even he is the eighth, and is of the seven, and goeth into perdition.

verses 10-11 Some have felt that these verses spell out clearly the identity of the arch-enemy of the Christians in John’s day as Domitian. See the background commentary at the beginning of this commentary on Revelation, especially the historical background material.

Note that John seems to have confused the time frame to throw everyone but the Christians off: “and there are seven kings: five are fallen [the emperors Augustus through Nero have died], and one is [Vespasian], and the other is not yet come, and when he cometh he must continue a short space [Titus – who ruled only two years] and the beast that was [Nero], and is not [Nero is dead], even he is the eighth [thus, by the principle of Nero redivivus, John boldly identifies the beast as the eighth emperor Domitian], “and is of the seven, and goeth into perdition.”

Again, if John had Domitian in mind then he intended a dual meaning.

The precise identity of the kings, however, is not as important as their function in the vision. The seven kings may represent many kings of the earth, and the number seven, which indicates perfection or completeness, may tell us that all the kings of the earth, as a whole, are part of the beast and supportive of the evil woman.

“And the beast that was, and is not” This beast is the same one identified and discussed in Revelation 13:1-8 (see commentary on Revelation 17:8).

“even he is the eighth, and is of the seven” The beast has seven heads that represent seven kings. But the beast himself is also a king, the eighth in the series – yet at the same time “of the seven.” This is obviously a paradox, one without an easy answer. Some argue that Nero was one of the seven and that, according to a myth, he returned. Apparently, many in the first century (presumably including some of the saints) believed in this myth. Some believed that Nero had not died at all but had gone into hiding. Others argued that the evil, bloodthirsty Domitian was a reincarnation of the evil, bloodthirsty Nero (Mounce, *Book of Revelation*, 316; Dummelow, *One-Volume Bible Commentary*, 1087). But by now both Nero and Domitian have long since perished, yet the beast continues into the latter days as part of the seventh seal, and he will be present at the destruction of Babylon at the last day. Perhaps

the beast transcends all the other kings; perhaps he, as anti-Christ, is “of the seven” in the sense that his evil purpose is fulfilled in them – and, as the eighth, he may fulfill all that the others set in motion and sought to accomplish.

“and goeth into perdition” This expression reiterates that the beast will be defeated and banished from the earth.

12 And the ten horns which thou sawest are ten kings, which have received no kingdom as yet; but receive power as kings one hour with the beast.

verse 12 “the ten horns which thou sawest are ten kings” These ten kings all seem to reign during the same general period; they are united in their support of the beast and his principles and goals. The number ten here seems to signify “the whole of a part” (Draper, Opening the Seven Seals, 193) – the kings symbolized here might be representative of all the kings and kingdoms of the world (except God’s), particularly those when the world is ripe in wickedness (see also Daniel 7).

“which have received no kingdom as yet” The kings represented by the ten horns are all in John’s future, and the prophecy seems to suggest that they will hold power during the seventh seal, when they will unite against the whore (Revelation 17:16).

“receive power as kings one hour with the beast” These kings will receive their power from the beast, but they will hold it only a short time (“one hour”).

13 These have one mind, and shall give their power and strength unto the beast.

verse 13 “These have one mind” The ten kings have one united purpose, which is to support the beast. That mind and purpose are inspired by the master of the beast, Satan himself.

“Satan has control now. No matter where you look, he is in control, even in our own land. He is guiding the governments as far as the Lord will permit him. That is why there is so much strife, turmoil, and confusion all over the earth. One master mind is governing the nations. It is not the President of the United States; it is not Hitler; it is not Mussolini; it is not the king or government of England or any other land; it is Satan himself” (Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation*, 3:315).

“and shall give their power and strength unto the beast” The ten kings will lend their support to the principles and philosophies and goals of the evil king and evil kingdom that is called the beast.

14 These shall make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them: for he is Lord of lords, and King of kings: and they that are with him are called, and chosen, and faithful.

verse 14 “These shall make war with the Lamb” The Lamb, of course, is Jesus Christ (see commentary on Revelation 5:6). The war is part of the war that began in heaven (Revelation 12:7) and continues as the beast tries to destroy the true believers in Christ

(Revelation 13:7). This war will come to a bloody conclusion at Armageddon (Revelation 16:13-16; 19:17-21).

“the Lamb shall overcome them” Christ will be victorious over all his enemies, “retaining all power, even to the destroying of Satan and his works at the end of the world, and the last great day of judgment” (D&C 19:3). This event, when Christ will conquer all at his second coming, is discussed in much greater detail in Revelation 19:11- 21.

“for he is Lord of lords, and King of kings” One reason why the Lamb is successful in his battle against his enemies is that he commands the hosts (or armies) of heaven, as the “Lord of lords, and King of kings.” Not only do both the Father and the Son reign as sovereigns over all the earth and over every earthly ruler of any kind but they also rule over heavenly lords and kings (Revelation 1:6; 5:10; 15:3; Deuteronomy 10:17; Daniel 2:47; 1 Timothy 6:15).

“they that are with him are called, and chosen, and faithful” Those who attend the Lamb in overcoming his enemies are those who have overcome the world. This seems to be the same group that is described in Revelation 14:4: “These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth.” And they continue with him at the Second Coming, as seen in Revelation 19:14: “And the armies which were in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean.” Some of the called and chosen, of course, will still be alive as mortals at the Second Coming.

In one sense, to be called and chosen is to come to priesthood blessings and powers, in which one must be faithful (D&C 121:34-46). This phrase may also refer to those who have had their calling and election made sure. (TPJS, 42, 331.)

15 And he saith unto me, The waters which thou sawest, where the whore sitteth, are peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues.

verse 15 “The waters which thou sawest . . . are peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues” Here the angel gives a clear interpretation of where the whore is located – among all peoples of the world.

16 And the ten horns which thou sawest upon the beast, these shall hate the whore, and shall make her desolate and naked, and shall eat her flesh, and burn her with fire.

verse 16 “And the ten horns which thou sawest upon the beast” See commentary on Revelation 17:12.

“these shall hate the whore” Though they once sustained and assisted the whore in her evil work on the earth, as allies of the beast that supported her, in the end the ten kings will turn on her and destroy her – which will also bring their own destruction. Nephi saw the same event: “And the blood of that great and abominable church, which is the whore of all the earth, shall turn upon their own heads; for they shall war among themselves, and the sword of their own hands shall fall upon their own heads, and they shall be drunken with their own blood” (1 Nephi 22:13; Ezekiel 38:18-23).

“shall make her desolate and naked / eat her flesh / burn her with fire” Here is a paradox: Though the ten horns (ten kings) grow from the beast (a kingdom and ideology, as well as a specific king), and although the horns support and sustain the beast, and although the beast supports and sustains the whore (the church of the devil, the wicked world), yet the horns shall turn on the whore and help to destroy her. An old proverb says that there is no honor among thieves, meaning that though thieves may be allies for a time, in the end they will steal from each other. The Book of Mormon says that by the wicked will the wicked be punished (Mormon 4:5). Elsewhere it says that Satan will abandon his followers at the last day (Alma 30:60). In the same way, those who do the work of the devil often turn on each other.

These kings will not suddenly become righteous but will seek their own selfish ends in destroying the whore, not realizing that by their actions they will also destroy themselves. Perhaps the crazed self-destruction of the Nephites and Jaredites illustrates the mindless killing described here (Mormon 6:7-15; Ether 15:15-32).

The fate of the whore is striking. Instead of the finery that she once wore, the kings will strip her naked. Instead of drinking from a golden cup, she herself will be consumed – by those who turn on her like wild animals. Instead of being “drunken with the blood of the . . . martyrs” (Revelation 17:6), she herself will be killed. The particular method by which she is killed is important to note. Under the law of Moses, any daughter of a priest who chooses to “profane herself by playing the whore” is to be “burnt with fire” (Leviticus 21:9). Revelation 18:8 gives further details about the burning of Babylon. Ultimately, of course, Babylon, or the wicked world, will be destroyed by the fire of the coming of the Lord.

The description and fate of Babylon in the last days seems to mirror an allegory told by Ezekiel:

Revelation 17:2 Babylon the whore committed fornication with the kings of the earth.

Ezekiel 23:17 Aholibah (representing Jerusalem, verse 4) allowed others to “[come] to her into the bed of love, and they defiled her with their whoredom.”

Ezekiel 23:19 “Yet she multiplied her whoredoms.”

Revelation 17:16 The ten kings will come to “hate the whore.”

Ezekiel 23:29 “And they shall deal with thee hatefully.”

Revelation 17:16 The ten kings “shall make her desolate and naked.”

Ezekiel 23:26, 29 “They shall also strip thee out of thy clothes, and take away thy fair jewels, . . . and shall leave thee naked and bare.”

Revelation 17:16 The ten kings “shall eat her flesh.”

Ezekiel 23:25 “They shall take away thy nose and thine ears.”

Revelation 17:16 The ten kings “shall . . . burn her with fire.”

Ezekiel 23:25 “Thy residue shall be devoured by the fire.”

Revelation 17:18 The woman is a symbol for “that great city, which reigneth over the kings of the earth.”

Ezekiel 23:4 The woman is a symbol for the city Jerusalem.

17 For God hath put in their hearts to fulfil his will, and to agree, and give their kingdom unto the beast, until the words of God shall be fulfilled.

verse 17 “For God hath put in their hearts to fulfil his will, and to agree, and give their kingdom unto the beast” Though the kings likely do not know it, they serve God's greater purpose in supporting the beast for a time (Isaiah 7:18; 45:1). It has not been revealed why this is part of the Lord's plan.

“until the words of God [are] fulfilled” God has a plan which has been prophesied through his servants. All will proceed according to the divine will until all is accomplished (D&C 1:37). In particular, in this instance God has decreed that the kingdom of the wicked must be destroyed (Revelation 14:8; 16:19; 18:8).

For God hath put in their hearts to fulfil his will, and to agree, and give their kingdom unto the beast, until the words of God are fulfilled.

18 And the woman which thou sawest is that great city, which reigneth over the kings of the earth.

verse 18 “And the woman which thou sawest is that great city, which reigneth over the kings of the earth” Who is the whore? She is the church of the devil, as we have seen. She is the source and instigator of great sin on the earth. She is mysterious and secretive. And she is a political entity – a city – as well as a great gathering of people. For a time, she had control of the other kingdoms of the earth, but eventually they will betray her and contribute to her destruction.

In the time of John, Rome was the great city and the very essence of evil. But Rome is only one manifestation of Babylon, which can be found in one form or another until the end. The seat and embodiment of evil is found in governments, societies, churches, and other associations of humans on the earth in all ages.

Revelation Chapter 18 Destruction of Babylon

The Babylonian captivity was perhaps the lowest point of Israel's history. Elder Bruce R. McConkie wrote: "Both Isaiah and Jeremiah spoke at length of the devastations of that day and of the cursings and destruction that would come upon Babylon as a result. (Isaiah 13 and 21; Jeremiah 50 and 51.) Babylon was truly the great enemy of the Lord's people anciently, and her overthrow and the destruction of her worldliness and wickedness was one of the things of greatest interest and concern to them. What was more natural, then, than for John and all the prophets to use Babylon as the symbol of sin, and her destruction as the overthrow of wickedness on earth" (*Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, 3:559).

The fall of Babylon was foreseen in Babylon 14:8: "And there followed another angel, saying, Babylon is fallen, is fallen, that great city, because she made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication." In Revelation 16:17 and 19, divine action was taken to destroy the wickedness of Babylon: "And the seventh angel poured out his vial into the air . . . and great Babylon came in remembrance before God, to give unto her the cup of the wine of the fierceness of his wrath." The angel in Revelation 17:1 promised to show John the fulfillment of that prophecy and that divine action. But we do not actually begin to see that destruction until chapter 18, which is an extended lament, or a funeral dirge, over the loss of the great city of Babylon.

Babylon was convinced that in her strength she would never fall: "I sit a queen," she said, "and shall see no sorrow." But she will fall indeed and become a "habitation of devils." Her destruction shall be complete: "She shall be utterly burned with fire," the prophecy says. Because the world has given herself over to Babylon's enticements, the world will lament her demise. Joining in the lament are earth's kings, merchants, and shippers. But the righteous will have cause to rejoice over her downfall.

In latter-day revelation, we read, "And the great and abominable church, which is the whore of all the earth, shall be cast down by devouring fire, according as it is spoken by the mouth of Ezekiel the prophet, who spoke of these things, which have not come to pass but surely must, as I live, for abominations shall not reign" (D&C 29:21; see also Ezekiel 39:6).

"For the time speedily shall come that all churches which are built up to get gain, and all those who are built up to get power over the flesh, and those who are built up to become popular in the eyes of the world, and those who seek the lusts of the flesh and the things of the world, and to do all manner of iniquity; yea, in fine, all those who belong to the kingdom of the devil are they who need fear, and tremble, and quake; they are those who must be brought low in the dust; they are those who must be consumed as stubble; and this is according to the words of the prophet" (1 Nephi 22:23).

Elder Orson Pratt adds this testimony: "John predicts another great event to take place immediately after the proclamation of the everlasting gospel, namely, the downfall of great Babylon. . . [S]he must fall, after she has been warned with the sound of 'the everlasting gospel.' Her overthrow will be by a series of the most terrible judgments which will quickly

succeed each other, and sweep over the nations where she has her dominion, and at last she will be utterly burned by fire, for thus hath the Lord spoken. Great, and fearful, and most terrible judgments are decreed upon these corrupt powers – the nations of modern Christendom; for strong is the Lord God who shall execute His fierce wrath upon them, and he will not cease until he has made a full end, and until their names be blotted out from under heaven" (*Divine Authenticity of the Book of Mormon*, number 6 [1851]: 84-85).

verses 1-5 The saints are called out of Babylon.

1 And after these things I saw another angel come down from heaven, having great power; and the earth was lightened with his glory.

verse 1 “And after these things I saw another angel come down from heaven, having great power” John now beholds a powerful angel, different from the angel that guided him through the vision of chapter 17.

“the earth was lightened with his glory” This angel is so brilliant that the very earth is illuminated by his presence. In fact, this angel's glory is like that of Christ, who will yet return: "And, behold, the glory of the God of Israel came from the way of the east: and his voice was like a noise of many waters: and the earth shined with his glory" (Ezekiel 43:2). "For as the light[e]ning [of the sun] cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be" (Matthew 24:27).

2 And he cried mightily with a strong voice, saying, Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and is become the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird.

verse 2 This verse commences a song of rejoicing that the devil's kingdom will fall. In a specific and immediate sense, John perhaps was describing the eventual fall of Rome.

From a more general standpoint, John was likely describing the eventual triumph of good over evil which does not occur in the world's history until the second coming of Christ.

“And he cried mightily with a strong voice” The power of the angel's proclamation equals the power of his appearance – his cry is mighty, and his voice is strong.

“Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen” The angel's words are almost a direct quotation from a passage in Isaiah: "Babylon is fallen, is fallen; and all the graven images of her gods he hath broken unto the ground" (Isaiah 21:9; Jeremiah 51:8). This same expression is found in latter-day scripture: "And again, another angel shall sound his trump, which is the sixth angel, saying: She is fallen who made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication; she is fallen, is fallen!" (D&C 88:105).

“the habitation of devils/foul spirit/hateful bird” Where once Babylon boasted of being the great and powerful city that controlled kings (Revelation 17:18) and was the site of opulence and wealth (Revelation 17:4), it now is not fit for human habitation. Rather than being a city or kingdom with a desired place in the world, it now is the home for devils, foul

spirits, and unclean birds. This symbolic description emphasizes that the mighty Babylon will be brought to the lowest possible point.

Old Testament prophets saw the fallen city of Babylon as a wasteland, good only for foul and unclean creatures: “From generation to generation it shall lie waste; none shall pass through it for ever and ever. But the cormorant and the bittern shall possess it; the owl also and the raven shall dwell in it: and he shall stretch out upon it the line of confusion, and the stones of emptiness. They shall call the nobles thereof to the kingdom, but none shall be there, and all her princes shall be nothing. And thorns shall come up in her palaces, nettles and brambles in the fortresses thereof: and it shall be an habitation of dragons, and a court for owls. The wild beasts of the desert shall also meet with the wild beasts of the island, and the satyr shall cry to his fellow; the screech owl also shall rest there, and find for herself a place of rest. There shall the great owl make her nest, and lay, and hatch, and gather under her shadow: there shall the vultures also be gathered, every one with her mate” (Isaiah 34:10-16; see also Isaiah 13:19-22; Jeremiah 50:35-36, 40; Zephaniah 2:13-15).

As it was with the literal, ancient city of Babylon, so shall it be with the spiritual Babylon that spreads itself across the world in our time.

3 For all nations have drunk of the wine of the wrath of her fornication, and the kings of the earth have committed fornication with her, and the merchants of the earth are waxed rich through the abundance of her delicacies.

verse 3 “For all nations have drunk of the wine of the wrath of her fornication”

See commentary on Revelation 14:8; 17:1-2.

“the merchants of the earth are waxed rich through the abundance of her delicacies” The New English Bible gives a helpful alternative reading: “Merchants the world over have grown rich on her bloated wealth.” The world’s merchants have partaken of the wealth and luxury of Babylon, and they thereby have become part of her. This verse points out the worldwide power of Babylon (the wicked world, the church of the devil), as well as her involvement and influence in economic affairs.

The fallen Babylon becomes a shattered palace and wretched prison for abomination because of the role she played with the leaders of the world, seducing them to partake without measure of her fornications. In this chapter the angel makes clear the true nature of her power of seduction – the allure of wealth. While earthly lords were guilty of economic dalliance, the merchants committed idolatry through the worship of mammon. The term mammon (Greek *mammonas*) means money in any form. It symbolizes avarice deified.

4 And I heard another voice from heaven, saying, Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues.

verse 4 “And I heard another voice from heaven” This voice could be that of God, who directly addresses the saints as “my people.” More likely it is an angel speaking for God:

in verses 5 and 8 the Lord is referred to in third person. The words of this angel seem to be those recorded in verses 4 through 20.

“Come out of her, my people” This is the recurring cry of the prophets: Leave the world and its wickedness, and bind yourself to God. Down through the ages we hear their voices:

“Depart ye, depart ye, go ye out from thence, touch no unclean thing; go ye out of the midst of her; be ye clean, that bear the vessels of the Lord” (Isaiah 52:11).

“Flee out of the midst of Babylon, and deliver every man his soul: be not cut off in her iniquity; for this is the time of the Lord’s vengeance; he will render unto her a recompense” (Jeremiah 51:6).

“Go ye out of Babylon; gather ye out from among the nations, from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other. . . Go ye out from among the nations, even from Babylon, from the midst of wickedness, which is spiritual Babylon” (D&C 133:7, 14).

This counsel has particular application to the saints in our day. There is much in our world that partakes of the pride, the lust, the materialism, and the sins of Babylon. There is much that seeks to replace God in our hearts – the endless quest for wealth, the near-worship of sports and entertainment “stars,” the deep desire of most people to seek and reach their own goals rather than God’s. Babylon is alive and well in our times – but, as prophesied, Babylon will fall.

“that ye be not partakers of her sins” The saints are called to leave Babylon so that they can be fortified against the temptation to partake of her sins. What are those sins? Certainly, the people of Babylon are guilty of all the typical sins of mankind at their worst – murder, adultery, abortion, theft, pornography, lying, and on and on. But in addition, as Revelation records, Babylon is also guilty of persecuting and killing the saints (Revelation 17:6), leading the nations of the world into idolatry and gross wickedness (Revelation 17:2-4), and fostering all manner of abominations (Revelation 17:5).

“that ye receive not of her plagues” This phrase is connected with the previous one. By leaving Babylon and refusing to partake of her sins, the righteous are also protected from her plagues, enumerated elsewhere in Revelation (chapters 8, 9, and 16).

5 For her sins have reached unto heaven, and God hath remembered her iniquities.

verse 5 “For her sins have reached unto heaven / God hath remembered her iniquities” God is fully aware of the grossness and the extent of the sins of Babylon; not one escapes his notice. And even if he does not act immediately to judge and to punish in a given instance, he will ever remember until the time of retribution.

verses 6-24 Babylon falls and is mourned by her lovers.

6 Reward her even as she rewarded you, and double unto her double according to her works: in the cup which she hath filled fill to her double.

verse 6 “Reward her even as she rewarded you” Babylon will receive according to the law of the harvest: that which she has sown, so shall she reap. As she has given out, so shall it come back to her in punishment (Job 4:8; D&C 6:33).

“Wherefore, fear and tremble, O ye people, for what I the Lord have decreed . . . shall be fulfilled. And verily I say unto you, that they who go forth, bearing these tidings unto the inhabitants of the earth, to them is power given to seal both on earth and in heaven, the unbelieving and rebellious; yea, verily, to seal them up unto the day when the wrath of God shall be poured out upon the wicked without measure – unto the day when the Lord shall come to recompense unto every man according to his work, and measure to every man according to the measure which he has measured to his fellow man” (D&C 1:7-10; see also Jeremiah 50:15, 29).

“double unto her double according to her works” Babylon will receive not only a full portion of punishment for her iniquities but a double portion. Under the law of Moses, a thief was to pay double for that which he had taken (Exodus 22:4, 7). A double punishment is a common consequence in the scriptures (Isaiah 40:2; Jeremiah 16:18). The double use of double is a peculiarity of the King James Version (contrast, for example, RSV, NEB, JB, and NIV).

“the cup which she hath filled” Babylon has filled a cup of iniquity and caused the nations of the world to drink of it (Revelation 14:8). That same cup will now be filled with the wrath of God for Babylon to drink – in double portions.

7 How much she hath glorified herself, and lived deliciously, so much torment and sorrow give her: for she saith in her heart, I sit a queen, and am no widow, and shall see no sorrow.

verse 7 “How much she hath glorified herself / lived deliciously” Babylon, which is the wicked world, has exalted herself and lived in great pride and luxury. Deliciously can also be rendered wantonly or riotously (See note a to Revelation 18:7 in the LDS edition of the KJV.).

“so much torment and sorrow give her” The Lord says that as Babylon has exalted herself in pride and given herself to riotous living, to that same degree Babylon will suffer torment and sorrow. This punishment will come just before the second coming of Christ.

“I sit a queen, and am no widow” Babylon gives herself so thoroughly to pride and sin that she sees herself as invincible. She rules over the people of the world, a great queen over many kings. She fears nothing, not even death.

This arrogant claim repeats a prophecy found in Isaiah: “And thou saidst, I shall be a lady for ever: so that thou didst not lay these things to thy heart, neither didst remember the latter end of it. Therefore hear now this, thou that art given to pleasures, that dwellest carelessly, that sayest in thine heart, I am, and none else beside me; I shall not sit as a widow, neither shall I know the loss of children” (Isaiah 47:7-8).

The prophecy in Isaiah continues, foreseeing that which John also saw next: “But these two things shall come to thee in a moment in one day, the loss of children, and widowhood: they shall come upon thee in their perfection for the multitude of thy sorceries, and for the great abundance of thine enchantments. For thou hast trusted in thy wickedness: thou hast said, None seeth me. Thy wisdom and thy knowledge, it hath perverted thee; and thou hast said in thine heart, I am, and none else beside me. Therefore . . . desolation shall come upon thee suddenly, which thou shalt not know” (Isaiah 47:9-11).

8 Therefore shall her plagues come in one day, death, and mourning, and famine; and she shall be utterly burned with fire: for strong is the Lord God who judgeth her.

verse 8 “Therefore shall her plagues come in one day, death, and mourning, and famine” Some translations replace the word death with disease or pestilence. (See RSV, GNB, JB, and NEB.) In one day indicates that these things will come suddenly on the wicked.

In Deuteronomy Moses prophesied the horror of plagues and calamities to come upon the wicked: “The Lord shall send upon thee cursing, vexation, and rebuke, in all that thou settest thine hand unto for to do, until thou be destroyed, and until thou perish quickly; because of the wickedness of thy doings, whereby thou hast forsaken me. . . Then the Lord will make thy plagues wonderful, and the plagues of thy seed, even great plagues, and of long continuance, and sore sicknesses, and of long continuance. Moreover, he will bring upon thee all the diseases of Egypt, which thou wast afraid of; and they shall cleave unto thee. Also every sickness, and every plague, which is not written in the book of this law, them will the Lord bring upon thee, until thou be destroyed” (Deuteronomy 28:20, 59-61; see also 28:16-61; 2 Nephi 6:15; 10:6).

“she shall be utterly burned with fire: for strong is the Lord God who judgeth her” After the plagues comes the burning. When the Lord returns, the wicked will be destroyed by burning, and the earth itself will be cleansed by fire. “For after today cometh the burning – this is speaking after the manner of the Lord – for verily I say, tomorrow all the proud and they that do wickedly shall be as stubble; and I will burn them up, for I am the Lord of Hosts; and I will not spare any that remain in Babylon” (D&C 64:24; 3 Nephi 26:3). Certainly, a god who has power to bring such a judgment is a strong and powerful god.

This scene is also depicted in latter-day scripture: “And another angel shall sound his trump, saying: That great church, the mother of abominations, that made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication, that persecuteth the saints of God, that shed their blood – she who sitteth upon many waters, and upon the islands of the sea – behold, she is the tares of the earth; she is bound in bundles; her bands are made strong, no man can loose them; therefore, she is ready to be burned” (D&C 88:94).

9 And the kings of the earth, who have committed fornication and lived deliciously with her, shall bewail her, and lament for her, when they shall see the smoke of her burning,

verse 9 “the kings of the earth, who have committed fornication and lived deliciously with her” These kings are probably the kings of the earth in general, mentioned in Revelation 17:2. The kings represent the people of the earth, who also have joined in the “fornication” (see commentary on Revelation 14:8; 17:1-2). The kings and the people have joined together in celebrating the idolatry, immorality, and lust of the world. They have “lived deliciously” in luxury, excess, and wantonness, loving the pleasures of the world more than the treasures of God.

“bewail her, and lament for her, when they shall see the smoke of her burning”

When the kings of the earth see the utter destruction of Babylon, meaning the lifestyle and lust and wealth to which they had given themselves, they will weep and mourn for her loss (Jeremiah 51:8).

10 Standing afar off for the fear of her torment, saying, Alas, alas, that great city Babylon, that mighty city! for in one hour is thy judgment come.

verse 10 “Standing afar off for the fear of her torment” Though they regret her loss, kings try to separate themselves from Babylon for fear that they will share in her fate.

“Alas, alas, that great city Babylon, that mighty city!” This cry of lament for the destruction of wicked Babylon is repeated three times in this chapter – once by the kings, once by the merchants, and once by the sea traders. “The city is Babylon; she is the similitude. The city is Rome; but she too is only a type and a figure. The city is all the cities of the world – San Francisco, Chicago, and New York City; London, Paris, and Berlin; Moscow, Tokyo, and Sao Paulo – all of which are subject to the rule and dominion of evil and carnality” (McConkie, *Millennial Messiah*, 445).

“for in one hour is thy judgment come” This expression suggests that the punishments and disasters that will overtake Babylon (symbolizing the wicked world) will come suddenly. Variations of this expression are repeated in Revelation 18:17, 19. It is worth noting that the “one hour” of persecution revealed in Revelation 17:12-14 is balanced by the “one hour” of judgment in this verse.

11 And the merchants of the earth shall weep and mourn over her; for no man buyeth their merchandise any more:

verse 11 “And the merchants of the earth shall weep and mourn over her” The merchants, symbolizing all those who seek to increase their wealth by association and dealings with a godless culture, will mourn for the loss of that culture, that society, that way of life. Their mourning will be particularly poignant because of their personal loss – they will grieve for themselves more than for Babylon.

12 The merchandise of gold, and silver, and precious stones, and of pearls, and fine linen, and purple, and silk, and scarlet, and all thyine wood, and all manner vessels of

ivory, and all manner vessels of most precious wood, and of brass, and iron, and marble,

verse 12 "thyine wood" Thyine wood was called citrus, citron wood, by the Romans. It was the Callitris quadrivalvis of botanists, of the cone-bearing order of trees, and of the cypress tribe of this order. The name of this wood is derived from the Greek word *thuein*, "to sacrifice, " and it was so called because it was burnt in sacrifices, on account of its fragrance. The wood of this tree was reckoned very valuable, and was used for making articles of furniture by the Greeks and Romans. Like the cedars of Lebanon, it is disappearing from the forests of Palestine.

13 And cinnamon, and odours, and ointments, and frankincense, and wine, and oil, and fine flour, and wheat, and beasts, and sheep, and horses, and chariots, and slaves, and souls of men.

verses 12-13 The long list of items bought and sold in Babylon is impressive in the broad variety of that which is available there. Most of the items listed fall into the category of luxuries – in Babylon, it is not enough to wear simple clothing; one must wear “fine linen, and purple, and silk, and scarlet.” It is not enough to eat bread; one must have “wine, and oil, and fine flour.”

Ezekiel received a vision similar to that depicted in this chapter: “The word of the Lord came again unto me, saying, Now, thou son of man, . . . say unto Tyrus, . . . [Many merchants] traded in thy fairs . . . with horses and horsemen and mules . . . ivory and ebony . . . emeralds, purple, and broidered work, and fine linen, and coral, and agate . . . and honey, and oil, and balm . . . [and] wine . . . and white wool . . . lambs, and rams, and goats . . . [and] all spices, and with all precious stones, and gold . . . [and] blue clothes, and embroidered work, and in chests of rich apparel. . . [T]hy merchandise, thy mariners, . . . and all thy men of war, that are in thee . . . shall fall into the midst of the seas in the day of thy ruin. . . . [They] shall come down from their ships, they shall stand upon the land; and shall cause their voice to be heard against thee, and shall cry bitterly, and shall cast up dust upon their heads, they shall wallow themselves in the ashes. . . And in their wailing they shall take up a lamentation for thee, and lament over thee, saying, What city is like Tyrus, like the destroyed in the midst of the sea? . . . The merchants among the people shall hiss at thee; thou shalt be a terror, and never shalt be any more” (Ezekiel 27:1-3, 12-24, 27, 29-32, 35-36).

verse 13 “slaves, and souls of men” This passage represents the worst of the merchandising that takes place in Babylon: the merchants are trading in the souls and bodies of human beings. Throughout history, millions upon millions of men, women, and children have been kidnapped from their homes, during war or otherwise, and taken to distant places where they have been forced to labor for another (“It is estimated that there were as many as 60,000,000 slaves in the Roman Empire” alone – Mounce, Book of Revelation, 334). In return for their labors, which were often excessive and accompanied by force and violence, the slave

received only subsistence food, some clothing, shelter, and the opportunity to continue to live. Certainly, such traffic in human beings is reprehensible to God.

Another form of trading and merchandising that occurs in Babylon is in what John calls the “souls of men.” This expression may refer to false religious that buy and sell men’s souls, as Moroni recorded: “There shall be churches built up that shall say: Come unto me, and for your money you shall be forgiven of your sins” (Mormon 8:32). Or John’s vision may refer to what Hugh Nibley called the “Mahan Principle.” Here is Nibley’s description of how Babylon trades in the souls of men:

The story begins . . . with Satan seeking to promote himself even in the premortal existence, and being cast out of heaven in his pride, and dedicating himself upon his fall to the destruction of this earth, “for he knew not the mind of God” (Moses 4:6). [On earth] he . . . will control the world economy by claiming possession of the earth’s resources; and by manipulation of its currency – gold and silver – he will buy up the political, military, and ecclesiastical complex and run everything his way. . . He not only offers employment but a course of instruction in how the whole thing works, teaching the ultimate secret: “That great secret” (Moses 5:49-50) of converting life into property. Cain got the degree of Master Mahan, tried the system out on his brother, and gloried in its brilliant success, declaring that at last he could be free, as only property makes free, and that Abel had been a loser in a free competition.

The discipline was handed down through Lamech and finally became the pattern of the world’s economy (Moses 5:55-56). . . One may see Mahan at work all around, from the Mafia, whose adherence to the principle needs no argument, down to the drug pusher, the arms dealer, the manufacturer and seller of defective products, or those who poison the air and water as a shortcut to gain and thus shorten and sicken the lives of all their fellow creatures (Nibley, *Approaching Zion*, 165-67).

14 And the fruits that thy soul lusted after are departed from thee, and all things which were dainty and goodly are departed from thee, and thou shalt find them no more at all.

verse 14 “the fruits that thy soul lusted after / all things . . . dainty and goodly / thou shalt find them no more at all” The sweet and exotic foods that the world has enjoyed will be destroyed with Babylon itself. These foods may symbolize the excesses and extravagances of the world.

15 The merchants of these things, which were made rich by her, shall stand afar off for the fear of her torment, weeping and wailing,

verse 15 “The merchants of these things / stand afar off / weeping and wailing” Greed and luxury are powerful motivators. Those who have become rich by trafficking in the things of the world feel great grief at the loss of their source of wealth. But even in their

mourning they remove themselves from Babylon at the end, standing “afar off” for fear of partaking of her torment.

16 And saying, Alas, alas, that great city, that was clothed in fine linen, and purple, and scarlet, and decked with gold, and precious stones, and pearls!

verse 16 “Alas, alas, that great city” The cry of the merchants, the sea traders, and the kings in mourning the loss of Babylon (which is the wicked world, personified by the greatest, richest, and most powerful city in the world) is one of self-interest: they feel deeply the loss of her wealth, symbolized by the linen, the royal clothing made of purple and scarlet, and the precious metals and gems.

17 For in one hour so great riches is come to nought. And every shipmaster, and all the company in ships, and sailors, and as many as trade by sea, stood afar off,

verse 17 “For in one hour so great riches is come to nought” See commentary on 18:10.

“**as many as trade by sea, stood afar off**” See commentary on 18:10.

18 And cried when they saw the smoke of her burning, saying, What city is like unto this great city!

verse 18 “What city is like unto this great city!” When the sea traders see the destruction of Babylon, they are amazed. Babylon was so powerful and so rich – how could it be destroyed? In the same way, those who embrace the philosophies and lifestyle of a world without the true God, which world seems uniquely powerful and important, will be amazed at its destruction.

19 And they cast dust on their heads, and cried, weeping and wailing, saying, Alas, alas, that great city, wherein were made rich all that had ships in the sea by reason of her costliness! for in one hour is she made desolate.

verse 19 “And they cast dust on their heads” In Middle Eastern culture, this gesture is traditionally a sign of humiliation and deep mourning (Ezekiel 27:30).

“**Alas, alas, that great city**” See commentary on 18:10, 16.

“**for in one hour is she made desolate**” See commentary on 18:10.

20 Rejoice over her, thou heaven, and ye holy apostles and prophets; for God hath avenged you on her.

verse 20 “Rejoice over her, thou heaven, and ye holy apostles and prophets”

While the wicked kings, merchants, and sea traders mourn the loss of Babylon, heaven and the righteous have cause to rejoice. Their great nemesis, the unholy antagonist of all that is good and right, has been destroyed.

“God hath avenged you on her” Babylon orchestrated war against the righteous and has become “drunken with the blood of the saints” (Revelation 17:6). But God will come down in vengeance and bring judgments upon her according to all her wickedness. This vengeance fulfills the promise made in Revelation 6:9-11.

21 And a mighty angel took up a stone like a great millstone, and cast it into the sea, saying, Thus with violence shall that great city Babylon be thrown down, and shall be found no more at all.

verse 21 “a mighty angel took up a stone like a great millstone, and cast it into the sea” Of those who abuse or offend the Lord’s “little ones,” the Lord said, “It were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea” (Matthew 18:6). This is the very fate destined for Babylon, the wicked culture, philosophy, governments, religion, and lifestyle of the world. As an object lesson, “a mighty angel” will lift up a huge stone and throw it into the sea; and “thus with violence shall that great city Babylon be thrown down, and shall be found no more at all.” This passage may also depict some otherwise undefined natural disaster.

The destruction of Babylon was foreseen by Jeremiah (Jeremiah 51:37), Nephi (1 Nephi 14:15-16; 22:14), and Joseph Smith (D&C 1:16), among others.

We read in Jeremiah of this impressive prophecy: “So Jeremiah wrote in a book all the evil that should come upon Babylon. . . And Jeremiah said to Seraiah, When . . . thou hast made an end of reading this book . . . thou shalt bind a stone to it, and cast it into the midst of Euphrates: And thou shalt say, Thus shall Babylon sink, and shall not rise from the evil that I will bring upon her” (Jeremiah 51:60-64).

Just as a weighty stone has no power to rise again from the depths of the sea, in the same way Babylon will have no power to rise again from the destruction a just God brings on her.

22 And the voice of harpers, and musicians, and of pipers, and trumpeters, shall be heard no more at all in thee; and no craftsman, of whatsoever craft he be, shall be found any more in thee; and the sound of a millstone shall be heard no more at all in thee;

verse 22 “And the voice of harpers, and musicians, and of pipers, and trumpeters shall be heard no more at all in thee” The sounds of people seeking worldly pleasure and entertainment will be lost when Babylon is destroyed (Isaiah 24:8; Ezekiel 26:13). Contrast that with the promise in Revelation 15:2, which says that those who resist the beast, gaining a personal victory over him, will have “the harps of God,” making music of true joy and praise.

“no craftsman . . . shall be found any more in thee” Daily labor for pay in the city will cease. The economy of Babylon will be destroyed along with the city.

“the sound of a millstone shall be heard no more at all in thee” The grinding of wheat and other such daily tasks will no longer be heard in Babylon, because Babylon will be

no more. This prophecy has an ominous undertone – when the millstone ceases to grind, food soon ceases to be available.

23 And the light of a candle shall shine no more at all in thee; and the voice of the bridegroom and of the bride shall be heard no more at all in thee: for thy merchants were the great men of the earth; for by thy sorceries were all nations deceived.

verse 23 “And the light of a candle shall shine no more at all in thee” The city will be plunged into darkness. It will no longer have any light at all.

“the voice of the bridegroom and of the bride shall be heard no more at all in thee” Of an earlier and parallel event the Lord said, “Then will I cause to cease from the cities of Judah, and from the streets of Jerusalem, the voice of mirth, and the voice of gladness, the voice of the bridegroom, and the voice of the bride: for the land shall be desolate” (Jeremiah 7:34). The loss of such sounds indicates that normal life has stopped, or that all life in that place has ceased to be.

This verse is reminiscent of Jeremiah 25:9-12, a description of the long exile of Israel. In that passage, the Lord says he will allow Babylon to conquer his people but that Babylon would be destroyed in the end. During the exile, the Lord says, “I will take from them the voice of mirth, and the voice of gladness, the voice of the bridegroom, and the voice of the bride, the sound of the millstones, and the light of the candle” (Jeremiah 25:10).

“thy merchants were the great men of the earth” Those who traded in and with Babylon were great, rich, and powerful, but they do not have power to save her.

“by thy sorceries were all nations deceived” The Lord abhors sorcery, the use of witchcraft and evil powers to deceive others. We read in Revelation 13 of the miracles of the beast, which deceived the people of the earth and caused them to worship the beast rather than God (Revelation 13:12-15). Though the sorceries of Babylon enabled her to deceive the nations and thus to rule the world, those dark, satanic powers are unable to save her in the end: “Stand now with thine enchantments, and with the multitude of thy sorceries, wherein thou hast laboured from thy youth; if so be thou shalt be able to profit, if so be thou mayest prevail. . . Let now the astrologers, the stargazers, the monthly prognosticators, stand up, and save thee from these things that shall come upon thee. Behold, they shall be as stubble; the fire shall burn them; they shall not deliver themselves from the power of the flame: there shall not be a coal to warm at, nor fire to sit before it” (Isaiah 47:12-14).

24 And in her was found the blood of prophets, and of saints, and of all that were slain upon the earth.

verse 24 “in her was found the blood of prophets, and of saints, and of all that were slain upon the earth” Ultimately, Babylon, or the wicked world, is responsible for the martyrdom of all the prophets and saints who have ever been killed for their faith, as well as all who have been killed by murder and war. This persecution of the righteous is probably

Babylon's greatest sin. That these things were "found" in Babylon at the end suggests that all her wickedness will be uncovered.

All this is quite just according to divine law. God had set down two laws that apply – the law of bloodshed, and the law of the spiteful witness. According to the first, the life of a man is required if he slays a fellow man (see Genesis 9:5-6). According to the second, when a witness is found guilty of perjury, he receives the punishment he desired for his fellow (see Deuteronomy 19:16-19). Here God allows the saints, apostles, and prophets to pass sentence on the harlot. Of course, based on their own experience, they find her guilty of both perjury and murder. Because she brought forth false accusations and then passed the death sentence on holy men and women – "in her was found the blood of prophets, and of saints, and of all that were slain upon the earth" – she must forfeit her life.

The story of the tower of Babel is no mere myth; it provides historical background for understanding man's rebellion against God. The most impressive symbol of the Babylonian religion was its ziggurats, of which some ruins stand even to this day. As noted earlier in this work, they reveal the quest of base men to compete with the Gods by erecting colossal buildings, counterfeit holy mountains, where men could pretend to know the mysteries of God while promulgating unholy laws and base practices. These mountains like towers stand in defiance of true faith and emphasize the growing gulf between God and the natural man.

The Book of Mormon testifies of God's wrath upon these people (see Ether 1:33), and what caused it? The arrogant Babylonians combined purely sensual and material principles with the lofty striving within the soul of man. Out of this grew the principle of spiritual fornication. Men mistook lust for joy, sought happiness through passion, and pursued security through materialism. The bit of graffiti, "He who dies with the most toys wins," could have been written as easily in Babylon as in New York, or Las Vegas. Today many still seek to find heaven through drugs, lust, money, success, or power. People continue to try to escape the deadly round of daily life through material and immoral means. The result merely mires them more deeply in the muck that spews from the pit in the abyss.

God has provided a solution: flee Babylon. The command demands a complete severing of relations. God allows no association whatsoever. There is good reason. Babylon is not to be converted but destroyed: "We would have healed Babylon, but she is not healed: forsake her" (Jeremiah 51:9). Any that linger in Babylon will be taken with her plagues, "For after today cometh the burning . . . and I will not spare any that remain in Babylon" (D&C 64:24). Therefore, the cry is "deliver thyself, O Zion, that dwellest with the daughter of Babylon" (Zechariah 2:7).

Revelation Chapter 19 Final Destruction of Evil – Marriage Supper of the Lamb

The final destruction of evil occurs, and the rewards and punishment follow. This chapter describes the fifth interlude celebrating the marriage supper of the Lamb.

This part of John's revelation reports primarily things he hears, rather than things he sees. He hears "a great voice of much people in heaven" praising God for his righteous judgments against Babylon. He hears "the voice of a great multitude" praising God and rejoicing that "the marriage of the Lamb is come." He hears an angel command him to write that those who "are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb" are "blessed."

This section "skillfully weaves together three distinct strands from the Old Testament, all of which have been used before in the New Testament and related literature, but never together. The first is the depiction of the reign of God as a great feast (see Isaiah 25:6; cf. Mark 2:19; Matthew 22:1-14; 25:1; Luke 14:15-24). The second is the notion of Israel as the bride of Jehovah (see Hosea 2:5; Isaiah 1:21; Jeremiah 2:2; cf. Ephesians 5:32). The final is the use of clean garments as a symbol of sanctity (see Genesis 35:2; Isaiah 52:1; 61:10; Zechariah 3:4; cf. Revelation 3:4; 6:11; 7:14)" (Draper, *Opening the Seven Seals*, 208).

1 And after these things I heard a great voice of much people in heaven, saying, Alleluia; Salvation, and glory, and honour, and power, unto the Lord our God:

verse 1 "a great voice of much people in heaven" The people in heaven are likely the "many angels round about the throne" mentioned in Revelation 5:11, "and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands." See also commentary on 7:9-10.

"saying, Alleluia" The millions of people in heaven are crying out praises to God. Alleluia, they cry, which is the Greek form of the Hebrew Hallelujah, meaning "Praise ye Jah!" or "Praise Jehovah!" The praises are specifically motivated by the judgment God has brought against the great whore, Babylon, the wicked world (Revelation 19:2).

"Salvation, and glory, and honour, and power, unto the Lord our God" The inhabitants of heaven cry out praises to God, acknowledging that all honor and glory for the work of salvation in the earth go to him. The King James Version Salvation may more properly be rendered Victory (Greek Soteria) (Harrington, *Revelations*, 185). The expression Lord our God, indicates that the Lord is a personal God to us, one that we can claim as our own.

2 For true and righteous are his judgments: for he hath judged the great whore, which did corrupt the earth with her fornication, and hath avenged the blood of his servants at her hand.

verse 2 "For true and righteous are his judgments" As this verse tells us, the Lord has made a judgment against the great whore, which is correct and fair and right (see also

commentary on Revelation 16:7). All of God's judgments are true and righteous. If he were to judge otherwise, as Alma taught, he would "cease to be God" (Alma 42:13, 22).

"for he hath judged the great whore" The judgment of the whore is announced in Revelation 17:1; the actual judgments are detailed in chapters 6, 9, 11, and 16.

"did corrupt the earth with her fornication" See commentary on 17:2.

"hath avenged the blood of his [saints] at her hand" In Revelation 6:9-10, John "saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held: And they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?" That question is answered in the last days when the Lord exercises his many terrible judgments against the wicked. The events that bring the downfall of Babylon are the same as those that avenge the blood of the martyrs of the Lord.

"For true and righteous are his judgments: for he hath judged the great whore, which did corrupt the earth with her fornication, and hath avenged the blood of his saints at her hand."

3 And again they said, Alleluia. And her smoke rose up for ever and ever.

verse 3 "And again they said, Alleluia" See commentary on Revelation 19:1.

"And her smoke rose up for ever and ever" The smoke of the destruction of Babylon (see Revelation 18:9,18) will rise up to the heavens forever as a testimony of her wickedness. When Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed, Abraham "looked . . . toward all the land of the plain, and beheld, and, lo, the smoke of the country went up as the smoke of a furnace" (Genesis 19:28). When Isaiah made his prophecy against Idumea (which represents the world; see D&C 1:36), he saw that "the land thereof shall become burning pitch. It shall not be quenched night nor day; the smoke thereof shall go up for ever: from generation to generation it shall lie waste" (Isa. 34:9-10; Revelation 14:11). As the smoke of incense rises up to God as a prayer (Revelation 8:3-4), so will the smoke of the destroyed Babylon rise up as a reminder of the sin and just destruction of the wicked world.

4 And the four and twenty elders and the four beasts fell down and worshipped God that sat on the throne, saying, Amen; Alleluia.

verse 4 "And the four and twenty elders" See commentary on 4:4.

"the four beasts" See commentary on Revelation 4:6.

"fell down and worshipped God that sat on the throne" See commentary on Revelation 4:10.

"saying, Amen; Alleluia" Those closest to the throne, the elders and the beasts, join in the chorus introduced in the previous verse, crying "Amen, Alleluia," which means "Verily, praise the Lord Jehovah!" This expression echoes the cry of the people in Psalm 106:48: "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel from everlasting to everlasting: and let all the people say, Amen. Praise ye the Lord."

5 And a voice came out of the throne, saying, Praise our God, all ye his servants, and ye that fear him, both small and great.

verse 5 “And a voice came out of the throne” Because this voice comes from the throne of God, it may appear to be the voice of God himself. But the words spoken by the voice (“Praise our God”) imply that the voice is not that of God the Father. It could be the voice of Jesus, commanding the saints to praise the Father, though Jesus likely would have said “my God” (Revelation 3:12; John 20:17). The speaker may be one of those who surround the throne.

“Praise our God, all ye his [saints], and ye that fear him, both small and great”

First the people in heaven cry out their praises (Revelation 19:1-3), and then those who are closest to the throne (Revelation 19:4). Now all saints, “small and great,” are asked to join in the praises.

“And a voice came out of the throne, saying, Praise our God, all ye his saints, and ye that fear him, both small and great.”

6 And I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings, saying, Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth.

verse 6 “the voice of a great multitude” See commentary on Revelation 19:1.

“as the voice of many waters” The noisy sound of a huge rushing river or of the crashing breakers of the ocean is a very apt description of the sound of an immense crowd of people. See commentary on Revelation 1:15; 14:2.

“as the voice of mighty thunderings” Again, this is a very apt description of the sound of many people. See commentary on Revelation 14:2.

“saying, Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth” To paraphrase this passage: “Praise Jehovah, for the Lord who has power over all reigns as king over all the earth” (see Mosiah 3:5; A of F 1:10). This is the fourth cry of “Alleluia” recorded in Revelation 19; unlike the others, which praised him for his judgments against Babylon, this cry praises God for coming to bless and reign over his saints. The establishment of Christ’s reign is the fulfillment of the request made in the Lord’s prayer: “Thy kingdom come” (Matthew 6:10).

7 Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready.

verse 7 “Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him” We do indeed have cause to be glad, to rejoice, and to give honor to the Lord. He has offered the great mediating sacrifice for us, enabling us to repent and be cleansed from our sins and to draw near to him to be joined in an eternal, holy union with him (John 17:11, 19-23). The specific reason for this present rejoicing is that union, “the marriage of the Lamb.”

“for the marriage of the Lamb is come” The marriage of the Lamb, who is Christ (D&C 33:17-18) to his bride, who is the Church (D&C 109:73-74) as well as the New Jerusalem (21:2, 9-10), is a metaphor for the union between the Lord and his people, made possible through the atonement of Christ. In fact, the very name of Christ’s sacrifice (at-one-ment) suggests the purpose of that sacrifice: to make us one with both the Father and the Son (John 17:11, 19-23). To underscore the sweetness and blessing of that union, the Lord uses marriage as a symbol. There is no sweeter or more meaningful relationship on earth than that between a holy husband and a holy wife; that is the kind of relationship (in depth of feeling and completeness of union) that the Lord is inviting us to. That marriage is between Christ and the church – but the Church is not just an organization on the earth; it is also the individual souls who belong to that organization. Though we are to prepare for the marriage all our lives (Matthew 25:1-13; D&C 45:56-57), it will be brought to its culmination (with the body of the Church) when Christ returns in glory. Of course, as individuals, we are bound to Christ as soon as we are ready. (For other references to the marriage of the Lamb, see Isaiah 54:4-5; 62:5; Jeremiah 31:32; JST Matthew 22:1-14; Ephesians 5:23, 32; D&C 58:6-11; 65:3; 88:92; 133:10, 19.)

“his wife hath made herself ready” Through repentance, sanctification, and a heart that is fully turned to God, the wife of Christ, which is the Church, has prepared herself to be joined with him.

8 And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints.

verse 8 “to her was granted” It was granted to the bride to wear fine linen, which represents the righteousness of the saints. To her was granted is an interesting expression that reveals an important truth. Though we may labor hard to be righteous, in the final event even our righteousness is possible because of the grace and power and gifts of God (Deuteronomy 30:20; John 1:12; 2 Corinthians 4:7; Colossians 1:10-11).

“she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white” The great whore was arrayed in showy, expensive, worldly clothing (Revelation 17:4), but the bride of Christ is wearing simple clothing, which symbolizes “the righteousness of saints” (see also Revelation 15:6). The linen is white because it was “washed . . . in the blood of the Lamb” (Revelation 7:14), meaning that the saints are sanctified through the atonement of Christ.

9 And he saith unto me, Write, Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb. And he saith unto me, These are the true sayings of God.

verse 9 “And he saith unto me, Write” An angel (identified as such in Revelation 19:10) tells John specific words to record.

“Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb” This passage is another of the beatitudes of the book of Revelation. Those who are invited guests at the Lamb’s celebratory marriage feast are blessed indeed. There are three persons or

groups at the marriage supper: the Bridegroom, Jesus Christ, who is the Lamb; the Bride, who is the Church (as an institution but also as a collection of many individuals); and the guests, who also are likely the individual members, those who have qualified by righteousness for the grace of Christ. It seems that the individual members appear twice in this image: once in their connection with the Church (the Bridegroom) and once in representing themselves (the guests) (See Draper, *Opening the Seven Seals*, 209-10).

Joseph Smith wrote of this feast and our attendance: “Those who keep the commandments of the Lord and walk in His statutes to the end, are the only individuals permitted to sit at this glorious feast. . . [Paul wrote:] ‘I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith.’ . . . His labors were unceasing to spread the glorious news: and like a faithful soldier, when called to give his life in the cause which he had espoused, he laid it down. . . Follow the labors of this apostle from the time of his conversion to the time of his death, and you will have a fair sample of industry and patience in promulgating the Gospel of Christ. Derided, whipped, and stoned, the moment he escaped the hands of his persecutors he as zealously as ever proclaimed the doctrine of the Savior. . . Reflect for a moment, brethren, and enquire, whether you would consider yourselves worthy a seat at the marriage feast with Paul and others like him, if you had been unfaithful? Had you not fought the good fight, and kept the faith, could you expect to receive?” (HC, 2:19-20).

This marriage supper is described in latter-day revelation, where the Lord speaks of “a feast of fat things . . . for the poor; yea, a feast of fat things, of wine on the lees well refined, that the earth may know that the mouths of the prophets shall not fail; yea, a supper of the house of the Lord, well prepared, unto which all nations shall be invited. First, the rich and the learned, the wise and the noble; and after that cometh the day of my power; then shall the poor, the lame, and the blind, and the deaf, come in unto the marriage of the Lamb, and partake of the supper of the Lord, prepared for the great day to come” (D&C 58:8-11; 65:3).

“he saith unto me, These are the true sayings of God” The angel bears witness that these words, which he has instructed John to write, come from God himself.

10 And I fell at his feet to worship him. And he said unto me, See thou do it not: I am thy fellowservant, and of thy brethren that have the testimony of Jesus: worship God: for the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.

verse 10 “And I fell at his feet to worship him. And he said unto me, See [that] thou do it not” John has seen many angels in his vision and interacted with several of them, and he has not been inclined to worship any of them. Perhaps with praises going forth from “much people in heaven” (Revelation 19:1), those who surround the throne (Revelation 19:4), and a “great multitude” of the servants of God (Revelation 19:5-6), and with the angel’s promise of the sublime blessing of the marriage of the Bridegroom and the Bride, John is overcome and bows before the angel. Or perhaps, with the glory of the angel and the majesty and power of his words, John mistakes the messenger of the Lord for the Lord himself. In Revelation 1:10-18 John sees the Lord himself and appropriately bows before him, and the

Lord blesses him in his worship (Revelation 1:17). There the Lord says, “I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last” (Revelation 1:11). In Revelation 22:12- 13, a heavenly being says, “Behold, I come quickly . . . I am Alpha and Omega, . . . the first and the last.” The person speaking is an angel, speaking for the Lord. Immediately before these words (Revelation 22:8-9), John has sought again to fall before the angel in worship, and again John has been warned to worship only God. With an angel having authority to stand in the place of Christ, appearing in great glory and speaking the very words of Christ, it is understandable how John could mistake the identity of his visitor.

Worship of angels is never appropriate (as John, of course, knew) because they are our fellow servants but from another sphere (Hebrews 1:5-14). Instead, as the angel says here, we must “worship God” (see also Exodus 20:2-3).

“I am thy fellowservant, and of thy brethren that have the testimony of Jesus”

President Joseph F. Smith said, “We are told by the prophet Joseph Smith, that ‘there are no angels who minister to this earth but those who do belong or have belonged to it.’ Hence, when messengers are sent to minister to the inhabitants of this earth, they are not strangers, but from the ranks of our kindred, friends, and fellow-beings and fellow-servants (*Gospel Doctrine*, 435).

“worship God” God is the only being (or thing) we may appropriately worship; only worship of God brings eternal blessings. When Satan sought to entice Jesus to worship him, Jesus responded, “Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve” (Matthew 4:10).

Who is the God we worship? And how do we worship him appropriately? D&C 93 gives us some deep truths on the matter. There the Lord says that he has given us a revelation “that you may understand and know how to worship, and know what you worship” (verse 19).

We worship a being who is “the true light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world,” who is one with the Father, and who has received of the fulness of the Father (verses 2-3). He is “the light and the Redeemer of the world;” “in him was the life of men and the light of men;” and he is the creator of “all things” (verse 10). He is “full of grace and truth” (verse 11); “he received a fulness of the glory of the Father” (verse 16); “he received all power, both in heaven and on earth, and the glory of the Father was with him, for he dwelt in him” (verse 17); and “he received a fulness of truth, yea, even of all truth” (verse 26). The Father, whom we worship, is the source of the glory and power held by the Son.

How we worship is learned from the pattern shown in that same section. True worship is to follow the Son, to receive all that the Father will grant us, to obey the Lord in all things. True worship, then, is not a practice or attitude found only on the Sabbath, or in the temple, or in prayer, but in our very attitude of life.

D&C 93 gives us the following clues to this divine pattern: Christ “received of [his] Father” (verse 5), and so must we, partaking of his blessings and receiving his presence through his Spirit, and likewise receiving of (and doing) his will. Christ “received not of the fulness at the first, but received grace for grace” (verse 12), and so must we, worshipping God

by receiving all that he gives us, and by giving forth gifts and blessings to others. Christ received of the Holy Ghost (verse 15), and so must we. Christ was fully obedient to the Father in all things; and we must be obedient to him through the Son, keeping his commandments – which is a key to receiving “grace for grace” (verse 20). As Christ is the Firstborn of the Father, so must we be begotten through Christ, that we may be “partakers of the glory” of God (verses 21-22). It appears that all of this is part of true worship of God (See McConkie, *Doctrines of the Restoration*, ed. McConkie, 369-86).

“for the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy” Those who have received the spiritual witness (or testimony) that Jesus is the Christ have received a vital spiritual communication from on high. The spirit of prophecy is but another manifestation of that same Spirit. Thus, those who have a deep and true testimony of Christ have already experienced the spirit of prophecy. As President John Taylor taught, “The testimony of Jesus was the very principle, essence, and power of the spirit of prophecy whereby the ancient prophets were inspired” (*Taylor, Gospel Kingdom*, 120).

Some of our latter-day leaders have taught that the Holy Ghost and the spirit of prophecy are virtually equivalent. President Wilford Woodruff wrote that “it is the privilege of every man and woman in this kingdom to enjoy the spirit of prophecy, which is the Spirit of God.” (Durham, *Discourses of Wilford Woodruff*, 61.) Elder Delbert L. Stapley stated that “the Holy Ghost is the spirit of prophecy” (*Stapley, Conference Report*, October 1966, 112). Another way to put it is that those who live righteously have claim to the Holy Spirit of God, which gives them, as one of its gifts, the spirit of prophecy.

The formula for receiving the spirit of prophecy is given in Alma 17:2-3. The key requirements appear to be diligent scriptural search, much fasting, and much prayer: “Now these sons of Mosiah . . . had waxed strong in the knowledge of the truth; for they were men of a sound understanding and they had searched the scriptures diligently, that they might know the word of God. But this is not all; they had given themselves to much prayer, and fasting; therefore they had the spirit of prophecy, and the spirit of revelation.”

The phrase in the Greek text adds another dimension to our understanding. In essence, it says that the testimony about Jesus forms the common element in all prophecy. Taken together, all prophecy comes down to a witness of Christ, his work, his atonement, and his triumph.

“And I fell at his feet to worship him. And he said unto me, See that thou do it not: I am thy fellowservant, and of thy brethren that have the testimony of Jesus: worship God: for the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.”

verses 11-18 In these verses the bridegroom (Jesus Christ) returns to the earth for the bride (the Church and kingdom of God on the earth). The great marriage supper of the lamb shall then be celebrated.

This section of John’s revelation prophesies the actual second coming of the Lord in great power and judgment, accompanied by the armies of heaven. His appearance will be that

of a mighty warrior-king, with “eyes . . . as a flame of fire,” and “many crowns” on his head, and wearing a blood-red vesture (Revelation 19:12, 13). He is identified as “Faithful and True,” “The Word of God,” “King of kings,” and “Lord of lords.” He will “make war” and lead “armies” and will ride a “white horse,” as will his armies.

Paul spoke a similar prophecy to that found here: “The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power” (2 Thessalonians 1:7-9).

Some of the earlier sections of Revelation paralleled the plagues the Lord sent on Egypt in the time of Moses (see, for example, the plagues in chapters 8 and 16). In some ways the coming of the Lord, at which time the wicked are destroyed, parallels the tenth plague in Egypt, in which the first-born of Pharaoh’s people (and all others who refused the passover covenant with the Lord) were destroyed (Exodus 12:23-29). In fact, the destruction was so great that “there was a great cry in Egypt; for there was not a house where there was not one dead” (Exodus 12:30).

The description of that tenth plague recorded in the apocryphal Book of Wisdom has some interesting parallels with this section of Revelation: “While gentle silence enveloped all things, and night in its swift course was now half gone, thy all-powerful word leaped down from heaven, from the royal throne, into the midst of the land that was doomed, a stern warrior carrying the sharp sword of thy authentic command, and stood and filled all things with death, and touched heaven while standing on the earth” (Book of Wisdom 18:14-16).

11 And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war.

verse 11 “And I saw heaven opened” This expression seems to be another way of saying, “I had a vision from heaven,” or “I had a vision of things in heaven.” For example, when Peter had his vision that taught him that the gospel should be taken to the Gentiles, he “saw heaven opened, and a certain vessel descending unto him, as it had been a great sheet knit at the four corners, and let down to the earth” (Acts 10:11). We read in latter-day revelation that “the power and authority of the higher, or Melchizedek Priesthood, is to hold the keys of all the spiritual blessings of the church – to have the privilege of receiving the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, to have the heavens opened unto them” (D&C 107:18-19).

“a white horse” To ride a horse into battle is to go forth in strength and power. The color white is often a symbol of victory (Harrington, *Revelation*, 190; Dummelow, *One- Volume Bible Dictionary*, 1076). See commentary on Revelation 6:2.

“and he that sat upon him [is] called Faithful and True” These two titles of Christ give two of his primary characteristics. Christ is called faithful in Revelation 1:5 and true in Revelation 3:7. Here the characteristics are combined. He is faithful in that he holds

steadfastly to the right and keeps all his promises. He is true in that he acts always in accordance with true and righteous principles.

"in righteousness he doth judge" The Father has given the right and responsibility of judging the world (and all the individuals in the world) to his Son (John 5:22). As God, our Savior is not capable of rendering unrighteous or unfair judgment (Psalm 19:9; Isaiah 11:4; 2 Nephi 9:46). This judgment will vindicate the righteous and punish the wicked.

"and make war" The Lord is a God of mercy, blessing his children with his loving kindness, but he is also a God of justice, rendering judgment to all the people on the earth. He is "the Prince of Peace" (Isaiah 9:6), but he is also "a man of war" (Exodus 15:3), "mighty in battle" (Psalm 24:8). His title "Lord of hosts" suggests that he is the commander of the angelic hosts of heaven as they go forth to war against the wicked (1 Chronicles 17:24; Psalm 24:10; Isaiah 6:5; Zechariah 14:16-17). The Hebrew word *sabaoth*, which here is translated hosts, may also be translated armies, according to all lexicons.

"And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war."

12 His eyes were as a flame of fire, and on his head were many crowns; and he had a name written, that no man knew, but he himself.

verse 12 "His eyes . . . as a flame of fire" See commentary on Revelation 1:14.

"[he had] on his head . . . many crowns" The many crowns on the head of Christ represent the truth proclaimed in Revelation 11:15: "The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever." Contrast the many crowns of Christ with the seven worn by Satan, the dragon (Revelation 12:3) and the ten worn by the beast (Revelation 13:1). The crowns worn by the Lord are not specified in number; he has more than all other kings combined. He is the King of kings and Lord of lords (Revelation 19:16), "far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come" (Ephesians 1:21; Colossians 1:16; 2:10).

"a name written, that no man knew, but . . . himself" In the book of Revelation, a name on the forehead seems to identify the person who bears it. In Revelation 17:5 the whore had a name on her forehead that identified her as "Babylon the Great, the Mother of . . . Abominations. . ." In Revelation 14:1 the 144,000 had the Father's name written in their foreheads, suggesting that they belong to him. Here the Lord has a name written on his forehead, but it is not to identify him to others, because only he himself knows it.

"As with all glorified beings, our Lord has a new name in celestial exaltation, a name known to and comprehended by those only who know God in the sense that they have become as he is and have eternal life. See Revelation 2:12-17. Thus, Christ's 'new name' shall be written upon all those who are joint-heirs with him (Revelation 3:12), and shall signify that they have become even as he is and he is even as the Father (3 Nephi 28:10)" (McConkie, *Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, 3:567).

"His eyes as a flame of fire, and he had on his head many crowns; and a name written, that no man knew, but himself."

13 And he was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood: and his name is called The Word of God.

verse 13 "And he [is] clothed with a vesture dipped in blood" When Christ returns, his garments will be red, as we read in both ancient and modern revelation:

And it shall be said: Who is this that cometh down from God in heaven with dyed garments; yea, from the regions which are not known, clothed in his glorious apparel, traveling in the greatness of his strength? And he shall say: I am he who spake in righteousness, mighty to save. And the Lord shall be red in his apparel, and his garments like him that treadeth in the wine-vat. And so great shall be the glory of his presence that the sun shall hide his face in shame, and the moon shall withhold its light, and the stars shall be hurled from their places.

And his voice shall be heard: I have trodden the wine-press alone, and have brought judgment upon all people; and none were with me; and I have trampled them in my fury, and I did tread upon them in mine anger, and their blood have I sprinkled upon my garments, and stained all my raiment; for this was the day of vengeance which was in my heart (D&C 133:46-51; Isaiah 63:1-3).

The blood on Christ's clothing symbolizes at least three things: the blood Christ shed in performing the Atonement (Luke 22:44; D&C 19:18) the blood, or sins, of the wicked that he took upon himself (blood and sins are equated in Jacob 1:19; see also 1 Peter 3:18; Alma 33:22; 3 Nephi 11:11), and the blood of the unrepentant wicked he will slay in his wrath (Isaiah 63:3; Lamentations 1:15; D&C 133:48, 50-51).

"his name is called The Word of God" In three verses we have learned of three names of Christ: Faithful and True, a name that no one knows, and The Word of God. John had earlier used this present name: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God." (John 1:1-2). (JST Revelation 19:13 used Word here to refer to the gospel. But in JST John 1:14 and 16, Christ himself is called the Word.)

God executes his commands through his word, as do his servants (1 Nephi 17:29-31, 46; Alma 5:5; 7:8; 3 Nephi 28:20; Mormon 8:24; 9:17; Moses 7:13). This occurs in at least two ways – when God speaks, his servants obey and carry out his will, and when God speaks, even nature obeys, bringing to pass his will through what we call miracles. Perhaps Christ is called the Word himself because he is the one who most thoroughly carries out the will of God, being the very embodiment of that will (JST Revelation 19:15).

"And he is clothed with a vesture dipped in blood: and his name is called The Word of God."

14 And the armies which were in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean.

verse 14 “the armies which were in heaven followed him” One of the Lord’s titles is Lord of hosts – the word hosts is used to translate the Hebrew *tsebaah*, which generally means armies. The expression Lord of hosts or Lord God of hosts is used 341 times in the scriptures. The expression Lord of Sabaoth, which means the same thing, occurs six times. Sabaoth is a transliteration of the Hebrew *tsebaah* but in plural form. It occurs twice in the New Testament and four times in the Doctrine and Covenants. Christ is the Lord of the armies of heaven. Those armies include the “mighty angels” that Paul explained would return with Christ (2 Thessalonians 1:7) and may also include the “latter-day Church (D&C 5:14; 105:26, 30-31; 109:73) [and] the departed faithful (Daniel 4:35; Revelation 19:14; D&C 88:112)” (McConkie and Parry, *Guide to Scriptural Symbols*, 16). Those with the Lamb in war are those who are “called, and chosen, and faithful” (Revelation 17:14); the 144,000 “follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth” (Revelation 14:4). Perhaps these righteous ones of the earth join the armies of heaven after death or, perhaps, after their resurrection. Those who follow Christ here will follow him in the life to come.

“upon white horses” The armies of heaven, following Christ, have white horses like their master. See commentary on Revelation 19:11.

“clothed in fine linen, white and clean” The armies of heaven are arrayed in fine white linen as the Bride of Christ is; or perhaps they are so arrayed because they are the Bride. See commentary on Revelation 19:8.

15 And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron: and he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God.

verse 15 “out of his mouth [proceedeth the word of God, and] with it he [will] smite the nations” Paul taught that “the sword of the Spirit . . . is the word of God” (Ephesians 6:17). Elsewhere he wrote, “For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow” (Hebrews 4:12). The returning Christ will use the word of God as a powerful weapon; and with the power of those words he will smite the wicked and destroy the nations of the earth (Isaiah 11:4; 49:2). See also commentary on Revelation 2:16 and 19:13.

“he [will] rule them with [the word of his mouth]” The power of God is often found in his word; not only will he smite the nations with his word but he will also rule them with that word. See commentary on Revelation 12:3.

“he treadeth the winepress [in] the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God” See commentary on Revelation 14:19.

“And out of his mouth proceedeth the word of God, and with it he will smite the nations; and he will rule them with the word of his mouth; and he treadeth the winepress in the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God.”

16 And he hath on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS.

verse 16 “And he hath on [a] vesture, and on his thigh a name written” The vesture is probably that which is “dipped in blood” (Revelation 19:13). But the name is different from the name mentioned in Revelation 19:12, which “no man knew.” The name here is “King of kings, and Lord of lords.” It is uncertain why the name is written on his thigh, but the outer thigh would be prominently visible on a horseman. Some interpret this phrase to mean that the name was actually written on the garment that covered his thigh; others believe that the name was written on the sword at his side, resting on or next to his thigh (Mounce, *Book of Revelation*, 356; Harrington, *Revelation*, 191; note d to Revelation 19:16 in Jerusalem Bible). Of course, the purpose of this symbolic picture is to emphasize the supremacy of the Lord.

“KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS” This name is probably written in all capital letters to emphasize that it was presented like a sign on the thigh of the Lord. This is the fourth of the name-titles of Christ given in this chapter (Revelation 19:11-13). Because Christ is the Lord over all, he has power to smite the nations and rule them “with the word of his mouth” (JST Revelation 19:15). For a discussion of what this title means, see the commentary on Revelation 17:14.

“And he hath on a vesture and on his thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS.”

verses 17-21 In the previous section, we read that Christ will “smite the nations,” treading “the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God” (Revelation 19:15). His “vesture dipped in blood” (Revelation 19:13) is symbolic, in part, of the righteous slaughter of the wicked.

The destruction of the wicked is a theme of much of Revelation; the judgments against the wicked in the earlier chapters are part of the process of cleansing the earth and bringing justice on those who have followed the whore and the beast. But as events draw to their bloody conclusion, “the beast, and the kings of the earth, and their armies” will gather together “to make war against” Christ and his followers. In those battles, the beast will be conquered and thrown into the lake of fire, and the armies will be slain by the Lord. These events seem to be among those that occur at the Lord’s second coming.

The slain will be so many that the fowls of the air will be invited to come and feast on the corpses. This is called “the supper of the great God” (Revelation 19:17).

17 And I saw an angel standing in the sun; and he cried with a loud voice, saying to all the fowls that fly in the midst of heaven, Come and gather yourselves together unto the supper of the great God;

verse 17 “And I saw an angel standing in the sun” This passage describes “a position of splendor appropriate to a herald of victory. From this vantage point he will be able

to deliver effectively his message to the birds that circle in mid-heaven" (Mounce, *Book of Revelation*, 357).

"he cried with a loud voice, saying to all the fowls that fly in the midst of heaven"

The angel calls out to the carrion birds that are flying above the earth, awaiting the bloody battles between the beast and his armies and the heavenly hosts led by the Lamb.

"Come and gather yourselves together unto the supper of the great God" This supper stands in great contrast to the wedding supper that occurs at the union of the Bride and the Bridegroom (Revelation 19:9). Here, the bodies of the wicked are the fare at the supper. At the wedding feast, the righteous are blessed to partake of things "well refined" (D&C 58:8).

Those with refined senses find it difficult to conceive of the desolation, destruction, and death that will prevail during the final great battles ushering in Christ's reign of peace. So great shall be the slaughter and mass murder, the carnage and gore, the butchery and violent death of warring men, that their decaying bodies "shall stop the noses of the passengers," and it shall be a task of mammoth proportions merely to dispose of them. Then shall Ezekiel's prophecy be fulfilled that every feathered fowl and every beast of the field shall assemble to "eat the flesh of the mighty, and drink the blood of the princes of the earth" (Ezekiel 39).

That all this is an actual, literal supper, an horrible but real event yet to be, has been specifically confirmed in latter-day revelation (D&C 29:18-21) (McConkie, *Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, 3:569).

18 That ye may eat the flesh of kings, and the flesh of captains, and the flesh of mighty men, and the flesh of horses, and of them that sit on them, and the flesh of all men, both free and bond, both small and great.

verse 18 "That ye may eat the flesh of kings, and the flesh of captains, and the flesh of mighty men, and the flesh of horses" For a time the kings and captains and mighty men rule on the earth. But in the end, even they will fall before the power of the Lord, and they will become nothing more than flesh for the birds to feed on. Their war horses will suffer the same fate.

Ezekiel received a revelation similar to this part of John's: "Thus saith the Lord God; Speak unto every feathered fowl, and to every beast of the field, Assemble yourselves, and come; gather yourselves on every side to my sacrifice that I do sacrifice for you, even a great sacrifice upon the mountains of Israel, that ye may eat flesh, and drink blood. Ye shall eat the flesh of the mighty, and drink the blood of the princes of the earth, of rams, of lambs, and of goats, of bullocks, all of them fatlings of Bashan. And ye shall eat fat till ye be full, and drink blood till ye be drunken, of my sacrifice which I have sacrificed for you. Thus ye shall be filled at my table with horses and chariots, with mighty men, and with all men of war, saith the Lord God. And I will set my glory among the heathen, and all the heathen shall see my judgment

that I have executed, and my hand that I have laid upon them. So the house of Israel shall know that I am the Lord their God from that day and forward" (Ezekiel 39:17-22).

"the flesh of all [who fight against the Lamb, both bond and free], both small and great" This inclusive statement (all, bond and free, small and great) tells us that there will be no exceptions: everyone who fights against the Lamb will be destroyed.

"That ye may eat the flesh of kings, and the flesh of captains, and the flesh of mighty men, and the flesh of horses, and of them that sit on them, and the flesh of all who fight against the Lamb, both bond and free, both small and great."

19 And I saw the beast, and the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against him that sat on the horse, and against his army.

verse 19 "the beast, and the kings of the earth, and their armies . . . make war against him that sat on the horse" John again sees the beast he first saw in chapter 13. The continuing battle of wicked kingdoms and philosophies against the Lamb was first begun in the war in heaven (JST Revelation 12:6), continued when the beast rose to power on the earth (Revelation 13:7), and will reach its culmination at Armageddon (Revelation 16:13-14, 16). Of course, the battles between Satan and Jesus Christ do not always involve armies and bloodshed (in fact, such battles may be the exception rather than the rule); often Satan engages in a war of words, of ideas, seeking to win hearts and souls. In all cases the eventual outcome is assured: "These shall make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them" (Revelation 17:14). Old Testament prophecies of this conflict are recorded in Psalm 2:2; Zechariah 12; 14; and Joel 3.

"his army" See commentary on Revelation 19:14.

20 And the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet that wrought miracles before him, with which he deceived them that had received the mark of the beast, and them that worshipped his image. These both were cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone.

verse 20 "the beast was taken" John knew in advance (as can we, by a witness from the Spirit) that the terrible beast, which had such power, will be conquered by the omnipotence of Christ, the Lord over all (Revelation 17:14).

"with him the false prophet that wrought miracles" See commentary on Revelation 13:14.

"These both were cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone" "I beheld even till the beast was slain," Daniel said, "and his body destroyed, and given to the burning flame" (Daniel 7:11). The worst of all fates awaits the beast and the false prophet, which conspired together as an anti-Christ to thwart the work of the Lord through deception and bloodshed. They will not be slain; in the sense that the beast and false prophet are individual beings, this may be because a spirit cannot be killed; in the sense that the beast and false prophet are philosophies and ideologies, this may be because such can never be destroyed

but only removed from a given place and time. Rather, they will be thrown alive into the worst place imaginable – a burning lake of fire. See also commentary on Revelation 14:10.

Although the actual word Gehenna is not used in Revelation, this is what John refers to as the fiery lake of burning sulfur. Gehenna (an abbreviation for “valley of the son of Hinnom”) was the name given to the valley lying to the south and west of Jerusalem (the modern Wadi er Rababi). As the site of a cultic shrine where human sacrifices were offered (2 Kings 16:3; 23:10; Jeremiah 7:31), it acquired an unholy reputation. Because of prophetic denunciation of this place of terrible wickedness (Jeremiah 7:32; 19:6), it came to be equated with the hell of final judgment. . . In [New Testament] times Gehenna was a place of fire and the abode of the wicked dead (Matthew 5:22; Mark 9:43).

In our passage the fiery lake is said to burn with sulfur, a yellow substance that burns readily in air. . . A lake of burning sulfur would not only be intensely hot, but malodorous and fetid as well. It is an appropriate place for all that is sinful and wicked in the world. The Antichrist and the false prophet are its first inhabitants. Later the devil (Revelation 20:10), Death and Hades (Revelation 20:14), and all evil people (Revelation 21:8) will join them in this place of ceaseless torment (Mounce, *Book of Revelation*, 359).

Joseph Smith taught of this terrible punishment: “A man is his own tormentor and his own condemner. Hence the saying, They shall go into the lake that burns with fire and brimstone. The torment of disappointment in the mind of man is as exquisite as a lake burning with fire and brimstone. I say, so is the torment of man” (*HC*, 6:314).

21 And the remnant were slain with the sword of him that sat upon the horse, which sword proceeded out of his mouth: and all the fowls were filled with their flesh.

verse 21 “the remnant were slain with the [word] of him that sat upon the horse”

After the beast and the false prophet are cast into the fiery lake, the Lord slays their followers by the power of his word. Interestingly, although we know the Lord brings his armies with him to face the armies of evil, we have no details of the battle. In fact, from this verse, it appears that the Lord himself simply vanquishes the enemy through his power. But it could well be that the Lord also commands his followers to engage in the battle in the strength of his power.

Latter-day Saint scholar Richard Draper observes concerning the power of the word, “The only weapon the prophets need to defeat the enemy hosts and to establish peace upon the earth is the proclamation of the gospel.” (*Opening the Seven Seals*, 213.)

“all the fowls were filled with their flesh” The fowls were earlier invited to come forth and be filled with the flesh of the wicked. Here they respond and are filled indeed. See commentary on Revelation 19:17-18.

“And the remnant were slain with the word of him that sat upon the horse, which word proceeded out of his mouth: and all the fowls were filled with their flesh.”

Chapter nineteen depicts two feasts. One is the feast of the justified, the other the feast of the condemned. The Lord will set both tables. The feast for the birds is called “the supper of the great God” (verse 17). Thus, the Lord stands as host as he does at the wedding. For the obedient the banquet will consist of “fat things, of wine on the lees well refined, . . . a supper of the house of the Lord, well prepared, unto which all nations shall be invited” (D&C 58:8-9). Those who refuse to come to it may well be the fare of the second meal, for it will consist of “the flesh of kings, and the flesh of captains, and the flesh of mighty men, and the flesh of horses, and of them that sit on them, and the flesh of all men, both free and bond, both small and great’ (Revelation 19:18). What determines to which feast a person will go? It is clearly a matter of worship. Those whom God calls to the wedding supper worship him, those who come to the death feast worship the beast and its image. Blessedness awaits the first gathering, destruction the second.

Revelation Chapter 20 The Millennium

In chapters 20-22, the vision resumes, and the Millennium, final judgment, and celestialization of the earth are described. These are the final events in the drama.

Having seen the defeat and destruction of the beast, the false prophet, and the armies of the wicked, John now sees the defeat and imprisonment of their master, Satan. An angel comes from heaven, captures the devil, and throws him into a bottomless pit, where he must remain for a thousand years. The martyrs for Christ, who stood firm in the face of all the persecution and trouble brought by the beast and his followers, will be called forth in the first resurrection and given power to reign with Christ on earth. But those who joined the beast will have to wait the thousand years for the blessing of resurrection.

At the end of the Millennium, Satan will be loosed, and a great battle will occur between the forces of Christ and the forces of Gog and Magog led by Satan. The final judgment and resurrection then occur.

verses 1-6 Satan is bound, and a millennium of peace begins.

1 And I saw an angel come down from heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand.

verse 1 “an angel come down [out of] heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit” In Revelation 9:1 Satan is given the key to the bottomless pit. The JST of that verse corrects this error. It was the angel who was given the key. Here that angel returns to capture the devil. We do not know the identity of this angel, but obviously, it is a being of great power. Perhaps it is Michael, who has a special commission to fight and defeat Satan (D&C 88:112-15). (This was the view of George Q. Cannon, as recorded in his *Life of Joseph Smith the Prophet*, 198.) We do know that Michael is the seventh angel, who is given the privilege of proclaiming the victory of the Lamb (D&C 88:106-7, 112). Ultimately, of course, it is Christ who holds the key of hell and who gives the key to whomever he chooses to accomplish his work. See the commentary on Revelation 9:1.

“a great chain in his hand” Not only will the devil be cast into prison but he will be bound there by a chain, suggesting shackles and reemphasizing that there is no hope of his escape.

The key and the chain denote God’s supremacy over both Satan and his realm. Indeed, the angel incarcerates Satan in the pit. Thus, Satan is not the magistrate of hell, God is. The angel not only locks the dragon away with a key, but he also binds him with chains and seals the pit.

“And I saw an angel come down out of heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand.”

2 And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years,

verse 2 “he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan, and bound him” This verse gives us in one place the four names or titles John calls the adversary, making certain that we know the identity of our enemy throughout the revelation: the dragon, the serpent, the devil, and Satan. It is important to note that it is the angel who captures and binds the devil, not the inhabitants of earth, but he remains bound because the people refuse to hearken to him. As Nephi taught, “Because of the righteousness of his people, Satan has no power; wherefore, he cannot be loosed for the space of many years; for he hath no power over the hearts of the people, for they dwell in righteousness, and the Holy One of Israel reigneth” (1 Nephi 22:26).

“a thousand years” During the Millennium, which will last a thousand years, “Satan shall not have power to tempt any man” (D&C 101:28).

Elder Eldred G. Smith said:

Many other scriptures refer to the thousand years of wonderful, glorious conditions on the earth, because Lucifer, Satan, the devil, will be bound. The scriptures say he will be “bound with a chain” and “put into a bottomless pit.” To me, these are symbolical terms. I cannot quite conceive of steel chains or pits that could hold Satan. The only power I know of that will bind Satan, or render him powerless, is righteous living.

The war that started in heaven has not ended yet and shall not end until everyone has proved the extent of his ability to resist Satan. Even Jesus Christ had to bind Satan when he was tempted in the wilderness. Satan had no power over him, because Jesus resisted his temptations. Then the record says, “. . . he departed from him for a season” (Luke 4:13). When you have resisted a temptation until it no longer becomes a temptation, then to that extent, Satan has lost his power over you, and as long as you do not yield to him, to that degree he is bound (Smith, *Improvement Era*, June 1970, 104).

The purpose of Satan’s binding is not yet punitive but precautionary. The Savior and his people must have time to prepare the earth for celestial glory. Satanic delusions are not to get in the way for a season. John spells out precisely the reason for the dark lord’s incarceration: “that he should deceive the nations no more (verse 3). Satan has used deception as a major tool from the beginning, whispering to Cain and his brethren the Mahanic secret that one could obtain gain by murder and remain forever free. Yet Satan knew full well that “these things are not hid from the Lord” (Moses 5:39; see verses 29-41). And when Cain faced the wrath of a just God, Satan, with his delusion, discreetly stayed away.

3 And cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal upon him, that he should deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years should be fulfilled: and after that he must be loosed a little season.

verse 3 “cast him into the bottomless pit” The bottomless pit is another name for outer darkness. See commentary on Revelation 9:1. There appears to be no real contest between the adversary and the angel. The archangel seizes, binds, and throws the devil into the pit of the abyss with little if any struggle on Satan’s part. The idea of binding Satan goes back to Isaiah, who speaks of him being bound for a brief period in Isaiah 24:22 and forever in 24:23. Though no human eye may witness the event, John makes it clear that the act will be a historical reality (see D&C 43:31; 45:55; 84:100; 88:110-11).

“set a seal upon him” Other versions of the Bible agree that it was the pit that was sealed, rather than the devil himself (see LB, RSV, GNB, NIV, JB, NEB). To ensure that the devil could not escape, the pit that is his prison will be sealed shut by the power of God.

“that he should deceive the nations no more” We see in Revelation 12:9 that Satan’s mission on the earth is to deceive the people and the nations of the world. But when he is captured, bound with chains, and cast into the pit, he will no longer be able to deceive the people of the earth.

John’s use of the term *nations* is significant. Because of Satan’s power to deceive the kings of the earth through the glitter of Babylon, one may mistakenly believe that all nations were under the deceptive power of the beast and his false prophet and fought against the Lamb and his people. In verse three, John makes it clear that the “kings of the earth” (Revelation 12:9; 16:12, 14; 17:2; 18:3, 9) represent a select number of nations and peoples who are deceived by and assist Satan in his cause. Only these will be annihilated during the great battle (see Revelation 19:19). Many of those who do not join this cause will survive and come to Christ during the Millennium (see Revelation 21:24). Joseph Fielding Smith notes that there will be many within the nations who shall not know of the gospel law yet who shall live terrestrial-quality lives. These will be spared destruction and enjoy the millennial period with the saints of God. Through a tremendous missionary effort, all will eventually come to worship the Lord.

“till the thousand years should be fulfilled: and after that he must be loosed a little season” After the thousand-year period has expired, Satan will be loosed to turn again to his work of deception and destruction – but only for a “little season.” How long will the little season last?

President Joseph Fielding Smith reasoned that it might last a full one thousand years:

Our Savior came in the meridian of time. That dispensation is called the dispensation of the meridian of time. This means that it was about half way from the beginning of “time” to the end of “time.” Anyone who desires can figure it for himself that our Lord came about 4,000 years from the time of the fall. The millennium is to come some time following the 2,000 years after his coming. Then there is to be the millennium for 1,000 years, and following that a “little season,” the length of which is not revealed, but which may bring “time” to its end about 8,000 years from the beginning (Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation*, 1:81).

Latter-day revelation gives additional details about what will transpire during that “little season”:

Satan shall be bound, that old serpent, who is called the devil, and shall not be loosed for the space of a thousand years. And then he shall be loosed for a little season, that he may gather together his armies. And Michael, the seventh angel, even the archangel, shall gather together his armies, even the hosts of heaven. And the devil shall gather together his armies; even the hosts of hell, and shall come up to battle against Michael and his armies. And then cometh the battle of the great God; and the devil and his armies shall be cast away into their own place, that they shall not have power over the saints any more at all. For Michael shall fight their battles, and shall overcome him who seeketh the throne of him who sitteth upon the throne, even the Lamb” (D&C 88:110-15).

4 And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years.

verse 4 “thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them”

The kings of the earth, who once occupied the world's thrones, joined with the beast to fight against the kingdom of Christ. By the power of Christ, they will be defeated and slain (Revelation 19:21). Then those who stood firm in righteousness will be blessed to become kings themselves, granted thrones to reign with Christ throughout the Millennium.

There apparently is a hierarchy of judgment in the time of the Millennium. First is Christ himself, who rules over all and judges all (John 5:22; Acts 10:42; Mormon 3:20). Serving under him, the Twelve Apostles from the meridian dispensation will judge the house of Israel (Matthew 19:28). The house of Israel in this context apparently means those who are true Israel, those who are true to their covenants, as Joseph Smith learned by revelation:

Mine apostles, the Twelve which were with me in my ministry at Jerusalem, shall stand at my right hand at the day of my coming in a pillar of fire, being clothed with robes of righteousness, with crowns upon their heads, in glory even as I am, to judge the whole house of Israel, even as many as have loved me and kept my commandments, and none else (D&C 29:12).

John the Revelator, of course, is one of the Twelve who will so judge.

Judgment here should signify presiding power or rule. The Doctrine and Covenants supports this context: “Mine apostles, the Twelve which were with me in my ministry at Jerusalem, shall stand at my right hand at the day of my coming in a pillar of fire, being clothed with robes of righteousness, with crowns upon their heads, in glory even as I am, to judge the whole house of Israel, even as many as have loved me and kept my commandments, and none else” (29:12). The Twelve do not determine the eventual station of souls but rather

preside over the righteous. Further supporting this definition of judgment is the Lord's promise that "in mine own due time will I come upon the earth in judgment, and my people shall be redeemed and shall reign with me on earth. For the great Millennium, of which I have spoken by the mouth of my servants, shall come" (D&C 43:29-30).

In addition, the Nephite twelve are given the charge to judge the seed of Lehi (1 Nephi 12:9-10; 3 Nephi 27:27; Mormon 3:19). The principle would suggest that there are other divinely appointed leaders of other peoples who also will judge those they serve. Missionaries will be given the responsibility to stand in judgment on those who reject them (D&C 75:20-22). And finally, all saints shall "judge the world" (1 Corinthians 6:2).

Daniel had a similar vision of the judgment:

I beheld till the thrones were cast down, and the Ancient of days [Adam] did sit, whose garment was white as snow, and the hair of his head like the pure wool: his throne was like the fiery flame, and his wheels as burning fire. A fiery stream issued and came forth from before him: thousand thousands ministered unto him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him: the judgment was set, and the books were opened. . . I beheld, and the same horn made war with the saints, and prevailed against them; until the Ancient of days came, and judgment was given to the saints of the most High; and the time came that the saints possessed the kingdom. (Daniel 7:9-10, 21-22).

"the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God" The martyrs for Christ will reign with Christ: "And whoso layeth down his life in my cause, for my name's sake, shall find it again, even life eternal" (D&C 98:13). See commentary on Revelation 6:9.

"which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image" See commentary on Revelation 13:15.

"neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands" See commentary on Revelation 13:16.

"they lived" As we see in Revelation 13:15, the righteous are slain for refusing to worship the beast or to receive his mark. The beast gained a temporary victory. But here they rise in the resurrection to live forevermore and to reign victorious with their King.

"and reigned with Christ a thousand years" During the thousand years of the Millennium, Christ "will reign personally upon the earth" (Article of Faith 10). With him will reign the martyrs and other righteous people who resisted the great pressure to worship the beast and who were raised up in the first resurrection. "In mine own due time will I come upon the earth in judgment, and my people shall be redeemed and shall reign with me on earth. For the great Millennium, of which I have spoken by the mouth of my servants, shall come" (D&C 43:29-30).

5 But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection.

verse 5 “the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished” The righteous are resurrected at the coming of the Lord – they were dead but now live again, like their Master (Revelation 2:8). But the wicked must wait until after the Millennium. Their resurrection, with their judgment, is described in Revelation 20:12-13.

“This is the first resurrection” The first and second resurrections are described in some detail in the Doctrine and Covenants:

The curtain of heaven [shall] be unfolded, as a scroll is unfolded after it is rolled up, and the face of the Lord shall be unveiled;

And the saints that are upon the earth, who are alive, shall be quickened and be caught up to meet him.

And they who have slept in their graves shall come forth, for their graves shall be opened; and they also shall be caught up to meet him in the midst of the pillar of heaven—

They are Christ’s, the first fruits, they who shall descend with him first, and they who are on the earth and in their graves, who are first caught up to meet him; and all this by the voice of the sounding of the trump of the angel of God.

And after this another angel shall sound, which is the second trump; and then cometh the redemption of those who are Christ’s at his coming; who have received their part in that prison which is prepared for them, that they might receive the gospel, and be judged according to men in the flesh.

And again, another trump shall sound, which is the third trump; and then come the spirits of men who are to be judged, and are found under condemnation;

And these are the rest of the dead; and they live not again until the thousand years are ended, neither again, until the end of the earth.

And another trump shall sound, which is the fourth trump, saying: There are found among those who are to remain until that great and last day, even the end, who shall remain filthy still (D&C 88:95-102).

6 Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years.

verse 6 “Blessed and holy [are they who have] part in the first resurrection” This passage is another of the beatitudes found in Revelation. Those who are blessed to rise first are blessed indeed, for spirits look upon “the long absence of their spirits from their bodies as a bondage” (D&C 138:50). They are further blessed because they are victors over the second death; they are made “priests of God and of Christ,” and they are chosen to “reign with him a thousand years.” They are holy because they are righteous and because they are made holy by the glorified bodies they are given in the resurrection (D&C 88:28-29).

“on such the second death hath no power” The second death has no power over those of the first resurrection. See commentary on Revelation 2:11.

“priests of God and of Christ” See commentary on Revelation 1:6; 5:10.

“reign with him a thousand years” See commentary on Revelation 5:10; 20:4.

“Blessed and holy are they who have part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years.”

verses 7-10 Satan will be sealed up in the bottomless pit for a thousand years – but not forever. “When the thousand years are expired, Satan shall be loosed” to once again do his work of deception and destruction on the earth. He will gather followers from all nations to a battle in which the warriors are as many “as the sand of the sea.” Satan’s mortal hosts will surround the saints and their “beloved city,” but the Lord will act in great glory and power to devour his enemy. Then the devil will be cast away forever, to be punished for his great sins for all eternity.

The account in 4 Nephi 1 gives us a sobering preview of how the bright millennial era can be brought to a close. After the Savior’s visit to the descendants of Lehi in the Americas, the people entered into a condition that was millennial in some important respects: “There was no contention in the land, because of the love of God which did dwell in the hearts of the people. And there were no envyings, nor strifes, nor tumults, nor whoredoms, nor lyings, nor murders, nor any manner of lasciviousness; and surely there could not be a happier people among all the people who had been created by the hand of God. . . [T]hey were in one, the children of Christ, and heirs to the kingdom of God. And how blessed were they! For the Lord did bless them in all their doings” (verses 15-18).

The breakdown in this near-perfect society had tiny beginnings: “a small part of the people . . . revolted from the church and [had] taken upon them the name of Lamanites” (verses 20). Many years later, “in this two hundred and first year there began to be among them those who were lifted up in pride, such as the wearing of costly apparel, and all manner of fine pearls, and of the fine things of the world. And from that time forth they did have their goods and their substance no more common among them. And they began to be divided into classes; and they began to build up churches unto themselves to get gain, and began to deny the true church of Christ” (verses 24-26).

From that point, the society disintegrated rapidly. Within the next decade, “there were many churches in the land; yea, there were many churches which professed to know the Christ, and yet they did deny the more parts of his gospel, insomuch that they did receive all manner of wickedness, and did administer that which was sacred unto him to whom it had been forbidden because of unworthiness. And this church did multiply exceedingly because of iniquity, and because of the power of Satan who did get hold upon their hearts” (verses 27-28).

Thus, it was that in only a few years, Satan, who had essentially been bound, was loosed again in the land. “And thus they did dwindle in unbelief and wickedness, from year to

year. . . [And] there was a great division among the people. . . And the more wicked part of the people did was strong, and became exceedingly more numerous than were the people of God" (verses 34-35, 40). By the time three hundred years had passed away, "the robbers of Gadianton did spread over all the face of the land; and there were none that were righteous save it were the disciples of Jesus" (verse 46).

The decline and fall of this blessed society makes for troubling reading, and the lessons for our day are clear. Satan ever lies in wait to deceive and destroy, and if he fails with one generation, he will try with redoubled efforts to harm the next.

We cannot say whether the picture we see in 4 Nephi will be experienced toward the end of the Millennium, but it is certainly possible that the pattern will be repeated.

7 And when the thousand years are expired, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison,

verse 7 “when the thousand years are expired, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison” Because Satan will be bound by the power of God, as well as by the choices and desires of the people, it is reasonable to suppose that both these elements will be present in his loosing. Satan will likely be loosed because the people turn to him again and because the Lord, suffering their agency, will allow it. As we read in D&C 29, "When the thousand years are ended, and men again begin to deny their God, then will I spare the earth but for a little season" (verse 22).

8 And shall go out to deceive the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle: the number of whom is as the sand of the sea.

verse 8 “shall go out to deceive the nations” In Revelation 12:9 we read that "Satan . . . deceiveth the whole world." The tragedy is that though in the Millennium the whole world will turn to righteousness and peace and Satan will not have power to tempt and deceive (1 Nephi 22:26), at the end of the Millennium he will return to that power. And those who hearken to him will be not a few. He will deceive "nations" in every part of the globe, "the four quarters of the earth."

“Gog and Magog” These names are symbolic names of the hosts that will follow Satan in his war against the saints. We find these terms in the Old Testament in Ezekiel's description of the great wars that precede the second coming of Christ (Ezekiel 38-39). Here they or others who are represented by the same symbolic names fight the kingdom of Christ and his followers.

“to gather them together to battle” Latter-day revelation casts additional light on the last battle between Satan and God:

And then he shall be loosed for a little season, that he may gather together his armies. And Michael, the seventh angel, even the archangel, shall gather together his armies, even the hosts of heaven. And the devil shall gather together his armies; even the hosts of hell, and shall come up to battle against

Michael and his armies. And then cometh the battle of the great God; and the devil and his armies shall be cast away into their own place, that they shall not have power over the saints any more at all. For Michael shall fight their battles, and shall overcome him who seeketh the throne of him who sitteth upon the throne, even the Lamb. (D&C 88:111-15.)

“the number of whom is as the sand of the sea” Those mortals who follow Satan in the last battle shall be so many that they cannot be numbered. In addition, “the hosts of hell” will join in the battle (D&C 88:113).

It is instructive to compare this prophecy with the promise given to Abraham: “I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea shore; and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies” (Genesis 22:17). Though Satan and his hosts will be innumerable, so also will be Michael and his armies, who are all of Abraham by covenant. And the ancient promise will then surely be fulfilled: Abraham’s seed will prevail.

9 And they went up on the breadth of the earth, and compassed the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city: and fire came down from God out of heaven, and devoured them.

verse 9 “And they went up on the breadth of the earth” This expression suggests great hordes crossing the earth. The Good News Bible words this passage as “they spread out over the earth;” the Jerusalem Bible renders it as “they will come swarming over the entire country.”

“compassed the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city” “The two terms, ‘camp of the saints’ (Palestine) and ‘beloved city’ ([New] Jerusalem), stand together for the people of God. ‘Camp’ is the word used in Exodus for Israel’s wilderness home. . . The ‘beloved city’ stands in contrast to ‘the great city’ (Revelation 11:8); it is the new Jerusalem” (Harrington, *Revelation*, 198).

“fire came down from God out of heaven, and devoured them” This passage reminds us of an experience of Elijah, who when faced with enemies said, “If I be a man of God, let fire come down from heaven, and consume thee and thy fifty. And the fire of God came down from heaven, and consumed him and his fifty” (2 Kings 1:12). It also brings to mind an experience Jesus had with James and John in the New Testament, when the apostles wanted Jesus to call down fire from heaven to destroy a people who would not receive them (Luke 9:51-56).

Latter-day revelation specifically clarifies two important points. First, it tells us that Michael and his heavenly hosts will fight these battles at the end. First, the Doctrine and Covenants suggests that the “fire [that] came down from God out of heaven, and devoured” Satan’s host (Revelation 20:9) shall be the glory of Michael and his heavenly hosts marching in power to protect the cities of God. Second, the earthly saints do not appear to have to fight the battle. They are rescued from such horror by the great archangel and his celestial legions. The result is the total overthrow of all wickedness. The wilfully corrupt are devoured by the

fire, while “the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone” (verse 10). The divine inferno, which long before began its ceaseless torment of the beast and the false prophet, now accepts their master.

10 And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever.

verse 10 “And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are” We read in Revelation 19:20 that the beast and the false prophet are cast into the lake of fire and brimstone (see commentary there). Here the devil is cast into the lake of fire as well.

“shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever” Torment is the essence of dwelling in the lake of fire and brimstone; in fact, torment and punishment are probably the purpose of the lake. In contrast to this torment of the damned is the everlasting joy of those who are saved in the kingdom of God. As we read in the Doctrine and Covenants, “The graves of the saints shall be opened; and they shall come forth and stand on the right hand of the Lamb, . . . and they shall sing the song of the Lamb, day and night forever and ever” (D&C 133:56).

Nephi taught that in the resurrection “they who are righteous shall be righteous still, and they who are filthy shall be filthy still; wherefore, they who are filthy are the devil and his angels; and they shall go away into everlasting fire, prepared for them; and their torment is as a lake of fire and brimstone, whose flame ascendeth up forever and ever and has no end” (2 Nephi 9:16).

verses 11-15 In his vision of the Last Judgment, John sees God sitting on his throne as the great Judge of all. He sees the dead resurrected and brought to stand before God, to be judged “according to their works,” as those works were recorded in both earthly and heavenly books (see also D&C 128:6-8). He also sees another book, “the book of life.” Those whose names are not recorded in the book of life are “cast into the lake of fire.” In addition, death and hell themselves are “cast into the lake of fire.”

11 And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them.

verse 11 “a great white throne” This throne, which we first see in Revelation 4:2, symbolizes God’s kingship and power. It is called “great” to suggest that this is no ordinary throne but one fit for the king of all creation. White may symbolize victory or purity and righteousness – or a combination of these attributes of God. In addition, the word white (Greek *leukos*) may mean “bright” or “gleaming” (Mounce, *Book of Revelation*, 375). God dwells in “everlasting burnings,” (HC, 6:317) and his throne would therefore be white, bright,

and gleaming. For other references to the throne, see Revelation 4:2-3, 9; 5:1, 7, 13; 6:16; 7:10, 15; 19:4; 21:5.

“him that sat on it” The Being on the throne is God, the Eternal Father.

“from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away” “When the thousand years are ended, and men again begin to deny their God, then will I spare the earth but for a little season; And the end shall come, and the heaven and the earth shall be consumed and pass away, and there shall be a new heaven and a new earth. For all old things shall pass away, and all things shall become new, even the heaven and the earth, and all the fulness thereof” (D&C 29:22-24). These things will come by the power of God.

“there was found no place for them” The old heaven and earth must give way so that the new may come (Revelation 21:1). Just as Satan and his followers were cast out of the presence of God – “neither was their place found any more in heaven” (Revelation 12:8) – so will the old heaven and the old earth themselves have no place before God. The earth will be changed to a celestial order after the Millennium (see Revelation 21:1).

12 And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works.

verse 12 “the dead, small and great, stand before God” These individuals are “the rest of the dead” who were not resurrected earlier (Revelation 20:5). The righteous dead have already been raised upon unto glory (Revelation 20:4). All who remain – whether they were weak or strong, rich or poor, famous or insignificant in the eyes of the world – will be raised from the dead to stand before God the Judge to determine what their eternal reward or punishment will be.

“the books were opened” Joseph Smith explained: “You will discover in this quotation [Revelation 20:12] that the books were opened; and another book was opened, which was the book of life; but the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works; consequently, the books spoken of must be the books which contained the record of their works, and refer to the records which are kept on the earth [which probably includes Church records of ordinances and Church histories]. And the book which was the book of life is the record which is kept in heaven; the principle agreeing precisely with the doctrine which is commanded you in the revelation contained in the letter which I wrote to you previous to my leaving my place [D&C 127] – that in all your recordings it may be recorded in heaven” (D&C 128:7; see also Daniel 7:10).

“another book was opened, which is the book of life” Those whose names are recorded in the book of life are saved from being cast into the lake of fire, which is the second death. As Jesus said to the apostles, “Rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you; but rather rejoice, because your names are written in heaven” (Luke 10:20). See commentary on Revelation 3:5.

The basis of the judgment will consist of records kept in earth and heaven. John sees two sets of records. The first he refers to as “books;” and the second, as “the book of life” (verse 12). Speaking of these two sets of records, Joseph Smith wrote: “The dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works; consequently, the books spoken of must be the books which contained the record of their works, and refer to the records which are kept on the earth. And the book which was the book of life is the record which is kept in heaven” (D&C 128:7). He went on to explain that John actually had reference to priesthood sealing ordinances:

Whatsoever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatsoever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. Or, in other words, taking a different view of the translation, whatsoever you record on earth shall be recorded in heaven, and whatsoever you do not record on earth shall not be recorded in heaven; for out of the books shall your dead be judged, according to their own works, whether they themselves have attended to the ordinances in their own propria persona, or by the means of their own agents, according to the ordinance which God has prepared for their salvation from before the foundation of the world, according to the records which they have kept concerning their dead (D&C 128:8).

All will be “judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works” (Revelation 20:12). In the final analysis, the Lord judges on the basis of works. Those who have accepted the gospel and been sealed by the power of the priesthood will come under his domain and receive everlasting life. But those who have not accepted him, who have not partaken of his grace and power, who have not participated in the sealing ordinances “remain separately and singly, without exaltation, in their saved condition, to all eternity; and from henceforth are not gods, but are angels of God forever and ever” (D&C 132:17).

“the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works” The things we do here on earth are entered into the record books of both heaven and earth, and our works form the basis of our judgment. Jacob wrote: “When all men shall have passed from this first death unto life, insomuch as they have become immortal, they must appear before the judgment-seat of the Holy One of Israel; and then cometh the judgment, and then must they be judged according to the holy judgment of God” (2 Nephi 9:15). And Paul later testified, “Every one of us shall give account of himself to God” (Romans 14:12).

As mentioned earlier, the dead here are those who were not worthy to come forth in the first resurrection but were reserved until after the Millennium was completed. The righteous will also likely stand before the judgment bar at this time but only to have their earlier judgment – and blessing of glory – confirmed (McConkie, *Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, 3:576-77). For examples of individuals and groups that received an earlier judgment, see Revelation 20:4; Mosiah 15:21-25; D&C 101:30-31; 132:37.

Joseph Smith gave a valuable and comforting lesson on the judgment:

The Great Parent of the universe looks upon the whole of the human family with a fatherly care and paternal regard; He views them as His offspring, and without any of those contracted feelings that influence the children of men. . . [He] will judge all men, not according to the narrow, contracted notions of men, but, “according to the deeds done in the body whether they be good or evil,” or whether these deeds were done in England, America, Spain, Turkey, or India. He will judge them, “not according to what they have not, but according to what they have,” those who have lived without law, will be judged without law, and those who have a law, will be judged by that law. . . He will award judgment or mercy to all nations according to their several deserts, their means of obtaining intelligence, the laws by which they are governed, the facilities afforded them of obtaining correct information, and His inscrutable designs in relation to the human family; and when the designs of God shall be made manifest, and the curtain of futurity be withdrawn, we shall all of us eventually have to confess that the Judge of all the earth has done right (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, 218).

President Joseph Fielding Smith added this insight: “Every man will be judged according to his works, his opportunities for receiving the truth, and the intent of his heart” (Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation*, 2:21).

13 And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works.

verse 13 “the sea gave up the dead which were in it” The sea may represent those whose bodies are most lost of all, even more than those who were buried in the earth. The bodies were carried away, and no one knows their final resting place. Even these will be resurrected. In addition, “It was widely believed that those lost at sea had no access to Sheol (Hades); in specifically naming the sea John emphasizes that he is describing the general resurrection” (Harrington, *Revelation*, 203).

“death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them” According to Jacob, brother of Nephi, death is the state in which body and spirit are separated, and hell is the state of spiritual death. All those in both states will be brought forth in the great, universal resurrection. Jacob said:

O how great the goodness of our God, who prepareth a way for our escape from the grasp of this awful monster; yea, that monster, death and hell, which I call the death of the body, and also the death of the spirit. And because of the way of deliverance of our God, the Holy One of Israel, this death, of which I have spoken, which is the temporal, shall deliver up its dead; which death is the grave. And this death of which I have spoken, which is the spiritual death, shall deliver up its dead; which spiritual death is hell; wherefore, death and hell must deliver up their dead, and hell must deliver up its captive spirits, and the grave

must deliver up its captive bodies, and the bodies and the spirits of men will be restored one to the other; and it is by the power of the resurrection of the Holy One of Israel (2 Nephi 9:10-12).

"they were judged every man according to their works" See commentary on Revelation 20:12.

14 And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death.

verse 14 "death and hell were cast into the lake of fire" This expression seems to be a symbolic way of saying that the great consequences of sin – physical and spiritual death – will suffer the same fate as the master instigator of sin, Satan. “Jesus Christ . . . hath abolished death,” Paul wrote (2 Timothy 1:10), and he likewise abolishes hell for all who attain to a state of glory. The lake of fire itself is a hell for those who are cast into it (Satan, his angels, and the sons of perdition), and that hell will continue through the eternities (D&C 29:38; 76:44; 2 Peter 2:4). For a discussion of the lake of fire, see commentary on Revelation 19:20.

But for those who are “heirs of salvation” (D&C 76:88), meaning all who attain to a kingdom of glory, death and hell will forever cease to exist.

“This is the second death” The torture of the second death is typified by the lake of fire. See commentary on Revelation 2:11.

15 And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.

verse 15 “whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire” In close proximity we have seen the following cast into the lake of fire: the beast and the false prophet (Revelation 19:20), the devil (Revelation 20:10), death and hell (Revelation 20:14), and all those who are not found in the book of life (Revelation 20:15). For discussion of the book of life, see commentary on Revelation 3:5; for discussion of the lake of fire, see commentary on Revelation 19:20.

This portion of John’s vision, though abbreviated, teaches some important principles. Among them, it teaches that the power of the first resurrection reaches only those of the past and present ages who are Christ’s at the time of his coming. That moment is critical. Those who must seek a little time while they get their lives in order will find that the words “I come quickly” indeed mean “I come suddenly, even before you are ready.” These, like the five foolish virgins, may find, when they finally are ready, that the door to celestial glory has been shut. Their cry “Lord, Lord, open unto us,” will hear the response, Go away for, “verily I say unto you, Ye know me not” (Matthew 25:9-11).

John’s vision drives home another point: the binding of Satan does more than merely give hope for the future. It speaks to the present. It says that there is no ultimate dualism. The power of evil, though deadly real now, has no place in the future. It exists and operates at any time only by permission of God. When he determines that it will end, it will end. There will be no argument, no retort, only the irresistible and overpowering explosion of divine fire in

which all corruption will be eternally consumed and evil forever incarcerated. Not a whisper of rebuttal will overreach or penetrate through the massive and frozen walls of Gehenna.

Revelation Chapters 21-22

The beautiful paradise reserved for the righteous is described. Thus, the great drama ends. The forces of good prevail!

Revelation chapter 21 Earth Attains Celestial Glory

This chapter and verses 1-5 of chapter 22 describes the earth's becoming celestial with its capital, the New Jerusalem.

verses 1-8 With death and hell abolished, along with Satan and his followers, the earth is ready to be transformed. All the people of the world are also ready to dwell on a new creation, having "put off the old man" and having "put on the new man . . . after the image of him that created him," which is Jesus Christ (see Colossians 3:4-10), and having come forth from the grave in celestial glory. With evil gone and the inhabitants of the earth glorified, the earth itself is changed to a habitation of great glory.

The new earth is much more than simply a globe made new. It is also a new society, a new way of living. It is a place where God may dwell. It is a state of being in which there is no death, sorrow, or pain. It is a habitation for the heirs of God.

1 And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea.

verse 1 "a new heaven and a new earth" The new earth, following the millennial thousand years, is described in the Doctrine and Covenants:

Therefore, [the earth] must needs be sanctified from all unrighteousness, that it may be prepared for the celestial glory; for after it hath filled the measure of its creation, it shall be crowned with glory, even with the presence of God the Father; that bodies who are of the celestial kingdom may possess it forever and ever; for, for this intent was it made and created, and for this intent are they sanctified. . . And again, verily I say unto you, the earth abideth the law of a celestial kingdom, for it filleth the measure of its creation, and transgresseth not the law – wherefore, it shall be sanctified; yea, notwithstanding it shall die, it shall be quickened again, and shall abide the power by which it is quickened, and the righteous shall inherit it (D&C 88:18-20, 25-26).

And again, verily, verily, I say unto you that when the thousand years are ended . . . the end shall come, and the heaven and the earth shall be consumed and pass away, and there shall be a new heaven and a new earth. For all old things shall pass away, and all things shall become new, even the heaven and the earth, and all the fulness thereof, both men and beasts, the fowls of the air, and the fishes of the sea; and not one hair, neither mote, shall be lost, for it is the workmanship of mine hand (D&C 29:22-25).

That the universe or even the galaxy will pass away when the earth is renewed is unlikely. More likely a new heaven will manifest itself as the earth takes up its new position as a celestial sun.

“the first heaven and the first earth were passed away” Heaven and earth as we know them will cease to exist, having “passed away,” as we pass away in death. In their place, will be a renewed, resurrected earth (See *Discourses of Brigham Young*, 375; Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation*, 1:74; 2:281, 322; Talmage, *Jesus the Christ*, 322), and the heavens surrounding the earth will likewise be renewed.

“there was no more sea” Perhaps one reason there will be no sea is that the entirety of the earth will have one surface, “like a sea of glass and fire” (D&C 130:7).

This expression may also have a symbolic meaning, as Latter-day Saint scholar Richard Draper explains: “The abode of chaos, the home of the satanic beast, the old seat over which the whore held sway, has vanished. Under the force of the Lamb’s radiance, the source of Babylon’s seaborne luxuries and what helped feed and sustain her corruption has boiled into oblivion. But the sea and the abyss are one and the same. Therefore, the destruction of the sea represents the annihilation of the primeval deep, the home of malevolence and evil. Up to this point, it has dominated the world. As the stronghold of Satan’s supporters, its existence mocked the hope of a complete victory and a complete sovereignty of the Lord. It has no place in the transformed world where all things spontaneously obey their Lord and their God” (Draper, *Opening the Seven Seals*, 228).

2 And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.

verse 2 “the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven” In the last days, a “remnant of the house of Joseph shall be built upon this land . . . and they shall build up a holy city unto the Lord, like unto the Jerusalem of old. . . And there shall be a new heaven and a new earth; and they shall be like unto the old save the old have passed away, and all things have become new. And then cometh the New Jerusalem; and blessed are they who dwell therein, for it is they whose garments are white through the blood of the Lamb” (Ether 13:8-10).

This New Jerusalem “should come down out of heaven, and the holy sanctuary of the Lord,” Moroni wrote (Ether 13:3). Thus, the New Jerusalem built up on the earth by the saints of God will be joined by the New Jerusalem from heaven, which includes the original Zion, Enoch’s city, “the City of Holiness . . . [which] was taken up into heaven” (Moses 7:19, 21).

As the Lord promised Enoch:

Righteousness and truth will I cause to sweep the earth as with a flood, to gather out mine elect from the four quarters of the earth, unto a place which I shall prepare, an Holy City, that my people may gird up their loins, and be looking forth for the time of my coming; for there shall be my tabernacle, and it shall be called Zion, a New Jerusalem. And the Lord said unto Enoch: Then shalt thou

and all thy city meet them there, and we will receive them into our bosom, and they shall see us; and we will fall upon their necks, and they shall fall upon our necks, and we will kiss each other; and there shall be mine abode, and it shall be Zion, which shall come forth out of all the creations which I have made; and for the space of a thousand years the earth shall rest (Moses 7:62-64).

In Revelation 21:1, it appears that John is seeing the heavenly New Jerusalem descend after the final battle when Satan is cast away forever, while in Moses 7, it seems that the city will descend before the Millennium. Perhaps the Lord may send the holy city down at the beginning of the Millennium, remove it during the final time of wickedness on the earth (because the earth may not be worthy to have the city present in that period), and, finally, restore it to its rightful place after Satan is conquered and cast out for good.

“prepared as a bride adorned for her husband” See commentary on Revelation 19:7.

3 And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God.

verse 3 “great voice out of heaven” The revelation does not explain whose voice this is, whether it is God’s or that of an angel. Its function is to explain the meaning of what John is now seeing.

“the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them” In the time of Moses, God dwelt among men in the great tent they provided for him – his tabernacle (Leviticus 26:11-12). In the celestialized earth, God will personally come down to earth and stay with his people. “After [the earth] hath filled the measure of its creation, it shall be crowned with glory, even with the presence of God the Father” (D&C 88:19).

One point needs to be emphasized. At the center of John’s new vision lies a city – a real city. John clearly makes this the heart of the vision. Heaven exists as a society. Joseph Smith explained that the “same sociality which exists among us here will exist among us there, only it will be coupled with eternal glory, which glory we do not now enjoy” (D&C 130:2). The celestial kingdom is a community or system of communities presided over by a central city. Celestial beings, the church of the Firstborn, occupy these areas as families, for families make up communities. Thus, the ideal and perfect community is the eternal family of God.

John records that “the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them” (verse 3). His statement echoes Ezekiel 48:35, which notes that the name of the eternal city is “The Lord is there” (KJV). The word John uses for “tabernacle” (Greek *skn*) translates the Hebrew *mishkan*. Mishkan means “tent.” However, in a number of places in the Old Testament, it is used to denote God’s personal presence and attention to Israel (see Leviticus 26:11; Ezekiel 37:27). John’s statement thus emphasizes the very personal association that will be set up on the new earth between God and his children.

The reason why such an association can be maintained is clearly stated: "They shall be his [God's] people" (verse 3). This fulfills the promise that God made with Israel at Sinai, which had been continuously renewed through his prophets (see Leviticus 26:12; Jeremiah 7:23; 11:4; cf. Hosea 1:9. Note how the promise is renewed in Jeremiah 30:22; Ezekiel 36:28; 37:23, 27; Zechariah 8:8). The covenant found fulfillment in the Lord (see Romans 9:25; 1 Peter 2:10), and it continues today as part of the new and everlasting covenant. Out of heaven, John hears a great voice proclaiming the privileges of those who have sacrificed the things of the old world in hope of obtaining those of the new. While on earth, they felt themselves as little more than strangers and pilgrims seeking "a better country, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city" (Hebrews 11:16). The blessing is spoken by none other than God himself.

"they shall be his people, and God himself shall . . . be their God" The Lord is able to dwell with the people of the celestialized earth because they are his people. They have become one with him and are worthy of his presence. This passage fulfills a promise made repeatedly through the Lord's prophets: "I will set my tabernacle among you: and my soul shall not abhor you. And I will walk among you, and will be your God, and ye shall be my people" (Leviticus 26:11-12; Jeremiah 7:23; 11:4; 30:22; Ezekiel 36:28; 37:23, 27; Zechariah 8:8; 2 Corinthians 6:16).

4 And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away.

verse 4 "And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes" See commentary on Revelation 7:17.

"there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain" This promised reward is the reverse of the fate of Babylon. There, all sounds of joy have ceased forever (Revelation 18:22). In the celestial Zion, the heavenly New Jerusalem, all sorrow has ceased forever. Death, sickness, and physical pain are no more. And the sources of sorrow and emotional pain – including crime, poverty, contention in the home, jealousy, marital unfaithfulness, and a host of others – likewise have totally ceased (see also Isaiah 65:17-20).

"for the former things are passed away" The former things are those belonging to the old heaven and earth. The old heaven and earth, with the death, sorrow, pain, and suffering that were integral parts of them, are gone forever.

5 And he that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new. And he said unto me, Write: for these words are true and faithful.

verse 5 "he that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new" The One who sits on the throne in heaven is God the Father. He has power to renew or rejuvenate or regenerate. That process of renewal begins in the hearts of those who will turn to God and

yield themselves to him (Helaman 3:35). It continues when the dead are raised to glory and concludes when the earth itself is transformed into a new world (see commentary on Revelation 21:1). The Lord does not make just some things new – he proclaims that all things are made new by his power.

“he said unto me, Write; for these words are true and faithful” John has repeatedly been commanded to record things he hears and sees, and he is also told what to write (1:10-11; 1:19; 14:13). “Faithful and True” are given to John as two of the names of Christ (Revelation 19:11), whose words are always trustworthy (the translation given in JB, NIV, NEB, and RSV) and true (2 Nephi 31:15; D&C 1:37; 71:11).

6 And he said unto me, It is done. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely.

verse 6 “It is done” Because Christ is the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, he is fully able to see the end from the beginning. That which he has ordained to come to pass is as though it has already happened. Thus, to God, blessings promised in the future are as certain of fulfillment as if they had already been received.

“I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end” See commentary on Revelation 1:8.

“I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely” Water is an essential source of life; Jesus Christ is the source of eternal life. As such, he is the fountain of the water of life, which water of life is the principles and ordinances of the gospel (*Discourses of Brigham Young*, 235; McConkie, *Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, 1:151-52).

In the remarkable exchange with the woman of Samaria, Jesus said, “If thou knewst the gift of God, and who it is that [speaketh] to thee . . . thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water. . . But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life” (John 4:10, 14). As the Lord promised through John, this water is offered freely to all who will recognize their spiritual thirst and come unto Christ to be satisfied (Isaiah 55:1; Alma 5:34; 42:27; D&C 10:66). See commentary on Revelation 7:17.

Living water may also represent the Holy Ghost. Jesus said, as John recorded elsewhere: “He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive: for the Holy Ghost was not yet given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified” (John 7:38-39).

7 He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son.

verse 7 “He that overcometh shall inherit all things” When we overcome the temptations of the adversary and rise above the trials of life, when we endure to the end in righteousness, we receive the great blessing of becoming “heirs of God and joint-heirs with

Christ" (Romans 8:17). Then the King shall say to us, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world" (Matthew 25:34), and "all that my Father hath shall be given unto him" (D&C 84:38). Then "they are gods, even the sons of God – wherefore, all things are theirs, whether life or death, or things present, or things to come, all are theirs and they are Christ's, and Christ is God's. And they shall overcome all things" (D&C 76:58-60). Certainly, overcoming will require sacrifice and suffering, but as Paul taught, "I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us" (Romans 8:18).

This promise follows on other, similar promises made to those who overcome – that they will become pillars in the temple of God, to go no more out; that the very name of God, and Christ's new name, will be written upon them; that they will be privileged to sit with Christ on his throne (Revelation 3:12, 21).

"I will be his God, and he shall be my son" This marvelous promise is given to all who enter the celestial kingdom. Earlier the Lord said, "They shall be his people . . . and God himself shall be . . . their God" (Revelation 21:3). But here the Lord makes it personal and individual – we will become his sons and his daughters, not just part of a collective group. This assurance is a fulfillment of what Paul promised: "Wherefore thou art no more a servant, but a son; and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ" (Galatians 4:7). And again, "For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God" (Romans 8:14).

In another setting, John the Revelator gave the same testimony: "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not. Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is" (1 John 3:1-2).

The underlying feeling conveyed by this phrase is that the Lord is assuring us of relationship, a close relationship between us and him. He will claim us as his own, draw us to him, hold us closely, and treat us tenderly. We will in very deed be his sons and daughters.

8 But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death.

verse 8 "But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars" It is interesting – and important – that the Lord begins this list of those to be condemned with "the fearful, and unbelieving." Certainly to have fear and lack belief are not as serious as the sins that follow in the list. Yet it is the fearful – the cowardly – and unbelieving who yielded to the enticings of the beast, who failed to stand firm and true in the face of the great persecutions and temptations that come upon the faithful. Perhaps fear and unbelief lead to the other sins the Lord lists (D&C 63:17-18; 76:36, 103-6).

All these are in stark opposition to the character of Christ, who is faithful and true (Revelation 3:14; 19:11). They have been led astray by the devil, “which deceiveth the whole world” (Revelation 12:9). They follow their father, Satan; as Christ said, “Ye are of your father the devil. . . There is no truth in him. . . He is a liar, and the father of it” (John 8:44).

This verse might be seen both as a warning and an invitation: a warning that those who do not repent of ungodliness will not be able to enjoy the sweet existence on the new, paradisiacal earth, and an invitation to turn from such wickedness.

“the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone” This expression is a metaphor for the second death. Latter-day Saint scholar Richard Draper has written: “Such sinners are Lucifer’s but only for a time. While they are under his power, his full wrath will be spent upon them. For a thousand years [the Millennium] their tears, their torment, their misery will be his wine, and their scorched souls and burning consciences the butter of his bread” (Draper, *Opening the Seven Seals*, 232-33). See commentary on Revelation 19:20.

“which is the second death” See commentary on Revelation 2:11.

verses 9 through 22:5 In Revelation 19 we briefly saw Zion portrayed as a bride. Here we see a more developed image of Zion as a holy, celestial city. That city will send forth a wonderful light. It will have high walls with foundations made of precious stones, and its gates will be made of pearl and guarded by twelve angels. The city itself will be “pure gold, like unto clear glass.” Within the city is a “pure river of water of life” and “the tree of life.” The inhabitants of the city will dwell in the presence of God, “and they shall see his face . . . and they shall reign for ever and ever.”

In the apocryphal book of 4 Ezra, the seer experienced a similar shift in his vision. First, he sees a woman mourning for her children, not realizing that the woman is Zion. Then, “while I was talking to her, her face suddenly shone exceedingly, and her countenance flashed like lightning. . . And I looked, and behold, the woman was no longer visible to me, but there was an established city, and a place of huge foundation showed itself” (4 Ezra 10:25-27).

The images of the holy city in Revelation 21 stand in bold contrast to the wicked city in Revelation 17. The city of righteousness (a symbol for her people) is everything good and holy and true that the city of wickedness (also a symbol for her people) is not.

It is easy to be distracted by the details of measurements and precious stones in this vision and thus to miss impressions that come from other images in this passage: the celestial city (and the people) are bound to Christ in an intimate relationship; the city is holy and has come from the presence of God; she shines with precious light; one gains entry to the city through passing by angels that are set as sentries there, and by belonging to one of the twelve tribes of Israel; the “twelve apostles of the Lamb” are a key element of the city’s foundation; the Father and the Son shine with the light of their being to illuminate the city; only those who are pure and clean are allowed to enter; the city provides both living water and the fruit of the tree of life to its inhabitants; both the Father and the Son dwell there, and the servants of Christ “shall see his face.”

Ezekiel had a similar vision of the holy city (Ezekiel 40:1-47:12; 48:30).

9 And there came unto me one of the seven angels which had the seven vials full of the seven last plagues, and talked with me, saying, Come hither, I will shew thee the bride, the Lamb's wife.

verse 9 “one of the seven angels which had the seven . . . last plagues” This is one of the angels that poured plagues from the seven bowls, or vials (Revelation 17:1).

“Come hither, I will shew thee the bride, the Lamb’s wife” The angel’s invitation parallels a similar invitation in Revelation 17:1: “Come hither; I will shew unto thee the judgment of the great whore that sitteth upon many waters.” In the former instance, as in this, John saw a city. The wicked city of the whore, however, is destined to receive eternal destruction, while the holy city of New Jerusalem will be filled forever with the glory of God. See commentary on Revelation 19:7.

“And there came unto me one of the seven angels which had the seven last plagues, and talked with me, saying, Come hither, I will shew thee the bride, the Lamb’s wife.”

10 And he carried me away in the spirit to a great and high mountain, and shewed me that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God,

verse 10 “And he carried me away in the spirit” See commentary on Revelation 17:3.

“to a great and high mountain” This place may have simply been a vantage point from which John could view the city (as in JST Matthew 4:8-10), but more likely this high mountain was the “holy mountain of God” (Ezekiel 28:14, 16), the holy temple on earth rather than in heaven.

“shewed me that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God” See commentary on Revelation 21:2.

“And he carried me away in the Spirit to a great and high mountain, and shewed me that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God,”

11 Having the glory of God: and her light was like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper stone, clear as crystal;

verse 11 “Having the glory of God” The city is filled with God’s glory, meaning his light, his power, his majesty, and, crowning all, his presence. “Therefore, [the earth] must needs be sanctified from all unrighteousness, that it may be prepared for the celestial glory; for after it hath filled the measure of its creation, it shall be crowned with glory, even with the presence of God the Father; that bodies who are of the celestial kingdom may possess it forever and ever; for, for this intent was it made and created, and for this intent are they sanctified” (D&C 88:18-20; Isaiah 60:1-2; Ezekiel 43:1-2).

“her light was like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper stone, clear as crystal” A jasper is a precious stone with great religious significance, for it was one of the stones in the high priest's breastplate (Exodus 28:20; 39:13). In Revelation 4:3, we read that the One on the throne, God the Father is “like a jasper” (see commentary there). Here, the holy city of New Jerusalem, which has “the glory of God,” is also “like a jasper stone,” perhaps meaning the city will have a beauty and glory like God himself.

The celestial city will shine like a precious stone in the same way that the earth itself will shine: “The angels . . . reside in the presence of God, on a globe like a sea of glass and fire, where all things for their glory are manifest, past, present, and future, and are continually before the Lord. The place where God resides is a great Urim and Thummim. This earth, in its sanctified and immortal state, will be made like unto crystal and will be a Urim and Thummim to the inhabitants who dwell thereon” (D&C 130:6-9).

The stone that is the city is like the “stone” that is Christ: “Therefore thus saith the Lord God, Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation” (Isaiah 28:16).

We also will be like precious stones, each contributing our part to Zion. Peter explained: “Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ. Wherefore also it is contained in the scripture, Behold, I lay in Sion a chief corner stone, elect, precious: and he that believeth on him shall not be confounded. Unto you therefore which believe he is precious: but unto them which be disobedient, the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner” (1 Peter 2:5-7).

It is reasonable that these images would be similar – a holy, celestial environment must be completely consistent with its Maker and with its holy, celestial inhabitants.

12 And had a wall great and high, and had twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels, and names written thereon, which are the names of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel:

verse 12 “a wall great and high” This expression suggests that the people inside the city will enjoy absolute peace and complete security – and that no one can enter except by the gates.

“twelve gates” Though the city is surrounded by an impregnable wall, those who qualify may freely enter; that there are twelve gates indicates a ready entrance for the faithful. The twelve gates may represent the twelve tribes of Israel, or the Twelve Apostles, who will judge the worthiness of the people to enter the holy city.

“at the gates twelve angels” The angels may well be guardians or sentinels, assigned to prevent entrance into the city by “any thing that defileth” (Revelation 21:27). It may be that these angels represent the angels Brigham Young described when he defined the temple endowment: “Your endowment is, to receive all those ordinances in the House of the Lord, which are necessary for you, after you have departed this life, to enable you to walk back to

the presence of the Father, passing the angels who stand as sentinels, being enabled to give them the key words, the signs and tokens, pertaining to the Holy Priesthood, and gain your eternal exaltation in spite of earth and hell." (Brigham Young, JD, 2:31.)

"names written thereon, which are the names of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel" On the gates were written the names of the twelve tribes, probably with a different gate assigned to each tribe. To enter the celestial city of Zion, we must enter as members of the family of Abraham, according to the Abrahamic covenant (Abraham 2:6-11). That may be the purpose of the symbolism here – that we enter Zion through the gate of, or by membership in, one of the twelve tribes of Israel.

13 On the east three gates; on the north three gates; on the south three gates; and on the west three gates.

verse 13 "On the east three gates" Ezekiel recorded, "And at the east side . . . three gates; and one gate of Joseph, one gate of Benjamin, one gate of Dan" (Ezekiel 48:32).

"on the north three gates" Ezekiel wrote, "And the gates of the city shall be after the names of the tribes of Israel: three gates northward; one gate of Reuben, one gate of Judah, one gate of Levi" (Ezekiel 48:31).

"on the south three gates" Again from Ezekiel: "And at the south side . . . three gates; one gate of Simeon, one gate of Issachar, one gate of Zebulun" (Ezekiel 48:33).

"on the west three gates" Again from Ezekiel: "At the west side . . . three gates; one gate of Gad, one gate of Asher, one gate of Naphtali" (Ezekiel 48:34).

14 And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and in them the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.

verse 14 "the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and in them the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb" Other translations indicate that the city wall was made of twelve foundation stones (LB, GNB, JB, NEB), each one representing one of the twelve apostles. The symbolism in this vision seems to say that the earthly organization of the Church is so important that it truly forms a foundation for the celestial city in which we hope eventually to dwell.

This passage from Paul's writings thus appears to have a significance beyond mortality: "Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God; and are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone; in whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord" (Ephesians 2:19-21).

15 And he that talked with me had a golden reed to measure the city, and the gates thereof, and the wall thereof.

verse 15 “he that talked with me had a golden reed” This golden reed is a measuring rod (see commentary on Revelation 11:1). Perhaps only a measuring rod made of gold is appropriate to be used with the holy city of gold.

“to measure the city, and the gates thereof, and the wall thereof” The angel has apparently been commissioned to measure the heavenly city and convey the information to John and thus to us.

16 And the city lieth foursquare, and the length is as large as the breadth: and he measured the city with the reed, twelve thousand furlongs. The length and the breadth and the height of it are equal.

verse 16 After the angel measures the city, John learns that it is shaped like an enormous cube – like the holy of holies in Solomon’s temple (1 Kings 6:20). The holy of holies was the holiest place on earth, the innermost chamber of the temple, the earthly place where God would visit. The city in John’s vision was likewise the holiest place on the new earth and likewise was the dwelling place of God. Both were formed in the shape of a cube, “a symbol of perfection” (Harrington, *Revelation*, 213-14).

A furlong is about 607 English feet. Altogether, then, the city was about 1,400 miles on each side. It was also 1,400 miles high. “The heavenly Jerusalem stretches from earth to heaven and unites them into one” (Davidson, ed., *New Bible Commentary*, 1197). The number 1,400 comes close to being a multiple of 12 times 120 (1,440), perhaps a repetition of the emphasis on the twelve apostles and the twelve tribes of Israel.

17 And he measured the wall thereof, an hundred and forty and four cubits, according to the measure of a man, that is, of the angel.

verse 17 “And he measured the wall thereof, an hundred and forty and four cubits, according to the measure . . . of the angel” The repetition of the number twelve in the stones and gates stands as a constant reminder of the priestly power that guards and envelops all aspects and operations of the holy city. This is seen especially in the measurement of the walls. John notes they are 144 cubits, after the measure of an angel. The size of an angelic cubit is unknown. What is important is the number – twelve squared – signifying the fulness of priesthood authority. This is what surrounds and stands as a great bulwark to the city” (Draper, *Opening the Seven Seals*, 236).

18 And the building of the wall of it was of jasper: and the city was pure gold, like unto clear glass.

verse 18 “the building of the wall of it was of jasper” We see in Revelation 21:11 that the city is like jasper, as God himself is like jasper (Revelation 4:3). Here the wall of the city is jasper. The symbolism seems to be that the very walls of the city give glorious testimony to the presence of God.

"the city was pure gold, like unto clear glass" In Revelation 4:6, John sees that God's throne is "a sea of glass like unto crystal." In Revelation 21:11, the city is likened to clear crystal. In the Doctrine and Covenants the earth itself is "like unto crystal" and the globe where God and his angels dwell is "like a sea of glass and fire" (D&C 130:9, 7). In Revelation 21:21, the streets are "pure gold, as it were transparent glass." These images of pure gold, transparent glass, and perfect crystal suggest perfection and clarity. They suggest great worth, value, and preciousness. They suggest materials that reflect and magnify the brilliance of light. Perhaps these things will all work together with the Urim and Thummim that is the earth itself (D&C 130:9) to create an environment in which great truths are more readily made manifest to the inhabitants of the earth.

19 And the foundations of the wall of the city were garnished with all manner of precious stones. The first foundation was jasper; the second, sapphire; the third, a chalcedony; the fourth, an emerald;

20 The fifth, sardonyx; the sixth, sardius; the seventh, chrysolite; the eighth, beryl; the ninth, a topaz; the tenth, a chrysoprasus; the eleventh, a jacinth; the twelfth, an amethyst.

verses 19-20 "the foundations of the wall of the city were garnished with all manner of precious stones" Here is a city, in size and dimensions, in splendor and glory, which is so far beyond human experience or comprehension that there is no way to convey to the finite mind what the eternal reality is. Hence, expressions relative to precious stones, to streets of gold, and to pearly gates" (McConkie, *Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, 3:588).

Isaiah used a similar description of the heavenly city to indicate the love and attentiveness of God: "O thou afflicted, tossed with tempest, and not comforted, behold, I will lay thy stones with fair colours, and lay thy foundations with sapphires. And I will make thy windows of agates, and thy gates of carbuncles, and all thy borders of pleasant stones. And all thy children shall be taught of the Lord; and great shall be the peace of thy children. In righteousness shalt thou be established: thou shalt be far from oppression; for thou shalt not fear: and from terror; for it shall not come near thee" (Isaiah 54:11-14).

The stones listed in these verses may be compared with those on the breastplate of the high priest anciently, each of which bore the name of one of the twelve tribes (Exodus 28:17-21; 39:10; Ezekiel 28:13). In the New Jerusalem, however, these stones are linked to the Twelve Apostles rather than to the twelve tribes of Israel (Revelation 21:14).

These stones may also be contrasted with the precious stones worn by the harlot, who is a symbol of another city.

21 And the twelve gates were twelve pearls; every several gate was of one pearl: and the street of the city was pure gold, as it were transparent glass.

verse 21 “the twelve gates were twelve pearls” Pearls were viewed as very precious in New Testament times (Matthew 13:45-46; 1 Timothy 2:9). Pearls are not mentioned in the Old Testament, but the Lord revealed through Isaiah concerning this same city, “I will make . . . thy gates of carbuncles” (Isaiah 54:12). Like pearls, carbuncles were valued as precious stones (Carbuncles may have been clear crystals or “a precious stone of bright red color.” *LDS Bible Dictionary*, 631; see also Parry, Parry, and Peterson, *Understanding Isaiah*, 486). The truth common to both passages is that the gates were made of priceless materials, indicating the great value the people, and the Lord, placed on the holy city itself.

“every several gate was of one pearl” The pearls used in constructing the gates were so remarkable that one marvelous pearl was all that was needed to make each gate. This detail seems to emphasize again the magnificence of the different elements of the city.

“the street of the city was pure gold, as it were transparent glass” See commentary on Revelation 21:18.

22 And I saw no temple therein: for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it.

verse 22 “no temple therein” There are at least two possible reasons why no temple is needed in the celestial city. First, the entire city is “the house of the Lord” – the Lord is ever-present there. Second, all the inhabitants have made the necessary covenants. All the ordinance work for the living and the dead has been completed. All are fully qualified for a celestial life; nothing more remains to be done.

Of course, in another sense, there is a temple in heaven, as John saw repeatedly in his vision (Revelation 3:12; 7:15; 11:19; 14:17; 15:5; 16:17). But a deeper truth is that all of heaven is the temple, as we can deduce from the description of the heavenly city in this chapter of Revelation. And a truth deeper still is that God himself is the temple. What John may mean, then, is that there may be no single structure called a temple in heaven; everything about the heavenly experience partakes of the spirit and beauty and light of the temple.

“the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it” We go to the temple in mortality to receive ordinances, make covenants, and draw closer to the Lord. In the celestial world, we will actually live in God’s presence. Perhaps, rather than go to a sacred edifice to draw near to the Lord, we will seek to go to him directly; rather than go to a sacred edifice to make covenants and agreements with God, we will most likely go to him directly. In the celestial kingdom, the temple ceases to be a means to come unto God – we will go to him directly.

23 And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof.

verse 23 “the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof” When God, with his brightness, is present, we do not need the secondary light sources of the sun and moon

(Isaiah 60:19-20). After all, the sun and moon have power to shine in the first place because of the light of Christ (D&C 88:7-13).

24 And the nations of them which are saved shall walk in the light of it: and the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honour into it.

verse 24 “the nations of them which are saved shall walk in the light of it: and the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honour into it” The Father and the Son give their light to the heavenly city, and that city gives its light to the nations of the saved on the earth. In turn, “the kings of the earth will bring it their treasures” (JB), or “the kings of the earth shall bring into it all their splendour” (NEB).

But what are these nations on the celestial world, and who are the kings? The kings of the earth were destroyed in Revelation 19:19, 21 and 20:9. John testified at the beginning of the book that Christ “hath made us kings and priests unto God” (Revelation 1:6). Here he shows us that the Lord, in triumph, will indeed bring us forth in glory as kings.

These kings – who will be us and our fellows, as exalted, glorified souls – will bring the riches of their inheritance, as well as the glory of their own beings, into the city.

25 And the gates of it shall not be shut at all by day: for there shall be no night there.

verse 25 “the gates of it shall not be shut at all by day” This expression indicates the degree of security and peace in the land (see also Isaiah 60:11).

“for there shall be no night there” Because God is the light of the city, and because he is ever-present, his light shines constantly. There will be neither day nor night there, but one constant, never-ceasing period of light.

26 And they shall bring the glory and honour of the nations into it.

verse 26 “they shall bring the glory and honour of the nations into it” See commentary on Revelation 21:24.

27 And there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie: but they which are written in the Lamb’s book of life.

verse 27 “there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie” This passage may seem to go without saying, because the city is now in the celestial kingdom. All things that defile, that work abomination, or that make a lie have been cast into the lake of fire (Revelation 21:8), but the Lord apparently wants to underscore this truth: “No unclean thing can enter into his kingdom” (3 Nephi 27:19; 1 Nephi 10:21; Alma 11:37; Moses 6:57).

“but they which are written in the Lamb’s book of life” Those whose names are not written in the Lamb’s book of life – specifically, all those who worship the beast (Revelation

13:8) – have been prohibited from entering the holy city of New Jerusalem. See commentary on Revelation 3:5.

Revelation Chapter 22 Saints Shall Reign in Celestial Glory

1 And he shewed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb.

verse 1 “he shewed me a pure river of water of life” In the heavenly city of New Jerusalem is a river of water of life, which flows from the throne of God; beside the river are two trees of life (see commentary on Revelation 7:17; 21:6).

These features are reminiscent of the Garden of Eden; as we read in Genesis: “And out of the ground made the Lord God to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight, and good for food; the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of knowledge of good and evil. And a river went out of Eden to water the garden” (Genesis 2:9-10).

“There is a river,” the psalmist wrote, “the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God, the holy place of the tabernacles of the most High” (Psalm 46:4).

In Lehi’s great vision, he also saw the tree of life and “near the tree” was “a river of water” (1 Nephi 8:13). When Nephi learned the interpretation, he discovered that the tree represents “the love of God, which sheddeth itself abroad in the hearts of the children of men; wherefore, it is the most desirable above all things” (1 Nephi 11:22). He also learned that “the rod of iron, which my father had seen, was the word of God, which led to the fountain of living waters, or to the tree of life; which waters are a representation of the love of God; and I also beheld that the tree of life was a representation of the love of God” (1 Nephi 11:25).

Thus, the tree of life and the “pure river of water of life” both represent the same thing: the love of God. Could it be that the pure love of God (given as a gift from him to us and then returned with full hearts back to him and to others) is what brings us to eternal life and then sustains and empowers us there?

The source of the water is important. It flows from “the throne of God and of the Lamb” (verse 1), note, one throne not two. There is but one source of life – God. But sharing in the responsibility is the Son, whoever stands as “the very Eternal Father of heaven and of earth, and all things which in them are” (Alma 11:39). In his gospel, John recorded the Lord’s words: “Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life” (John 4:14). Thus, both God and Christ occupy the same throne, for life flows from God through the Savior to mankind.

But the water has yet another and more significant meaning. Nephi saw that the “waters are a representation of the love of God” (1 Nephi 11:25). Herein lies the power of the water. It bequeaths and sustains life because it is love – pure, and unaffected.

“clear as crystal” See commentary on Revelation 21:18.

“proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb” Ezekiel saw waters flowing from beneath the temple, or house of God. Here they flow from the throne, which might represent the holy of holies in the heavenly temple. The waters of life, then, or the waters of love, come forth from God’s throne, from the heart of God’s holy city. The symbolism suggests

that these waters come directly from God himself. The love of God is a motivating power unto eternal life, as John declared elsewhere: “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life” (John 3:16). For further discussion of the throne of God, see commentary on Revelation 1:4.

Earlier in John’s vision he sees the throne of God in heaven (Revelation 4:1-2), but now it has come down to earth in the New Jerusalem, for God will dwell with his people. It is noteworthy that God the Father and Jesus the Son seem here to share one throne, which may be representative of the perfection of their union. That union was expressed in Jesus’ great intercessory prayer (John 17:11, 21-23).

2 In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, was there the tree of life, which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.

verse 2 “In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river” This sentence is made clearer by other translations. In its context, we read, “Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, . . . flowing . . . down the middle of the great street of the city. On each side of the river stood the tree of life, bearing twelve crops of fruit, yielding its fruit every month” (NIV).

John’s attention is drawn next to the tree of life and the avenue in which it stands. The Greek of verse two is difficult. The relationship between river, tree, and street cannot be determined. If the first phrase in mes ts plateiasauts (literally “In [the] midst of the street of it”) belongs to the preceding verse, then the stream divides the avenue. If the phrase belongs to what follows, the river and stream likely run side by side with not just one but many trees of life in between. There are also other possibilities. However, this in no way affects what John wants his readers to understand. The city is the new Eden, and in her midst, stands the tree of life. Other prophets have seen that same tree and left descriptions. “I looked and beheld a tree,” exclaimed Nephi, “and the beauty thereof was far beyond, yea, exceeding of all beauty; and the whiteness thereof did exceed the whiteness of the driven snow” (1 Nephi 11:8).

Note that the tree stands alone. It has no competition. The tree of good and evil has ceased to exist because the inhabitants of the city, knowing good from evil, have spurned all evil and eternally choose the good. In consequence, the cherubim, placed to guard the tree of life, have been removed, allowing God’s people to eat freely of the fruit. Jewish thought looked forward to the time when men would be free to partake of the wondrous tree.

Following Ezekiel 47:12, John notes that each month the tree produces a different type of fruit. John conveys the idea that the tree does not follow the normal course of budding, blossoming, fruit setting, and ripening, with one harvest a year. The crops grow continually. The entire image, as one scholar notes, “expresses the absolute triumph of life over death.” The very leaves of the trees hold healing properties. Where it stands, not a single blade of sorrow or pain can be found. All nations are healed, that is, made whole and complete, through the power of the tree.

But one must not overlook the meaning of the tree itself, for “it is the love of God, which sheddeth itself abroad in the hearts of the children of men; . . . [which is] the most joyous to the soul” (1 Nephi 11:22-23). Thus, the tree and the water symbolize the same thing. The continuous flow of the water and the perpetual bearing of the tree emphasize the limitlessness of God’s love. It flows from him forever and unconditionally. All who wish to partake may do so.

“the tree of life” The tree of life here lies “in the midst of the street.” Perhaps that street represents the straight and narrow path that Lehi saw (1 Nephi 8:20), which leads through the trials and temptations of mortality upward to the tree and, ultimately, to the celestial city of God.

We know that in the Garden of Eden was a real tree called the tree of life (Genesis 2:9; 3:24). In that setting, as well as elsewhere in the scriptures, the tree of life also functions as a symbol for eternal life.

The tree of life in the celestial city has no cherubim guarding it, as did the tree in the Garden of Eden (Genesis 3:24; Alma 12:21), for all in the city have a right to freely partake. And there is no mention of the tree of knowledge of good and evil; the inhabitants of the city, having successfully passed through mortality, have experienced both good and evil, and they have rejected all evil and turned wholly to the good. They are now entitled to eternal life, which the fruit of the tree symbolizes.

There is also possibly a deeper level of meaning here. Trees often symbolically stand for people, and the tree of life symbolizes that perfect Man who brings us life (McConkie and Parry, *Guide to Scriptural Symbols*, 103-4). But the Greek in this verse may well be plural (trees) (Metzger, *Breaking the Code*, 102; JB 22:2). It may be that the trees of life in the celestial city include the exalted souls who have come unto Christ and become like him, souls who have gained eternal life.

This passage suggests that each tree bears a different fruit every month, for a total of twelve varieties each year. Further, unlike most fruit trees, which bear their fruit seasonally, the fruit of the tree of life is ever available. The tree of life is always living and growing, never subject to death, not even subject to the normal sequence of a winter’s “death,” a spring’s sprouting, a summer’s growth, an autumn’s harvest, and another winter’s death.

Lehi described the fruit of the tree of life as “desirable to make one happy” and “desirable above all other fruit” (1 Nephi 8:10, 12). He said “it filled my soul with exceedingly great joy” (1 Nephi 8:12). Alma described this fruit as “most precious, which is sweet above all that is sweet, . . . and ye shall feast upon this fruit even until ye are filled, that ye hunger not, neither shall ye thirst” (Alma 32:42).

If the trees of life are the exalted souls in the celestial glory, the fruit of the tree may be their goodness and their good works that bless others forever.

“the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations” Ezekiel saw the same tree and received the same understanding: “[An angel] brought me again unto the door of the house [the temple]; and, behold, waters issued out from under the threshold of the house

eastward . . . and the waters came down from under from . . . the south side of the altar. . . . Then said he unto me . . . by the river upon the bank thereof, on this side and on that side, shall grow all trees, for meat, whose leaf shall not fade, neither shall the fruit thereof be consumed: it shall bring forth new fruit according to his months, because their waters they issued out of the sanctuary: and the fruit thereof shall be for meat, and the leaf thereof for medicine" (Ezekiel 47:1, 8, 12).

Because the tree symbolizes the love of God, it is only consistent to understand that the leaves of the tree would help to bring peace, union, and spiritual strength – in a word, healing – to the nations of the world. This use is probably symbolic, though there may actually be plants in the worlds of glory that bring blessing to those who gain the right to use them.

The nations mentioned here may be those in Revelation 21:24-26, which have been saved by the power of Christ. As he said to us all, by way of invitation, "Will ye not now return unto me, and repent of your sins, and be converted, that I may heal you?" (3 Nephi 9:13). Or, as Elder Parley P. Pratt wrote, "When John sees it [the tree of life], the nations have no need of healing, for there is no death, neither pain, nor sorrow, for the former things have passed away, and all things are become new; consequently, he speaks in the past tense, and says they were for the healing of the nations; of course, referring to the times when they existed temporally, according to Ezekiel, before their final change." (Pratt, Voice of Warning, 138.)

3 And there shall be no more curse: but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it; and his servants shall serve him:

verse 3 "there shall be no more curse" This passage seems to refer to the curses that were pronounced on Adam and Eve at the time of the Fall – that they would "surely die" by partaking of the forbidden fruit, that the woman would bear children in sorrow, and that the man would eat his bread "in the sweat of thy face." The ground itself, in fact, was "cursed . . . for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life" (Genesis 2:17; 3:16, 17, 19). Those in the celestial world would be subject to these curses no more. It is interesting to note that the Bible begins with a record of humankind being cursed and ends with a vision of those curses being removed.

"but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it" The but that joins this phrase with the preceding phrase suggests that the presence of God and the Lamb is an essential reason why a curse could not exist in the New Jerusalem – the presence of God blesses all that receive it. In particular, the curse of spiritual death is removed by the presence of God. See commentary on Revelation 22:1.

"his servants shall serve him" See commentary on Revelation 7:15.

4 And they shall see his face; and his name shall be in their foreheads.

verse 4 "they shall see his face" One great purpose of the temple is to bring us into the presence of God. Much of the symbolism of the temple ordinances demonstrates how we can find our way back to him. When we dwell in the heavenly temple, or in the heavenly city,

we will see God's face always, for we will always be in his presence. Jesus pointed to this blessing when he said, "Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God" (Matthew 5:8).

When we live in the holy city, we will regularly have the privilege that Moses had on the rarest of occasions: "And the Lord spake unto Moses face to face, as a man speaketh unto his friend" (Exodus 33:11; Moses 1:11, 31). Moses "sought diligently to sanctify his people that they might behold the face of God" as well, but they refused to qualify themselves and lost the blessing (D&C 84:23-24).

But the promise of the Lord continues among us: "Sanctify yourselves that your minds become single to God, and the days will come that you shall see him; for he will unveil his face unto you, and it shall be in his own time, and in his own way, and according to his own will" (D&C 88:68). "Verily, thus saith the Lord: It shall come to pass that every soul who forsaketh his sins and cometh unto me, and calleth on my name, and obeyeth my voice, and keepeth my commandments, shall see my face and know that I am" (D&C 93:1).

Perhaps not many will receive this blessing in mortality, but all who enter the holy, celestial city of the New Jerusalem surely will.

"his name shall be in their foreheads" In the symbolism of the book of Revelation, an individual bears the name or mark of the person with whom he or she is allied (Revelation 3:12; 13:16). Further, to bear another's name seems to indicate that one has become like that other person. Therefore, with the Father's name in our foreheads, we can know that "when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is" (1 John 3:2). See commentary on Revelation 3:12.

5 And there shall be no night there; and they need no candle, neither light of the sun; for the Lord God giveth them light: and they shall reign for ever and ever.

verse 5 "there shall be no night there and they need no candle, neither light of the sun" A light emanates from the person of God, as Joseph Smith saw in the Sacred Grove: "I saw a pillar of light exactly over my head, above the brightness of the sun. . . I saw two Personages, whose brightness and glory defy all description" (JS-H 1:16-17). God, with the great light of his being, will dwell in the celestial city, and thus there will never be night, nor need for artificial light of candle, nor need for the sun (Zechariah 14:6-7). See commentary on Revelation 21:23.

"they shall reign for ever and ever" When we ascend to our glory, as "heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ," we will reign with them forever (Romans 8:17). As "sons of God . . . we shall be like him" (1 John 3:2). We ourselves "shall . . . be gods" (D&C 132:20). We will truly be like our Father and our Lord: "Every man who reigns in celestial glory is a God to his dominions" (TPJS, 374). The righteous are the rulers of heaven.

verses 6-21 These verses contain commandment to John to send the vision to the world. They constitute the epilogue to the book of Revelation.

6 And he said unto me, These sayings are faithful and true: and the Lord God of the holy prophets sent his angel to shew unto his servants the things which must shortly be done.

7 Behold, I come quickly: blessed is he that keepeth the sayings of the prophecy of this book.

8 And I John saw these things, and heard them. And when I had heard and seen, I fell down to worship before the feet of the angel which shewed me these things.

9 Then saith he unto me, See thou do it not: for I am thy fellowservant, and of thy brethren the prophets, and of them which keep the sayings of this book: worship God.

10 And he saith unto me, Seal not the sayings of the prophecy of this book: for the time is at hand.

11 He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still: and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still.

12 And, behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be.

13 I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last.

14 Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city.

15 For without are dogs, and sorcerers, and whoremongers, and murderers, and idolaters, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie.

16 I Jesus have sent mine angel to testify unto you these things in the churches. I am the root and the offspring of David, and the bright and morning star.

17 And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.

18 For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book:

19 And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book.

20 He which testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly. Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus.

21 The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.

verses 6-21 With the promise that men and women can truly become as God, the magnificent visions of John close. The sweep of his prophecy has been vast, stretching from the premortal existence to the postmortals worlds. He has placed all history in its cosmic setting and shown its movement to the end of time. But more grand than the historical review stands his powerful and pure testimony of his King and his God, whose power, judgment, and love he has shown none can escape.

John emphasized both the truthfulness of the vision and the assurance of its accomplishment. By testifying of God's responsibility for the message, John legitimized the vision for his readers. God sent "his angel to shew unto his servants the things which must shortly be done" (verse 6). Doubly accentuating the point is God's own proclamation that "these sayings are faithful and true" (verse 6). The law of two witnesses has been satisfied: the angel and the Lamb have testified to John (see verse 16). In turn, John and the Lamb testify to the reader (see verses 18-20). John even identifies another set of two witnesses: the Spirit and the bride, or the Church (see verse 17).

The vision stands true, established in the mouths of divine and mortal witnesses. Therefore, a curse is laid on any who might tamper with the words of the prophecy (see verses 18-19). But the real thrust of the epilogue is in the beatitude expressed in verse seven: "Blessed is he that keepeth the sayings of the prophecy of this book" (KJV). In powerful, poetic, and prophetic terms, John has spelled out the full measure of that blessing. Now it is up to his readers to actualize it.

The prophet Nephi stated, "I beheld that the rod of iron, which my father had seen, was the word of God, which led to the fountain of living waters, or to the tree of life" (1 Nephi 11:25). Note that in Nephi's vision the tree and the water represent the same thing, each image expressing but a different aspect. The same is true in Revelation. The heart of John's city is love – the pure love of Christ. John, as few others, understood the life-power behind that love. "For God so loved the world," he testified, "that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John 3:16).

Christ was the Lamb slain before the foundation of the world. He became flesh so that "as many as received him," he could give the "power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name" (John 1:12). In another epistle, John had taught the saints: "God is love," and "love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God" (1 John

4:7-8). In the eternal city, all are free to partake of that love, which flows out of him and sustains and embraces all who have been transformed into his very image.

Conclusion

The book of Revelation contains, as John clearly stated in his introduction, the revelation of Jesus Christ. That revelation was given to him by God the Father. In it the Savior is revealed as the divine and visible Lamb; and the Father, as the omnipotent invisible God. But the invisible God is a God of action. For much of earth's history, he has chosen to act, as it were, behind the scenes. This has made it easy for natural men and women to attribute the course of history to political, social, or other causes. But this will not be the case for long. Already God is beginning to more openly direct the course of history and manifest more directly his control over the destiny of mankind. Soon he will personally disrupt the flow of history and set it upon a completely new course.

In the meantime, John's vision stands as more than a powerful testimony of God's prophetic abilities. It shows not only that the Almighty knew the end from the beginning and contemplated the whole of earth's history, but also that he arranged it. To say it more strongly, before the first soul was ever placed on the earth, God orchestrated the whole of earthly existence. Since that time, all things have moved in concert with his plans.

The issue throughout Revelation centers on sovereignty. Who is the God of this world, the Father or Satan? John's vision, focusing as it does on cosmic reality, clearly shows that it is the God of heaven, not the master of hell. Further, the Seer discloses that there is never a moment when the Father's supremacy comes into question. He has full power over all things, including death and hell. Nothing, though it may seem at times otherwise, moves independent of his designs – not even the host of Satan. Showing that God overmasters all things, John admonishes his reader to faith and patience. In the end, no matter how bad things may appear until then, righteousness will triumph, and the faithful will have their full reward.

In spite of this, there has never been the slightest interference with either human will or satanic machinations. Each individual stands as a separate player, creating his own lines, developing his own character, and freely producing the drama of his own life. Still, God shares the same stage. Further, he is not only the principle actor, but also the director. Though he may not select the cast, he alone has the power to determine when and where each soul will be played. His self-imposed rules dictate that he must use every person, no matter how evil or twisted he may become or how much good he may do. Each must have his chance. Still, God knows what each will do, how each will respond to any given situation and to life as a whole.

Some have asked, "If God knows the end of every soul, why doesn't he just judge people now and place them in their kingdom?" The question makes two false assumptions. The first tries to make a connection between what God knows and how a person behaves. Richard Draper has reported how he teaches this principle: "I have used a simple illustration in some of my classes to show that there is no connection between the two. Taking a pencil, eraser-end down, and placing it roughly six inches above the center of a sloping table, I have asked my students to tell me what will happen when I release it. I stress that they may not guess and must tell me what they absolutely know will happen. They are uncanny in their

ability to determine its course, predicting, among other things, that it will fall, bounce, produce a noise, roll, and come to rest. When I drop the pencil, everything happens exactly as they say. I then ask them how they get the pencil to do what they know it will. They assure me that they have nothing to do with what the pencil does. This simple exercise demonstrates that foreknowledge does not cause action: no connection exists between what God knows about us as individuals and our behavior."

The second false assumption is that God is a magician who, by the wave of some divine wand, can make us into creatures of celestial, terrestrial, or telestial glory. But God is not a magician, and he cannot make us into anything. He can protect, guide, and empower us. But we are the ones who make us into something, and we do it through the millions of choices, both big and little (but mostly little), that we make during the course of an entire lifetime. Thus, we shape our eternal character, and in the resurrection what we have shaped is what we become (cf. Alma 41:1-8).

Now to the point. God knows how each person will behave at any given time and under any given circumstance. By knowing what each person will do, he knows how the whole of any combination of people will behave. He shapes history by assembling the aggregate while at the same time allowing each individual free reign over his own destiny.

Thus, John's revelation testifies not only to the omniscience of God, but also to his omnipotence. The Revelator appeals to both faith and faithfulness as he shows that everything moves in harmony according to the composition orchestrated by God. God even weaves the discord of Satan into the whole movement. The result becomes a magnificent hymn of praise to his power as both God and the Lamb. In the words of the heavenly choir: "Great and marvelous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints. Who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name? for thou only art holy: for all nations shall come and worship before thee; for thy judgments are made manifest" (Revelation 15:3-4).

Doctrine and Covenants Section 77 Book of Revelation

See the introductory commentary in *Learning to Love the Doctrine and Covenants* for "Section 77 Book of Revelation." We will now provide specific commentary for those fifteen verses in section 77:

1 Q. What is the sea of glass spoken of by John, 4th chapter, and 6th verse of the Revelation? A. It is the earth, in its sanctified, immortal, and eternal state.

verse 1 "the sea of glass" See the commentary above for Revelation 4:6.

2 Q. What are we to understand by the four beasts, spoken of in the same verse? A. They are figurative expressions, used by the Revelator, John, in describing heaven, the paradise of God, the happiness of man, and of beasts, and of creeping things, and of the fowls of the air; that is spiritual being in the likeness of that which is temporal; and that which is temporal in the likeness of that which is spiritual; the spirit of man in the likeness of his person, and every other creature which God has created.

verse 2 "the four beasts" It seems apparent that the four beasts are actual beasts who are now exalted but lived on other worlds. These actual beasts are also symbolic of – figurative expressions of – other things (see the commentary for Revelation 4:6).

"the spirit of man in the likeness of his person" There is a similarity of form between the spirit of a living thing and the body it inhabits. This similarity may not be exact, however, as in the case of birth defects and other mortal deformities, and the precise degree to which individual spirits correspond to the appearance of their mortal bodies has not been revealed. Certainly, spirits can look exactly like their deceased bodies when necessary, but whether they always do so is open to question. It is not necessary to insist that genetic and environmental influences on mortal, physical bodies are coincidentally shared by their inhabiting spirits.

3 Q. Are the four beasts limited to individual beasts, or do they represent classes or orders? A. They are limited to four individual beasts, which were shown to John, to represent the glory of the classes of beings in their destined order or sphere of creation, in the enjoyment of their eternal felicity.

verse 3 "limited to individual beasts, or do they represent classes" See the commentary for Revelation 4:6, 7-8.

"in their destined order or sphere of creation" There is no revealed doctrine which explains this intriguing phrase. It raises the question: Are there well-defined orders of animals? Just as man is of a higher order than the animals, and animals are a higher order than plants, are some orders of animals higher than others? We simply do not know.

"the enjoyment of their eternal felicity" All forms of living things, and not just human beings, will, through the work of Christ, receive eternal joy – except perdition. Does this apply to every living microscopic creature, plants, even inanimate objects? Perhaps so, but we are not given revelation on this issue presently.

4 Q. What are we to understand by the eyes and wings, which the beasts had? A. Their eyes are a representation of light and knowledge, that is, their wings are a representation of power, to move, to act, etc.

5 Q. What are we to understand by the four and twenty elders, spoken of by John? A. We are to understand that these elders whom John saw, were elders who had been faithful in the work of the ministry and were dead; who belonged to the seven churches, and were then in the paradise of God.

verse 5 "four and twenty elders" John saw in his vision twenty-four elders who, along with the four beasts, had harps and little bottles of perfume – symbolizing their singing and praying to God as acts of worship (see also the commentary for Revelations 5:8-9). We learn in this particular verse that John may have known some of these men personally, for they had lived in the seven churches of western Turkey addressed in the book of Revelation among which John had labored (see Revelation 1:11). Though John saw in his vision twenty-four specific individuals, these twenty-four symbolically represented all the faithful elders who will be exalted through Christ out of every nation of the earth.

"the paradise of God" This is the pleasant state of some of the spirits in the world of spirits who, between their mortal deaths and their resurrections, are sealed up to immortal life.

6 Q. What are we to understand by the book which John saw, which was sealed on the back with seven seals? A. We are to understand that it contains the revealed will, mysteries, and the works of God; the hidden things of his economy concerning this earth during the seven thousand years of its continuance, or its temporal existence.

verse 6 "the book which John saw" See the introductory commentary for Revelation 5, the commentary on verses 1-5 of that chapter, and the commentary for Revelation 5:1.

"the revealed will, mysteries, and the works of God" The book symbolizes the comprehensive plan of God for this earth and its inhabitants from the beginning to the end.

"the seven thousand years of its continuance" The seven thousand years of this earth's existence between the fall of Adam and the end of the Millennium. These seven periods of one thousand years are equated with the "seven seals" (see also the commentary for Revelation 5:1).

7 Q. What are we to understand by the seven seals with which it was sealed? A. We are to understand that the first seal contains the things of the first thousand years, and the second also of the second thousand years, and so on until the seventh.

verse 7 "the first seal contains the things of the first thousand years" Even though a seal is a bit of wax or clay, imprinted with an identifying mark, which keeps a scroll tightly rolled up, here Joseph equates the scroll with its seal and explains that "the first seal contains the things of the first thousand years . . ."

For ancient Jews, the number seven symbolized perfection or completeness. Since the seven scrolls or seven seals represent the comprehensive plan of God (see verse 6), the sequential opening of the seven seals likely represents the full unfolding or implementation of the divine plan for this earth from beginning to end. With the opening of the seventh seal, God's plan for the temporal earth will reach its final stage in a glorious Millennium.

8 Q. What are we to understand by the four angels, spoken of in the 7th chapter and 1st verse of Revelation? A. We are to understand that they are four angels sent forth from God, to whom is given power over the four parts of the earth, to save life and to destroy; these are they who have the everlasting gospel to commit to every nation, kindred, tongue, and people; having power to shut up the heavens, to seal up unto life, or to cast down to the regions of darkness.

verse 8 See the commentary for Revelation 7:1.

9 Q. What are we to understand by the angel ascending from the east, Revelation 7th chapter and 2nd verse? A. We are to understand that the angel ascending from the east is he to whom is given the seal of the living God over the twelve tribes of Israel; wherefore, he crieth unto the four angels having the everlasting gospel, saying: Hurt not the earth, neither the sea, nor the trees, till we have sealed the servants of our God in their foreheads. And, if you will receive it, this is Elias which was to come to gather together the tribes of Israel and restore all things.

verse 9 "the angel ascending from the east" See the commentary for Revelation 7:2.

"sealed the servants of our God in their foreheads" See the commentary for "seal of the living God" in Revelation 7:2, above.

"this is Elias" Again, see the commentary for Revelation 7:2. There have been many Eliases or those called to do restorative work in this final dispensation, but in this particular verse Elias seems to be none other than Jesus Christ himself. In the context of the earth's existence in the first six thousand years, restoring all things perhaps means restoring the fulness of the gospel and the keys of the priesthood to a celestial world, and the several Eliases listed in the commentary for Revelation 7:2 have done this. However, in the context of the seventh thousand years, restoring all things includes restoring the earth itself to a terrestrial state and bringing to pass the redemption and resurrection of the dead. This is the might work of only one Elias, Jesus Christ himself. He will, at his second coming, be the great and final Elias or restorer. It is Jesus Christ himself who ultimately will restore all things and who will finally gather all of Israel together "as a hen gatherereth her chickens" (3 Nephi 10:4-6).

10 Q. What time are the things spoken of in this chapter to be accomplished? A. They are to be accomplished in the sixth thousand years, or the opening of the sixth seal.

verse 10 "in the sixth thousand years" The work of spreading the gospel throughout the world to every nation, kindred, tongue, and people is the work of the latter-day Church. We now live in the sixth-time period, or day, or thousand years – the period of time immediately before the glorious Millennium, which is the seventh-time period or the sabbath day of the earth's temporal existence.

11 Q. What are we to understand by sealing the one hundred and forty-four thousand, out of all the tribes of Israel — twelve thousand out of every tribe? A. We are to understand that those who are sealed are high priests, ordained unto the holy order of God, to administer the everlasting gospel; for they are they who are ordained out of every nation, kindred, tongue, and people, by the angels to whom is given power over the nations of the earth, to bring as many as will come to the church of the Firstborn.

verse 11 "twelve thousand out of every tribe" See the commentary for Revelation 7:4-8 above (it is found prior to verse 4).

"the church of the Firstborn" See the commentary for D&C 76:54.

12 Q. What are we to understand by the sounding of the trumpets, mentioned in the 8th chapter of Revelation? A. We are to understand that as God made the world in six days, and on the seventh day he finished his work, and sanctified it, and also formed man out of the dust of the earth, even so, in the beginning of the seventh thousand years will the Lord God sanctify the earth, and complete the salvation of man, and judge all things, and shall redeem all things, except that which he hath not put into his power, when he shall have sealed all things, unto the end of all things; and the sounding of the trumpets of the seven angels are the preparing and finishing of his work, in the beginning of the seventh thousand years — the preparing of the way before the time of his coming.

verse 12 "sounding of the trumpets" See the commentary for Revelation 8:1-2. After the opening of the seventh seal in his Revelation, John saw a series of seven angels, who sounded their seven trumpets one after the other in a symbolic series. This verse informs us that the events symbolized by the seven trumpets are mighty works that Jesus Christ will perform after the beginning of the Millennium (after the opening of the seventh seal) but before his second coming (see verse 13) – works of judgment, redemption, and resurrection. These works, on the seventh day of the earth's temporal existence, will be part of sanctifying the earth and raising it to a paradisiacal glory, just as Christ sanctified the earth and gave it the glory of paradise, or Eden, once before – on the seventh day of its creation. This is the same series of trumpet blasts described in D&C 88:96-106. The seventh trumpet announces the completion of all preparations and the coming of the glorious Christ himself to the earth (see Exodus 19:16-20), where the descent of Jehovah, or Christ, to the earth was also marked by the sounding of a trumpet).

"on the seventh day he finished his work, and sanctified it, and also formed man out of the dust of the earth" This phrase can be confusing and should not be interpreted as

meaning that the Lord created man on the seventh day. Man was created (the physical creation) on the sixth day of creation. The creation of Adam on the seventh day would require rejecting the specific testimony of Genesis 1:31; Moses 2:31; and Abraham 4:31 that Adam was created on the sixth day or time, and the latter two sources were translated by the prophet Joseph Smith.

13 Q. When are the things to be accomplished, which are written in the 9th chapter of Revelation? A. They are to be accomplished after the opening of the seventh seal, before the coming of Christ.

verse 13 "after the opening of the seven seal, before the coming of Christ" Note that the seventh period of the earth's existence will start before the second coming of Christ and that there will be a space of time "after the opening of the seventh seal, before the coming of Christ." The two events are not simultaneous, nor does the opening of the seventh seal initiate the Millennium. According to John's Revelation, there was silence in heaven for the space of half an hour after the opening of the seventh seal before the events symbolized by the seven trumpets – the final preparations for the coming of Christ – began to take place. If we interpret literally the formula of one day with God being a thousand years with man, which is by no means certain that we must so interpret, a half hour would amount to a little less than twenty-one years separating the opening of the seventh seal and the beginning of the seven trumpets. No indication is given of how much additional time the events associated with the seven trumpets will take, although it seems that all will be completed in less than one generation (see JST Matthew 1:34).

14 Q. What are we to understand by the little book which was eaten by John, as mentioned in the 10th chapter of Revelation? A. We are to understand that it was a mission, and an ordinance, for him to gather the tribes of Israel; behold, this is Elias, who, as it is written, must come and restore all things.

verse 14 "the little book" In his vision John saw an angel holding a little book or scroll. John was instructed to take the book and eat it. When he did so, according to the book of Revelation, he found that it was delicious but that it upset his stomach. The experience of John in this regard is an almost exact repetition of the experience of Ezekiel (see Ezekiel 2:9 through 3:4).

"it was a mission" The interpretation offered here is supported by the similar experience of Ezekiel, who with the same visionary imagery was also called on a mission to preach and minister to the house of Israel. John the Beloved Apostle is here identified as one who will assist in the restoration and gathering of Israel in the latter days. Note that John did not die, but was translated (D&C 7) – making him available to minister to the earth directly in this final dispensation. See also the commentary for Revelation 10:2, 8, 9, 10.

15 Q. What is to be understood by the two witnesses, in the eleventh chapter of Revelation? A. They are two prophets that are to be raised up to the Jewish nation in the last days, at the time of the restoration, and to prophesy to the Jews after they are gathered and have built the city of Jerusalem in the land of their fathers.

verse 15 "the two witnesses" In Greek the words for witness and martyr are the same. This is appropriate, since being one often leads to becoming the other. John saw in his vision two servants of the Lord who testify of the truth and who suffer martyrdom for it. These two witnesses have the power to shut the heavens and to smite the earth with plagues. These witnesses will not be casual elders who just happen to be in Jerusalem when war breaks out; they will likely be General Authorities of the Church – prophets specifically called on this mission to the Jewish nation (compare Zechariah 4:12-14; Revelation 11:1-4). See also the introductory commentary for Revelation 11 and the commentary for Revelation 11:1-4.

"to the Jewish nation in the last days" It is intriguing that at the time Joseph Smith wrote this revelation, there was no Jewish nation upon the face of the earth. The existence of the nation of Israel in the Holy Land since 1948 constitutes just one more prophecy of Joseph Smith that has come to pass since the Restoration.