

COMMENTARY ON REVELATION PART 1

Chapters 1-5

What is now

The risen Christ	1
Letters to church leaders	2 – 3
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The title and origin of the book (1:1-3)

The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show his servants what must soon take place. He made it known by sending his angel to his servant John, who testifies to everything he saw - that is, the word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ. Blessed is the one who reads aloud the words of this prophecy and blessed are those who hear it and take to heart what is written in it, because the time is near.

Dan 2:29 As Your Majesty was lying there, your mind turned to things to come, and the revealer of mysteries showed you what is going to happen.

Rev 22:6 The Lord, the God who inspires the prophets, sent his angel to show his servants the things that must soon take place.

This book is a revelation given by Jesus the Messiah. It is also about him and given through the mediation of an angel to the apostle John. It is to be believed because it originates with God and it is the testimony of Jesus. It deals with the final catastrophic period of world history when the Messiah, after mortal combat with the powers of evil, will emerge victorious.

John sees a series of visions that are prophecies about the future, relating to the end of this age, and culminating in the end of the world. It describes the events that will precede the second coming of Jesus Christ, who is coming to rule the world for 1000 years. That is our hope. That is what we are looking forward to, and the reason why we pray that God's kingdom will come and his will be done on earth.

God's servants (Greek = slaves) are God-fearing people in general, those who have surrendered their lives into his care. It is hard to understand why something that must *soon take place*, that was written nearly 2000 years ago, should be described as *near*. It seems that God wants us to

keep these future events in mind, and to live in expectation of the Messiah's return. His coming is our blessed hope, resulting in our salvation, and also our glorification. This book is a special encouragement to believers in times of persecution.

When John said, 'The time is near', it is not a mistake; the concept is stated many times. Jesus repeats the statement, 'I am coming soon', four times, and twice we have the phrase 'what soon must take place'. Greek-English lexicons sometimes give an alternative meaning for the Greek word *ταχὺ*, 'soon', as 'without unnecessary delay'. The book of Revelation makes it clear that God has a plan; the timetable is set; Jesus will be revealed at the appointed time. Because these things were spoken of as taking place soon, some people assume the events of the book of Revelation are now in the past, it is history. Some say the book was written before 70 AD so that they can include the destruction of Jerusalem as a prophecy. However, everything leads up to the return of Jesus as Messiah, and that hasn't happened yet!

As the message is revealed to John in visions, the book is quite different from the historical books or the epistles. It is presented to us in picture form using symbols and metaphors, to *show* us what must take place; but we must use our sanctified imaginations. There is a blessing for you here, just from hearing the Apocalypse read, or from reading it yourself, and more to the point, if you submit yourself to God and do his will.

Greetings to churches and praise to Jesus (1:4-6)

John, to the seven churches in the province of Asia: Grace and peace to you from him who is, and who was, and who is to come, and from the seven spirits before his throne, and from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth. To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood, and has made us to be a kingdom and priests to serve his God and Father - to him be glory and power forever and ever! Amen.

John greets the seven churches to whom this letter (the whole book) is addressed. The churches were in Asia Minor, modern-day Turkey, not far from the island of Patmos where John was imprisoned. The benediction is from the eternal, triune God. 'He who is, and who was, and who is to come' is a paraphrase of the divine name, YHWH, meaning I AM. 'The seven spirits before the throne' refer to the Holy Spirit. And Jesus Christ is God the Son. Seven is a sacred number that is used 55 times in Revelation.

Jesus is the faithful witness, he came into the world to testify to the truth (Jn 18:37), the firstborn from the dead (Col 1:18), and the ruler of the kings of the earth, the blessed and only Ruler, the King of kings and Lord of lords (1 Tim 6:15). The latter expression confirms the prophecy in Ps 89 and is an anticipation of the Messiah ruling the world.

John ascribes glory and power to Jesus because he loves us, and nobody can separate us from the love of Christ (Rom 8:35), and also because he has freed us from our sins by his blood. We have been justified by his blood, and even more certainly, we will be saved from God's wrath through him (Rom 5:9). And the final reason for praise is because he made us to be a kingdom and priests to serve his God and Father (Ex 19:5-6).

The expression 'kingdom of priests' was first attributed to Israel, and now to believers in Jesus. The word 'kingdom' has the primary meaning of kingship or royal power. It refers to the people who possess the kingship; the ruling class, the monarchy, the Messiah's government. Jesus is the coming king, and the saints, his people, will reign with him. They will inherit the kingdom (Mt 5:5, James 2:5), and reign with him (2 Tim 2:12) on earth (Rev 5:10), and they will serve God as priests because they alone have access to God and can mediate between him and unbelievers. The monarchy is a fulfillment of Moses' civil law and the priesthood is a fulfillment of the ceremonial law. The phrases 'God's servants' (Rev 1:1) and 'the saints' (Rev 5:8) always refer to Christians in Revelation. They are the royal family; they are heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ (Rom 8:17). That is the climax to which this book inevitably builds.

Jesus' second coming (1:7-8)

Look, he is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him, even those who pierced him; and all the peoples of the earth will mourn because of him. So shall it be! Amen. 8 "I am the Alpha and the Omega," says the Lord God, "who is, and who was, and who is to come, the Almighty."

Isa 40:5 And the glory of the Lord will be revealed, and all people will see it together.

Dan 7:13 In my vision at night I looked, and there before me was one like a son of man, coming with the clouds of heaven.

A key to understanding an author's purpose is to understand his literary structure. With greetings dispensed with, John opens his drama with two dramatic statements. The first is the announcement that the Messiah is coming, and every eye will see him. Isaiah connects his coming with Jerusalem. All the ends of the earth will see the salvation of Israel's God (Isa 52:10). The second is a statement by the Messiah himself, declaring that he is the Almighty God who was and is and is to come (cf. Rev 22:11-13).

'He is coming with the clouds' is from a messianic prophecy in Dan 7:13-14, from which Jesus took the title 'Son of Man'. He will come physically with clouds of angels (Mk 8:38) to establish his eternal kingdom and all nations will serve him.

The chapters leading up to Jesus' dramatic return describe a terrible time of tribulation that will occur under the reign of the Antichrist, culminating in the battle of Armageddon, when the whole world will rebel against God. It will be a time of great suffering, as on the one hand, the Antichrist brings war and persecutes God's people, and on the other, as God pours out his wrath on a defiant world, including the greatest earthquake that man has known. The face of the earth will be destroyed and covered in darkness and telecommunications will be down, so the world's population won't be seeing Jesus' return on phones or TV. His coming will be like lightning flashing across the whole sky.

John alludes to a prophecy in Zech 12:10-12 that predicts that the Jews will look on the one they have pierced, and all their clans will mourn for him. It is the Jews, 'all the tribes of the land', who will mourn for him as they are converted at this time. The unbelievers will not mourn for him;

they can only curse God because of the plagues (Rev 16:9, 11, 21). However, the glory and noise of Jesus' return may be so great that it will be visible to all.

Alpha and Omega are the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet. The Messiah is the Lord God, the first and the Last, the Beginning and the End. He controls all human history. In Revelation, we find that Jesus, the Son of God, is often pictured seated on the throne together with the Father. Jesus said that he and the Father are one (Jn 10:30) and that the Father is in him and he is in the Father (Jn 10:38). Father and Son have equal authority throughout Revelation. Praise is given in one breath to him who sits upon the throne and to the Lamb (5:13. 7:10). The throne of God and the Lamb will be in the city, and his servants will serve *him* (22:3). The pronoun 'him' relates to both God and the Lamb, the Father and the Son.

John, the writer (1:9-11)

I, John, your brother and companion in the suffering and kingdom and patient endurance that are ours in Jesus, was on the island of Patmos because of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus. On the Lord's Day I was in the Spirit, and I heard behind me a loud voice like a trumpet, which said: "Write on a scroll what you see and send it to the seven churches: to Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia and Laodicea."

John never reveals his identity beyond 'John', but early tradition is unanimous that the author was apostle John. He identifies himself with fellow Christians. He is their brother and companion, patiently enduring and suffering with them, imprisoned on the isle of Patmos.

Paul said that we have the privilege, not only of believing in Christ but also of suffering for him (Phil 1:29). He said that we are heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ *if* we share in his sufferings. And we will also share in his glory (Rom 8:17). This theme of martyrdom is emphasized in many verses. See Rev 2:10, 3:10, 6:9-11, 12:17, 13:7, 10, 14:12-13, 16:6, 17:6, 18:24, 20:4. The Church needs to be patient and endure, knowing that a kingdom awaits them. They will reign with the Messiah over the entire world. The kingdoms of this world will become the kingdom of the Messiah, and he will reign forever and ever (Rev 11:15).

The Lord's Day is Sunday, the first day of the week, the day the early Christians chose to meet for worship. John was 'in the Spirit', (see also Rev 4:2), a state of spiritual awareness produced by the Holy Spirit, in which John saw his visions. Visions, in contrast to dreams, are seen while one is awake. He was instructed to write down what he saw in his visions on a scroll, a sheet of parchment, which in the first century was the equivalent of a book. What he saw included specific messages to the seven churches mentioned in verse 4, but in addition, it included all the visions that he saw in the entire book of Revelation.

John heard the voice of the Lord Jesus speaking to him. It sounded like a trumpet, just as Moses had heard on Mount Sinai when he received the Ten Commandments (Ex 19:19).

The Son of Man (1:12-16)

I turned around to see the voice that was speaking to me. And when I turned, I saw seven golden lampstands, and among the lampstands was someone "like a son of man," dressed in a robe reaching down to his feet and with a golden sash around his chest. The hair on his head was white like wool, as white as snow, and his eyes were like blazing fire. His feet were like bronze glowing in a furnace, and his voice was like the sound of rushing waters. In his right hand he held seven stars, and coming out of his mouth was a sharp double-edged sword. His face was like the sun shining in all its brilliance.

Dan 7:9, 13 The Ancient of Days took his seat. His clothing was as white as snow; the hair of his head was white like wool. ... in my vision at night I looked, and there before me was one like a son of man, coming with the clouds of heaven.

Jesus the Messiah is standing there with his face shining like the sun as it did at the transfiguration (Mt 17:2), symbolizing his glory. Out of his mouth comes a sharp double-edged sword (Heb 4:12), symbolizing the power and authority of the word of God. In his hand are seven stars which stand for the messengers of the churches. Some interpret them as guardian angels of the churches, but why would the Lord hold them in his hand and address commendations and rebukes to angels and tell them to repent? The primary meaning of the Greek word ἄγγελος is 'messenger', but it is also used for angels. The church leader who brings God's messages to his flock is the most appropriate interpretation. The title of the book Malachi means 'my messenger' and refers to the prophet Malachi. As in Greek, the Hebrew word means both messenger and angel.

There was a golden lampstand with seven lamps on it in the temple with which Jews were familiar. Instructions on its manufacture are given in Ex 25:31-40. The significance of a lampstand and its lamps is of course that they give light. It is a fitting symbol for the local church.

The title 'Son of Man' is used by Jesus to show himself to be the Messiah, as described in Daniel's prophecy (7:13). It is a title that expresses both

his divinity and humanity. In each context where it is used, it either points to the Messiah's present lowliness or his future glory. In the vision that Daniel saw, God gives glory and kingship to him who appears before him in human form, coming with the clouds of heaven, that all people and nations might honor him. The long robe with a golden sash around the chest was the high priest's attire. Jesus is our high priest, as well as being the coming King, and he makes us to be a kingdom of priests. This is a vision of the glorified Messiah, who was described similarly by Daniel, Isaiah (6:1), and Ezekiel, all of whom saw a glorified human Messiah in their visions.

The resurrected and glorified Jesus (1:17-20)

When I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead. Then he placed his right hand on me and said: "Do not be afraid. I am the First and the Last. I am the Living One; I was dead, and now look, I am alive forever and ever! And I hold the keys of death and Hades. Write, therefore, what you have seen, what is now and what will take place later. The mystery of the seven stars that you saw in my right hand and of the seven golden lampstands is this: The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches, and the seven lampstands are the seven churches."

Isa 41:4b I, the LORD – with the first of them and with the last – I am he.

Isa 44:6 I am the first and I am the last; apart from me there is no God.

Mal 2:7 For the lips of a priest ought to preserve knowledge,

John collapses before this glorious apparition of Jesus, but Jesus reassures him that he is the risen Christ who holds the keys of death and Hades. As Paul said, Christ was raised from the dead, he cannot die again; death no longer has mastery over him (Rom 6:9). Christ is alive forever and holds the keys of death and Hades, the place of departed spirits. It is he who has the power to raise the dead on the day of resurrection. Jesus gave the keys of the kingdom of heaven to Peter so that he and the other apostles could preach the gospel and open the way for believers to enter his earthly kingdom and eternal life (Mt 16:19). Later he breathed on them and told them to receive the Holy Spirit. If they forgave anyone their sins, they would be forgiven; if they didn't forgive them, they wouldn't be forgiven (Jn 20:23-24).

The fact that Jesus holds the keys of death and Hades is an encouragement to the saints; it inspires them in times of tribulation and persecution to persevere and be faithful to their Lord, even if it involves martyrdom. Jesus is the First and the Last; he is sovereign over the whole length of human history, and as he said in John's gospel, he is the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in him will live, even if he dies (Jn 11:25). He died, and yet he is alive forevermore, and the same will be true for those who believe in him.

There is a three-fold division of the book; what is now (chapters 1-5), the things that will take place later (6-18), and Messiah's return and reign (19-22). The whole purpose of God in creating the world is the salvation of those who believe in Jesus, Christians, who are organized into churches and are led by God's messengers.

Jesus stands among the seven churches and holds seven stars in his hand. The stars are interpreted as the messengers of the seven churches, and it is to them that the seven letters of chapters 2-3 are written, not to angels. and indirectly to the churches. The messenger is the church leader; an overseer or shepherd, the one responsible before God for his 'flock'. The

Greek word 'you' is always singular throughout these letters, but sometimes he addresses the whole church, as in 2:24, where he addresses the rest of them. At the end of each letter, all the faithful are requested to listen to what the Spirit is saying to the churches.

Ephesus – the church that lost its first love (2:1-7)

To the angel of the church in Ephesus write: These are the words of him who holds the seven stars in his right hand and walks among the seven golden lampstands: I know your deeds, your hard work and your perseverance. I know that you cannot tolerate wicked men, that you have tested those who claim to be apostles but are not and have found them false. You have persevered and have endured hardships for my name, and have not grown weary. Yet I hold this against you: You have forsaken the love you had at first. Consider how far you have fallen! Repent and do the things you did at first. If you do not repent, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place. But you have this in your favor: You hate the practices of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate. Whoever has ears, let them hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To the one who is victorious, I will give the right to eat from the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God.

Gen 2:9 In the middle of the garden were the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

Each letter begins with a different description of the author, Jesus, as he was described in Chapter 1. Paul spent two years ministering to the church in Ephesus. He was preceded by Aquila and Priscila and followed by Timothy and John. So, the saints there had great teachers. There were no church buildings at that time, the word ‘church’ refers to a group of believers who met weekly, usually on Sundays in someone’s home.

The seven letters are addressed to the *messenger* of each church, and the commendations, complaints, and corrections relate primarily to him, but ‘whoever has an ear’ is encouraged to listen to what the Spirit says to the churches.

The Ephesian church leader had worked hard and persevered in the face of persecution. He had made a stand against false teachers and prophets and had not grown weary. The first love is the initial enthusiasm or devotion (Jer 2:2) the leader had when he first believed. That initial love had waned, his love for God, and maybe his love for others also. If a leader’s love has grown cold, he has lost his purpose and ceases to be a true leader. Loving God and your neighbor is the greatest of all the commandments. He may have been doctrinally correct, hating the practices of the Nicolaitan heresy, but faith must always be accompanied

by love. Jesus tells his servant to repent. Otherwise, his church would be removed.

The tree of life gives immortality to those who eat its fruit. After Adam and Eve sinned in the Garden of Eden, the Tree of Life was denied them. Paradise in Revelation is New Jerusalem which God has prepared for us, wherein God and believers will be restored to perfect fellowship, and man will rule as he was created to do (Rev 22:2, 14, 19).

Smyrna - the suffering church (2:8-11)

To the angel of the church in Smyrna write: These are the words of him who is the First and the Last, who died and came to life again. I know your afflictions and your poverty - yet you are rich! I know about the slander of those who say they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan. Do not be afraid of what you are about to suffer. I tell you, the devil will put some of you in prison to test you, and you will suffer persecution for ten days. Be faithful, even to the point of death, and I will give you life as your victor's crown. Whoever has ears, let them hear what the Spirit says to the churches. The one who is victorious will not be hurt at all by the second death.

Dan 1:12 Please test your servants for ten days.

God allows his servants to live in poverty and with afflictions because they can be sorrowful, yet always rejoicing, poor, yet making many rich,

having nothing, yet possessing everything (2 Cor 6:10). God chose those who are poor in the eyes of the world to be rich in faith, and to inherit the kingdom he promised those who love him (James 2:5). They are the fortunate ones; their sins are forgiven, they are children of God and co-heirs with Christ. Their reward is great. To have Christ is to have everything.

Unfortunately, in different times and places, Christians are called upon to live in hostile environments, where they are treated as second-class citizens and suffer economically. The Smyrna leader suffered much. He had to put up with the slander of an actively hostile Jewish population, whose synagogue belonged to Satan rather than God.

Polycarp, a leader at Smyrna, was an early martyr. The devil is behind these persecutions, which are allowed to test the faith of God's servants for a sufficiently long time (ten days). Jesus encourages him to be faithful, even if it means death, because he will give him the crown of life; the reward of eternal life and ruling with the Messiah. Christians who persevere and stand firm to the end will be saved (Mt 10:22). The second death is hellfire, called the lake of fire in Rev 20:14, and the fiery lake of burning sulfur in 21:8. It has no power over overcomers who will be resurrected, becoming immortal.

Millions of Christians in the world today live in hostile environments because they belong to ethnic or religious minorities. Thousands die as Christian martyrs each year, especially the leaders. John tells us that there will be an enormous number of martyrs in the last days, so we need to think seriously about Jesus' command to be faithful, even to the point of death, and he will give us the crown of life.

Pergamum – the church that tolerates false teaching (2:12-17)

To the angel of the church in Pergamum write: These are the words of him who has the sharp, double-edged sword. I know where you live - where Satan has his throne. Yet you remain true to my name. You did not renounce your faith in me, not even in the days of Antipas, my faithful witness, who was put to death in your city - where Satan lives. Nevertheless, I have a few things against you: There are some among you who hold to the teaching of Balaam, who taught Balak to entice the Israelites to sin so that they ate food sacrificed to idols and committed sexual immorality. Likewise, you also have those who hold to the teaching of the Nicolaitans. Repent therefore! Otherwise, I will soon come to you and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth. Whoever has ears, let them hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To the one who is victorious, I will give some of the hidden manna. I will also give that person a white stone with a new name written on it, known only to the one who receives it.

Ex 16:4, 31 I will rain down bread from heaven for you ... The people of Israel called the bread manna.

Num 31:16 They were the ones who followed Balaam's advice and enticed the Israelites to be unfaithful to the Lord in the Peor

Pergamum was the official center of emperor worship in Asia (present Western Turkey), so it is described as a place where Satan lived and had his throne. Pergamum is known for its many martyrs. Satan and his demons are active in all our towns and cities, but like God, they live in a different realm. Satan influences governments to be anti-Christian, and demons enslave people through superstitions and animistic religion. Demon possession and black magic are still common in many parts of the world. Balaam symbolizes false teachers who compromise with morality. This leader turned a blind eye toward some in his congregation who embraced this false teaching.

Satan is mentioned 35 times in the New Testament, including four times in these letters. We should not doubt his existence. He is also called the dragon, the ancient serpent (from Gen 3), or the devil. He is a deceiver and an accuser. Paul calls him the ruler of the domain of the air, the spirit who is presently at work in those who are disobedient (Eph 2:2), and he says that our struggle is not against humans, but against the cosmic powers of the darkness around us, the evil spiritual forces in the heavenly realm (Eph 6:12).

The sword in Jesus' mouth represents his authority. Compare Rev 19:15, and 2 Thess 2:8, where the Lord Jesus overthrows the lawless one with the breath of his mouth. The promises of Jesus in each letter apply to the

time when he returns, and the saints are resurrected. He is the resurrection and the life (Jn 11:25), the true bread from heaven (Jn 6:32). Whoever eats that manna will live forever. The white stone was sent as an invitation. Here, it is an invitation to the Messianic banquet, and the recipient will have a secret name. Jesus will also have a name on him, known only to himself (Rev 19:12).

Thyatira – the church that tolerates paganism (2:18-25)

To the angel of the church in Thyatira write: These are the words of the Son of God, whose eyes are like blazing fire and whose feet are like burnished bronze. I know your deeds, your love and faith, your service and perseverance, and that you are now doing more than you did at first. Nevertheless, I have this against you: You tolerate that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophet. By her teaching she misleads my servants into sexual immorality and the eating of food sacrificed to idols. I have given her time to repent of her immorality, but she is unwilling. So I will cast her on a bed of suffering, and I will make those who commit adultery with her suffer intensely, unless they repent of her ways. I will strike her children dead. Then all the churches will know that I am he who searches hearts and minds, and I will repay each of you according to your deeds. Now I say to the rest of you in Thyatira, to you who do not hold to her teaching and have not learned Satan's so-called deep secrets 'I will not impose any other burden on you, 25except to hold on to what you have until I come.

1 Kings 21:25 There was never anyone like Ahab, who sold himself to do evil in the eyes of the LORD, urged on by Jezebel his wife.

After initial commendation for his faith, love, service, and perseverance, the Lord blames the church leader for tolerating a so-called prophetess who led people into immorality and idolatry. Converts from pagan backgrounds often find it hard to change their worldview and relinquish their previous spiritual convictions, including idolatry and food laws. Jesus declared all foods clean (Mk 7:18-19) and good for Christians to eat, but Paul warned against eating food offered to idols. Those who fear and follow their traditions ignore and nullify the word of God. Let the word of God go deep into your lives. Doctrine is important; it determines your behavior. Both bad habits and bad beliefs must be repented of. Otherwise, we can expect suffering in this world and the next (2:22).

Committing adultery with this prophetess means joining with her in her idolatrous ways and its associated immorality, including sacrificing to idols. She and her followers were to be punished with sickness and death. They will be made examples of so that other believers will not be tempted to join them. The Son of God, whose eyes are like blazing fire, knows the hearts and minds of all and repays everyone according to their behavior.

Tolerance is the buzzword of our day. Non-judgmentalism means that we have no right to judge the actions of others, no matter how immoral or sinful we believe them to be. There is no right or wrong, no male or female, no place for the Ten Commandments. The leader had tolerated Jezebel and her teachings, and some in the church had been led astray. Maybe they were taught that what was done in the body would not affect their spiritual lives. Or maybe they were taught that to appreciate the grace of God fully, they must first experience the depths of evil. But God said that we should be holy because he is holy (1 Pet 1:16). Jesus encourages the faithful to persevere until he returns.

Overcomers will rule with the Messiah (2:26-29)

To the one who is victorious and does my will to the end, I will give authority over the nations – that one 'will rule them with an iron scepter and will dash them to pieces like pottery' - just as I have received authority from my Father. I will also give that one the morning star. Whoever has ears, let them hear what the Spirit says to the churches.

Num 24:17 A star will come out of Jacob; a scepter will rise out of Israel.

Ps 2:6-9 I have installed my King on Zion, my holy mountain. I will proclaim the LORD's decree: He said to me, "You are my Son; today I have become your father. Ask me, and I will make the nations your inheritance, the ends of the earth your possession. You will break them with a rod of iron; you will dash them to pieces like pottery."

The important Messianic Psalm 2 is quoted here. Immediately after his return, the Messiah will rule over the nations. He will rule them with severity until all his enemies are subdued. He will restore the world that has been marred by the curse and will be nearly destroyed by man in the last days. As the Jewish Messiah, he will restore the kingdom to Israel (Acts 1:6) and reign from Jerusalem.

The promise here to the overcomers is that they will rule with him. The authority that his Father has given him will be shared with the saints who will be resurrected or transformed upon Jesus' return. They will reign with the Messiah in his kingdom. The word 'kingdom' means kingship or royal authority. The saints are not subjects of this kingdom, they are children of God, heirs of God, and co-heirs with Christ. They will take part in the Messiah's government, as illustrated in the parable of the minas. One good servant's reward for his faithfulness in doing small things was to have charge of ten cities in his Master's coming kingdom (Lk 19:17).

The creation is waiting in eager expectation for the sons of God to be revealed (Rom 8:19). During the Messiah's 1000-year reign the creation will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God (Rom 8:21).

In Rev 22, Jesus declares that he is the Root and Offspring of David and the bright Morning Star. The morning star is the planet Venus that signals the dawn. When Jesus returns, it will be the dawn of a new age, it will be the dawn of eternal life for the overcomers. That seems to be the meaning of the promise of the morning star. Dan 12:3 says those who are wise will shine like the brightness of the heavens, and those who lead many to righteousness, like the stars forever.

Sardis – the dying church (3:1-6)

To the angel of the church in Sardis write: These are the words of him who holds the seven spirits of God and the seven stars. I know your deeds; you have a reputation of being alive, but you are dead. Wake up! Strengthen what remains and is about to die, for I have found your deeds unfinished in the sight of my God. Remember, therefore, what you have received and heard; obey it, and repent. But if you do not wake up, I will come like a thief, and you will not know at what time I will come to you. Yet you have a few people in Sardis who have not soiled their clothes. They will walk with me, dressed in white, for they are worthy. The one who is victorious will, like them, be dressed in white. I will never blot out the name of that person from the Book of Life, but will acknowledge that name before my Father and his angels. Whoever has ears, let them hear what the Spirit says to the churches.

Ex 32:32 But now, please forgive their sin – but if not, then blot me (Moses) out of the book you have written.

Ps 69:28 May they be blotted out of the Book of Life and not be listed with the righteous.

Rev 13:1b But at that time your people – everyone whose name

Jesus holds the seven spirits of God. This phrase expresses the presence of the Holy Spirit whom he promised to send to his followers from the Father. The Holy Spirit is our Counselor, the Spirit of Truth (Jn 15:26). Jesus is presently seated at the right hand of God and he continues to send the Spirit to believers, just as he did on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:33). We have already seen that the seven stars in his hand are the seven messengers of the seven churches. The churches are under his supervision.

Only those who have the Spirit of Christ living in them belong to Christ. It is they who are spiritually alive and who will be resurrected (Rom 8:9-11). Those without the Spirit of God are fake Christians; they are described as asleep or dead; they don't know God. The church leader at Sardis was asleep. He is told to wake up, repent, and obey the word of God that he has heard. Otherwise, Jesus will return when he doesn't expect him, and he will be like one of the foolish virgins who were not prepared when the bridegroom returned (Mt 25:10-13).

However, some in the Sardis assembly were not asleep. They were spiritually alive, and their sins had been forgiven. They had received the righteousness that comes from God, symbolized by the white robes. They were worthy because their faith and their conduct had proved them to be worthy. They will be the overcomers on that day when Christ returns. Their names are written in the Lamb's Book of Life and will never be erased. Christ will vouch for them before the Father (Mt 10:32). They are not nominal Christians; they are genuine. Jesus told his disciples to rejoice because their names are recorded in heaven (Lk 10:20).

Philadelphia – the evangelistic church (3:7-10)

To the angel of the church in Philadelphia write: These are the words of him who is holy and true, who holds the key of David. What he opens no one can shut, and what he shuts no one can open. I know your deeds. See, I have placed before you an open door that no one can shut. I know that you have little strength, yet you have kept my word and have not denied my name. I will make those who are of the synagogue of Satan, who claim to be Jews though they are not, but are liars - I will make them come and fall down at your feet and acknowledge that I have loved you. Since you have kept my command to endure patiently, I will also keep you from the hour of trial that is going to come upon the whole world to test the inhabitants of the earth.

Isa 22:22 I will place on his shoulder the key to the house of David; what he opens no one can shut, and what he shuts no one can open.

Isa 60:14 The children of your oppressors will come bowing before you; all who despise you will bow down at your feet and will call you the City of the LORD, Zion of the Holy One of Israel.

Dan 12:1 There will be a time of distress such as has not happened from the beginning of nations until then. But at that time your people – everyone whose name is found written in the book – will be delivered.

Christ holds the key of David; he controls access to the house of David, the royal household. During the Messianic reign, it is the Church, the children of God, who will constitute the royal household and reign with Christ. During this present Church age, the Church is being called out of all nations. After Paul's first missionary journey, he returned to Antioch and reported all that God had done through them and how he *had opened the door of faith to the Gentiles* (Acts 14:27). The Philadelphian leader was an evangelist, he was busy spreading the gospel. He didn't have much strength, but Christ knew his deeds, and he placed before him an open door. The Lord has been opening doors for his servants for centuries, and people have heard the gospel and responded. They have entered the kingdom as members of the royal house of David (For open doors see also: 1 Cor 16:9, 2 Cor 2:12, Col 4:3).

This leader had a major conflict with a synagogue who opposed him. During the Messianic reign, every knee will bow to Jesus, and all those who oppressed Christian workers will now be forced to acknowledge that they are the beloved of the Messiah.

The reward for his endurance and faithfulness is that he (or other faithful people alive at the time) will be kept from the hour of trial that is coming upon the whole world. This is not a promise of pretribulation rapture as taught by some, and which has little scriptural support, but rather a promise of preservation through trial following Jesus' prayer to the Father, when he said he was asking God to take them out of the world, but that he would protect them from the evil one (Jn 17:15). In the history of the spread of Christianity, there have always been martyrs. The Lord does not necessarily save his people from persecution and martyrdom. We are called not only to believe in Jesus but also to suffer for him (Phil 1:29).

In Rev 6:11 the souls of those who had been slain for the word of God were told to wait until the number of their fellow servants and brothers who were to be killed as they had been was completed.

An hour of trial may refer to any time of persecution of Christians, but here the hour of trial that is going to come upon the whole world is the Great Tribulation (Mk 13:19), which occurs at the end of this age. This trial is the focus of the Book of Revelation from chapters 6 - 18. During this time an out-of-control dictator will be causing havoc and God's wrath will be poured out on unbelievers. It is not directed toward believers, but the destruction will be so universal, it is hard to see how Christians will not be affected. Jesus said, not a hair of our heads will perish (Lk 21:18), but he was talking about our eternal security, not physical safety. As martyrs will soon be resurrected, nothing perishes.

The Philadelphian leader won't be around for the Great Tribulation, but the warnings and promises to these church leaders apply to churches and Christians of any age that fit the mold as described for them.

It is obvious from the coming chapters that Christians will suffer persecution during the last days, but they are not the objects of God's wrath. By persevering and remaining faithful unto death, they will not love their lives when faced with death (Rev 12:11), and their greatest victory will be achieved. Believers in a pre-tribulation rapture rapture themselves out of the Great Tribulation and then replace themselves with converts from that period. That doesn't make sense. Once the Church is raptured, the door is shut, and entry into the Messiah's monarchy is closed. Those who are alive at the Lord's coming will be raptured at his coming, and at the same time God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep (died) in him. The Second Coming, the Resurrection, and the Rapture are contemporaneous.

Overcomers will be pillars in God's temple (3:11-13)

I am coming soon. Hold on to what you have, so that no one will take your crown. The one who is victorious I will make a pillar in the temple of my God. Never again will they leave it. I will write on them the name of my God and the name of the city of my God, the new Jerusalem, which is coming down out of heaven from my God; and I will also write on them my new name. Whoever has ears, let them hear what the Spirit says to the churches.

Ezek 48:35b And the name of the city from that time on will be: THE LORD IS THERE.

A pillar is stable and permanent. The righteous will not be literal pillars; they are indwelt by the Spirit of God, and they will dwell permanently with God. Paul said that we are God's temple because God's Spirit lives in us (1 Cor 3:16). In Christ we are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit (Eph 2:22).

In Rev 14:1 the 144,000 have the name of the Lamb and the Father written on their foreheads; a sure sign of possession. Here Jesus writes his name

and the Father's name and the name of New Jerusalem on the overcomers, and also his new name. They have a special relationship to Jesus and the Father, and New Jerusalem will be their eternal home. The throne of God and the Lamb will be in New Jerusalem, and we will serve him. We will see his face, and his name will be on our foreheads (Rev 22:3-4). New Jerusalem is the bride of Christ, the glorified Church. It is a metaphor for the universal community of God's people. The saints are God's royal family, and they will rule with him forever and ever. Only those whose names are written in the Lamb's Book of Life may enter this city (community). This is our destiny on the new earth. The city will come down out of heaven from God. The dwelling of God will be with men. He will live with them, and they will be his people, and he'll be their God (Rev 21:3).

All the promises made to the overcomers relate to our eternal union with God as described in Rev 21:1 to 22:5: The promises are New Jerusalem (21:2), no second death (21:8), our names in the book of life (21:27), the tree of life (22:2), reigning forever (22:5), a new name (22:5), and the morning star (22:16); the promise of entry into the new age.

Laodicea - the lukewarm church (3:14-22)

To the angel of the church in Laodicea write: These are the words of the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the ruler of God's creation. I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot. I wish you were either one or the other! So, because you are lukewarm - neither hot nor cold - I am about to spit you out of my mouth. You say, 'I am rich; I have acquired wealth and do not need a thing.' But you do not realize that you are wretched, pitiful, poor, blind, and naked. I counsel you to buy from me gold refined in the fire, so you can become rich; and white clothes to wear, so you can cover your shameful nakedness; and salve to put on your eyes, so you can see. Those whom I love I rebuke and discipline. So be earnest, and repent. Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with that person, and they with me. To the one who is victorious, I will give the right to sit with me on my throne, just as I overcame and sat down with my Father on his throne. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.

Isa 65:16 Whoever invokes a blessing in the land will do so by the one true God of (the Hebrew word for true is amen).

God does not like lukewarm Christians. He is a jealous God, meaning that he demands exclusive service (Deut 6:14-15). 'Amen' signifies what is valid and binding or changeless. Christ is the truth (Jn 14:6), he is

trustworthy and faithful, in contrast to the Laodicean leader. He is the ruler of God's creation. The word 'ruler' can also mean that Jesus is the origin or first cause of creation. He is not the beginning of creation; that would mean he was the first thing created.

The Laodicean church was rich, but wealth is not the strength of a church or its leader. Maybe he had not invested in God but in this world. His focus was not on the spiritual but on the physical and material. Wealth without the gospel results in spiritual poverty and blindness. His state before God was pitiful and wretched. And he was naked because he was not clothed with the righteousness that Christ provides.

He is counseled to buy gold refined in the fire (genuine riches of faith - 1 Pet 1:7), white clothes (righteousness provided by God - Mt 6:33), and eye salve to correct his spiritual blindness. Paul prayed that the hearts of the Ephesian Christians might be enlightened so that they might know the glorious inheritance that God has called them to (Eph 1:18-19). The Lord wants his servants to have true wealth, not the passing riches of this world.

As all good fathers should do, the Lord rebukes and disciplines those whom he loves. He is standing at the door and knocking, and the invitation is addressed to individuals rather than churches. This picture was made famous by Holman Hunt's painting 'The Light of the World', where Christ is knocking at a door overgrown with vines, and there is no doorknob on the outside. Those who open the door to him and receive him and believe in his name become children of God (Jn 1:12). To the contrary, anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him (Rom 8:9). He promises to come in if only we will open the door.

The overcomers, those who are saved by trusting in Jesus and persevering through trial, have a glorious future. They are called according to God's purpose. They are predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son. They are justified and glorified. This glorification consists of being resurrected with immortal bodies and reigning with Christ during the millennium and on into eternity. Jesus will give them the right to sit with him on his throne (on earth), just as Jesus sat down with his Father on his throne (in heaven).

Christ is knocking and waiting for individuals to invite him in. He is doing it now, it has nothing to do with his return. He wants to come in

and eat with us; to have fellowship with us, sharing spiritual food in an atmosphere of intimacy, affection, and companionship. This is real life. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.

John's vision of God's throne (4:1-3)

After this I looked, and there before me was a door standing open in heaven. And the voice I had first heard speaking to me like a trumpet said, "Come up here, and I will show you what must take place after this." At once I was in the Spirit, and there before me was a throne in heaven with someone sitting on it. And the one who sat there had the appearance of jasper and ruby. A rainbow that shone like an emerald encircled the throne.

Gen 9:16 Whenever the rainbow appears in the clouds, I will see it and remember the everlasting covenant between God and all living creatures of every kind on the earth.

Isa 6:1 I (Isaiah) saw the Lord, high and exalted, seated on a throne, and the train of his robe filled the temple.

Ezek 1:26-28a Above the vault over their heads was what looked like a throne of lapis lazuli, and high above on the throne was a figure like that of a man. I (Ezekiel) saw that from what appeared to be his waist up he looked like glowing metal, as if full of fire; and that from there down he looked like fire; and brilliant light surrounded him. Like the appearance of a rainbow in the clouds on a rainy day, so was the radiance around him.

Dan 7:9 As I looked, thrones were set in place, and the Ancient of Day took his seat. His clothing was as white as snow, the hair of his head was white like wool. His throne was flaming with fire, and its wheels were all ablaze.

John, in a vision, sees an open door in heaven. Then Jesus calls him to come and see what must soon take place. He enters heaven through the door, as in a dream, and what he sees, he records in the rest of the book. He is fully conscious, and he sees the future. He is not really in heaven, and what he sees is not reality, it is a vision. All the same, what he sees is accurately reflecting the things that must take place, the visions recorded in chapters 4 – 22.

In his vision, he sees God sitting on his throne. Can you imagine God sitting on a chair? The vision expresses God's sovereignty. His glory resembles the glory of precious stones, and a green rainbow surrounds the throne. Imagine the brilliant color. Unfortunately, we don't know exactly what jasper and carnelian looked like, but this is a metaphor, fuel for our imagination. Daniel says his throne was flaming with fire, and its wheels were all ablaze. Ezekiel's vision of the Lord was a figure like that of a man; not meaning that God is a man, but man's body is the most perfect body that we know of, the most appropriate body for rendering visible God's invisible spiritual being. Attributing a human form or personality to God is called an anthropomorphism.

Since the days of Noah, the rainbow has been the sign of God's covenant with mankind, God's commitment that he would never again destroy living things by a worldwide flood. God is always faithful to the covenants he makes.

John does not tell us what the person on the throne looks like, but our impression will be that in visions at least, he looks like a man. So, he is pictured as sitting on a throne, wearing clothes, and having a head of white hair. We know that man was created in the image of God, but we can't be certain how this relates to God's spiritual form. However, in the future, we will see his face (Rev 22:4).

God's heavenly council (4:4-7)

Surrounding the throne were twenty-four other thrones and seated on them were twenty-four elders. They were dressed in white and had crowns of gold on their heads. From the throne came flashes of lightning, rumblings, and peals of thunder. In front of the throne, seven lamps were blazing. These are the seven spirits of God. Also in front of the throne there was what looked like a sea of glass, clear as crystal. In the center, around the throne, were four living creatures, and they were covered with eyes, in front and in back. The first living creature was like a lion, the second was like an ox, the third had a face like a man, the fourth was like a flying eagle.

Ezek 1:4-6, 10, 22 I looked, and I saw a windstorm coming out of the north – an immense cloud with flashing lightning and surrounded by brilliant light. The center of the fire looked like glowing metal, and in the fire were what looked like four living creatures. In appearance their form was human, but each of them had four faces and four wings. Their faces looked like this: Each of the four had a face like a human being, and on the right side each had the face of a lion, and on the left the face of an ox; each also had the face of an eagle. 22 Spread out above the heads of the living creatures was what looked something like a vault, sparkling like crystal, and awesome.

Ezek 10:12 Their entire bodies, including their backs, their hands and their wings, were completely full of eyes, as were their four wheels.

Who are these 24 rulers surrounding God's throne? The Greek word πρεσβύτερος, from which 'priest' is derived, means elder, official, or leader. It was used both for members of the Jewish Sanhedrin and for leaders of the churches. The white clothing is symbolic of their imputed righteousness, and the golden crowns of their reward, variously described in the epistles as crowns of righteousness, life, and glory. The number 24 represents the 12 Jewish tribes from the Old Covenant and the 12 apostles from the New Covenant. Their names are also written on the gates and foundations of New Jerusalem (Rev 21:12, 14). The saints are co-heirs with Christ, so it is not surprising to see them connected to God's throne. Man was created to rule the world, and only redeemed man is given this privilege. So, the 24 elders represent the saints, the Church.

Thunder and lightning express the awesomeness of God's majesty and power. The seven lamps represent the Holy Spirit, who is never represented in Scripture as reigning or on the throne, despite his deity. The glassy sea is immortalized in the hymn Holy, holy, holy', by the line 'all the saints adore thee, casting down their golden crowns around the glassy sea.' *The sea of glass is a sea that is as transparent as glass, and as clear as crystal. It symbolizes the tranquility of God's throne. Imagine the colors of the throne being reflected in it. A throne room is at the center of government, and here, everything is under control. The sea of glass contrasts with the turbulent seas of the world.*

The four living creatures, also called cherubim, are throne attendants who represent the world of nature, which will be liberated from its bondage to decay during the Messiah's reign on earth. So, it is appropriate that these creatures join in praising God. The lion, ox, man, and eagle represent wild animals, domestic animals, mankind, and birds. The fact that they are in heaven gives us hope that God's creation will in some way continue to exist throughout eternity.

Worshipping God in heaven (4:8-11)

Each of the four living creatures had six wings and was covered with eyes all around, even under his wings. Day and night they never stop saying: "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty, who was, and is, and is to come." Whenever the living creatures give glory, honor and thanks to him who sits on the throne and who lives forever and ever, the 24 elders fall down before him who sits on the throne, and worship him who lives forever and ever. They lay their crowns before the throne and say: "You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they were created and have their being."

Isa 6:2-3 Above him were seraphs, each with six wings: With two wings they covered their faces, with two they covered their feet, and with two they were flying. And they were calling to one another: "Holy, holy, holy is the LORD Almighty; the whole earth is full of his glory."

In Ezekiel, the cherubim have four wings, and in Isaiah, the seraphs have six wings as here. They represent creation, just as the 24 elders represent redeemed humanity, but they also portray God's attributes as reflected in creation: his majesty (lion), his omniscience (eagle), his omnipotence (ox), and his personhood (man). They are throne attendants, covered with eyes, front and back, and under the wings, indicating that nothing escapes their attention. In Genesis 3:24, cherubim were stationed at the entrance to the Garden of Eden to guard the way to the Tree of Life. They praise and thank the sovereign, eternal God day and night, acknowledging his majesty.

The 24 elders bow down and join in the worship, acknowledging his sovereignty by casting their crowns down before him. They rule with God but are completely submissive to him. They praise him as the Creator of all things and recognize that his will is supreme. He does whatever he wants and is the source of all life. The key word is 'holy' which relates to his deity, his perfection, his apartness, his authority, and power.

This is the throne room in heaven. This is the center of the universe, where God controls and sustains everything. This is the place where man's destiny is determined. Human history is under God's control, and the next chapter introduces us to the Lamb, the Savior of the world, who will reveal to John, and us, the events that must occur before the end of this age. The Lamb is the one who was sacrificed so that people from every tribe and language, and people and nation might be redeemed. He is also the coming Messiah, who will come to defeat the enemy and eliminate all evil. He will rule the world and restore it to its pre-curse condition, and then hand his kingdom over to God the Father.

Here is a book that was written before creation and in which are recorded all the details of our lives (Ps 139:16), and the entire history of the world. It rests in the hand of God who knows and controls everything. Daniel was told things that were written in this 'Book of Truth' (Dan 10:21), and that at a certain time everyone whose name was written in the book would be delivered (Dan 12:1).

The books of the Bible and other documents used to be written on scrolls. They could be rolled up and sealed with wax, and then stamped for security. So, Daniel was told to shut up (in archives) and seal (preserve for posterity) what had been revealed to him from that book. Copies were made, which were made public.

This scroll is of unparalleled significance. In it is written the destiny of the world as determined by the sovereign will of God. We live in the last days, the time that extends from Pentecost to the Second Coming. It is time for what God has determined to be revealed. But we are not given dates, or names of people and places; prophecy is necessarily obscure.

As the seals are removed, some things will be revealed. The destiny of the world is a broad subject, but more specifically, it is Jesus the Messiah who is revealed. And not only he. Paul tells us that the creation is waiting in eager expectation for the sons of God to be revealed (Rom 8:19). If Jesus' return to earth as the King of kings is one climax to the book, an associated climax is the glorification of the children of God, and another is the liberation of creation from its bondage to decay. Paul considers that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us (Rom 8:18).

Most of the book of Revelation describes the sufferings that we might experience before our glorification. Jesus said that nations will continue to be at war with each other, and there will be famines and earthquakes. but these are only the beginning of birth pains (Mt 24:7-8). As the seals are broken, the events of the last days are revealed to John in a series of visions, and through John to the servants of God who read his book. Jesus told his disciples about this renewal of all things, which will occur when he sits on his glorious throne and his disciples reign with him (Mt 19:28). But who is worthy to bring history to its foreordained consummation and reveal the future rulers? A mighty angel made a proclamation everywhere, and John was very upset that no one worthy was found.

The Messiah is worthy to open the scroll (5:5-8)

Then one of the elders said to me, "Do not weep! See, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has triumphed. He is able to open the scroll and its seven seals." Then I saw a Lamb, looking

One of the elders tells John not to weep. Someone has been found worthy! He is the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the promised Messiah, the coming king of Israel. He has triumphed. Jesus conquered sin Satan and death by his self-sacrifice on the cross. He now has the authority to defeat all his enemies, both human and demonic, to establish his kingdom on earth, and

to bring this earth to a fitting conclusion. Because of Jesus, history will have a good ending, like a fairy tale. Life is not meaningless.

Jesus descended from the tribe of Judah, the tribe from which kings arose. He is the conquering Messiah to whom the scepter belongs (Gen 49:10). But rather than him being depicted as a lion, he is seen as a sacrificial animal, a lamb that looks as if it has been slain, bearing the marks of slaughter. Imagine our Savior in his humiliation, how he suffered and died for us. But now he has ascended to heaven and is standing in the center of the throne, elsewhere described as seated at the right hand of the Father. His exalted position means equality with God. His seven horns depict his universal power, and his seven eyes are identified here as the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth; the Holy Spirit, whom he sends on a worldwide mission, to regenerate and to indwell believers (Jn 16:7), and to mark them as a seal (Ephesian 4:30), until Christ returns to establish his kingdom.

Jesus comes and takes the scroll from the hand of the Father while all who are present fall down prostrate to worship him. They hold harps, symbolizing the musical accompaniment, and bowls of incense, symbolizing the constant prayer of the saints, as in the Lord's prayer that his kingdom will come, and his will be done on earth. The prayers of the saints of all ages have been heard, and now God will answer them. These prayers play an essential part in bringing justice to the earth, and judgment upon the rebellious inhabitants.

Praising the Messiah who suffered (5:9-14)

And they sang a new song, saying: "You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, because you were slain, and with your blood you purchased for God persons from every tribe and language and people and nation. You have made

The Lamb is worthy to open the seals and reveal the future because by his death he paid the price for the salvation of millions of souls; people from all language groups. He is the one who will bring the world to its planned consummation. He gave his life as a ransom for many (Mt 20:28); they were bought with a price (1 Cor 6:20); with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect (1 Pet 1:19).

The saints have been made a kingdom of priests to serve their God, which was explained in 1:6. The significant information here is that they will reign *on earth*. However, some translate *over the earth*, which I prefer, because after resurrection, our home will be in New Jerusalem, not on earth. We will rule over the earth with Christ for 1000 years from a

different space-time dimension, and forever after (22:5). This is eternal life! This is what we were saved for! This is our glorification.

Millions of angels join in this celebration in heaven. God's will has been accomplished. The Lord Jesus Christ receives power, wealth, wisdom, strength, honor, glory, and praise. The angels are not exalted like the saints, who will be glorified and will reign with Christ (Heb 2:5-8). The angels are not seated on thrones, and they don't address the Lamb directly. They are described as ministering spirits sent to serve those who will inherit salvation (Heb 1:14). All creation joins in to praise both Father and Son. The living creatures say, 'Amen', while the elders, who represent the saints, fall down and worship.

The living creatures and the elders sing a new song because of new circumstances; they celebrate a new act of divine deliverance. Not only are the saints saved from their sins and made righteous, but now they are about to rule the nations on earth under their king, the Messiah, and creation will be liberated from its bondage to decay.