

## COMMENTS on REVELATION samples: The Visions (Chapters 4 through 6)

### Chapter 4

“Unlike chapters 2 and 3, which are focused on the conditions of seven churches located in western Asia Minor, the focus of chapters 4 and 5 is heaven [or, the realm of spirit]” (Metzger, *ibid* p 47; brackets added). I suggest that the setting of this chapter is God’s spiritual temple, of which the tabernacle and temple in the OT were types.

**1. After these things I saw** (or: perceived) – **and now consider this!** – **A door** (or: gate; entrance; portal), **having been opened** (thus: standing open) **within the atmosphere** (or: heaven; sky). **And the first sound** (or: voice) **which I hear** (or: heard) **[is; was] as a war-trumpet talking with me, saying, “Come up here** (Ascend to this place), **and I will proceed showing you what things it is necessary** (binding) **to birth** (to come to be in existence) **after these things.”**

In Jn. 10:7, Jesus instructed us,

**“I tell you, and it is certainly true** (amen, amen), **I Myself am the Door for the sheep** (or: the sheep’s Gate and Entrance).”

Then in vs. 9 He repeats this idea,

**“I Myself am the Door** (or: Gate; Entrance); **if anyone should enter in through Me he will be constantly kept safe and protected** (made whole and returned to his original condition; rescued; delivered; saved), **and he will be habitually going in** (entering) **and going out** (exiting), **and he will continue finding pasture** (something to feed on).”

So we may assume that this is another symbolic representation of the risen Christ: the Door into the atmosphere of the kingdom of God. He is our entrance into the realm of God’s Spirit. We were just told that the Lord stands at the door and is knocking (3:20). He set a door of opportunity before the Church within Philadelphia (3:8a) – or was that also a door of access into a higher realm? In any case or situation, Jesus is always our Way (Jn. 14:6) of entry or passage.

Here we have a **door** having been **opened** to John, within heaven (or: **the atmosphere**). Metzger points out that, from the perfect tense of the verb, this door remains open (*ibid*). Borg comments that, “He then looks through that door into another level of reality” (*ibid* p 271). There are other “openings” in this Unveiling: in 19:11, below, we see heaven itself “opened” (*cf* Matt. 3:16 where Jesus sees the heavens opened, at His baptism). In 9:2, below, we find “opened” the well (or, pit, shaft) of the abyss (the bottomless; the deep – this word was used in the LXX in Gen.1:2; 7:11; Isa. 44:27; 51:10; 63:13; Amos 7:4; Jonah 2:5); then in 12:16, below, the earth “opens” her mouth to swallow up a river. There are openings of scrolls and seals. In 11:19, below, God’s temple (which is the Body of Christ – 2 Cor. 6:16) is “opened” within heaven (which is a figure for His body being in the realm of the “spirit,” i.e., in heaven); then in 15:5 the temple pertaining to the tabernacle of witness is also “opened” within heaven (does this speak of “the body of Moses” [*cf* Jude 9; 1 Cor. 10:2; Heb. 3:2]? We find the term “tabernacle of witness” used in the O.T. for the tabernacle in the wilderness – Num. 9:15; 17:7; 18:2). These “openings” seem to speak of access, of things released or consumed, and of revelation. What has been opened signifies that “the way is clear for others, as well as the seer” (Metzger, *ibid*). The allusion is to Ezk. 1:1, “the heavens were ‘opened,’ and I saw visions of God.” It also reaches back to Jacob’s dream in Gen. 28:12-15, where, in vs. 17b, he referred to the place where he had the dream as, “the gate of heaven.”

In this second vision John heard the voice of the same person Who spoke to him in the first vision: again, it was the voice as of a **war-trumpet** (1:10, above). We think it safe to conclude that this speaker is the Lord.

The message to John was to come up to where the speaker was: "**Come up here.**" Recall this:

**"Within My Father's house** (or: household) **are many abodes** (dwelling places; homes; rooms). **Now if not, I would at once tell you folks, because I am progressively passing** (or: traveling) **along to prepare and make ready a place in you** (or: for you; with and among you folks). **Even if I should journey on and prepare** (make suitable, fit and appropriate) **a place** (or: a spot; a position; a role) **in you folks** (or: with you; for you), **I am now presently** (or: progressively; repeatedly; habitually) **coming again, and then, I will progressively take you folks in My arms and receive you to Myself, directing you toward Myself so as to be face to face with Me, to the end that where I, Myself, am** (or: exist) **you folks also can continue being** (or: may and would ongoingly exist). **And to the place under where I, Myself, am progressively leading the way** (or: where I am submissively going), **you have seen and know the Way** (or: path; road)" – Jn. 14:2-3.

In these visions, the Lord has come again to John and has invited him to come into the realm where He continuously exists. This also calls to mind the words of Paul in Phil. 3:14, "the high call," "the upwards invitation," "God's calling above within Christ Jesus." The door into heaven, access to the place where the Lord is, has been opened to John, and now he has been invited to ascend into this place. It was the place where John would be shown this vision: a vision about things that must be birthed into existence. It is a holy place that is set-apart from the Land.

What John will see in this ascended realm will be, "**what things it is necessary** (binding) **to birth** (to come to be in existence) **after these things.**" The idea of these upcoming events being **necessary**, or "binding," suggests that these occurrences are what God has decided to do. God's plan is behind what we will see through John's testimony. There is no duality expressed in the Unveiling. God rules; His will prevails.

**2. And then, immediately, I in myself came to exist within spirit** (or: in myself I came to be within [the] Spirit; I birthed myself in union with a Breath-effect) – **and now consider this! – A throne being laid down and lying within the atmosphere** (or: heaven; sky), **and upon the throne [was] One continuously sitting** (or: as well as [One] being permanently seated on the throne).

It would seem that the sound, or voice, that John just heard, both had an effect on him and also prompted him to inwardly move from the "natural" (soul or sense?) realm on into "spirit." These verses parallel 1:10, above,

**"I came to be** (or: birthed myself; happened to be) **within spirit** (or: in union with [the] Spirit; in the midst of a Breath-effect) **within the Day which pertains to or has the characteristics of the Lord** (the Lord's Day; = the Day of Yahweh; or, = the Day of Christ; = Christ's Day), **and I heard behind me a great voice** (or: = a loud sound), **as of a trumpet, saying** (or: = like that of a trumpet sounding a command or a message)."

The order of events: "sound/voice," and "being within spirit," are reversed in these two instances. Perhaps the first experience prompted John to immediately direct his focus into the realm of spirit upon both seeing the vision and hearing the sound/voice. It is also quite possible that this present vision came at a later time – thus the need to once again be birthed within spirit. The first clause qualifies what will follow. What he will see will be in the realm of **spirit**, and so must be "spiritually" interpreted (1 Cor. 2:10-16). This should alert the reader not to look for a literal interpretation of the symbols. The **Throne** that he

sees in the next clause is not a literal throne, but a symbol of God's reign and the realm of His kingdom and sovereign activities.

The call to John implied action on his part, similar to Jesus' call, "Follow Me." He was not transported, but was told to come up. The verb in the first phrase is in the middle voice, which means that the subject (John) was acting upon itself (i.e., himself). Thus it would seem from this that to come to be "within [the] spirit" requires something from us. John's response was immediate; it was like Matthew immediately leaving the tax station to follow Jesus. Once he had "come up" into the spirit realm (heaven) he could see what was there, and what the Lord wanted to show him. Like Moses climbing up Sinai to meet with Yahweh, John ascends into the spiritual realm of Mt. Zion (Heb. 12:22ff).

"Yahweh is in His holy TEMPLE; Yahweh - His throne is in the heavens" (Ps. 11:4, CVOT). From this association we can see the ark as a symbol of His throne, and the Holy of Holies (the Most Holy place of the tabernacle/temple) is a type of the upper atmospheres of the heavens, which are figurative of the higher realms of spirit. This reminds us of what Paul said:

**"I am acquainted with a person (or: a man; a human) in Christ... being snatched away (dragged off; seized and taken) as such, as far as [the; or: a] third heaven (or: atmosphere)... into the Paradise and heard inexpressible gush-effects and utterances"** (2 Cor. 12:2, 4a).

"Thus says Yahweh, 'The heavens are my throne, and the earth is my footstool'" (Isa. 66:1, Rotherham). So the entire creation is His "throne room." This figure shows contrast between the two realms, defines the place of ruling, shows the subservient place of earth, and establishes the place of His throne. I would also point out that God is continuously sitting upon the throne: He always rules; He is always in control. Isaiah had a vision similar to this one that John here describes. I would suggest reading Isa. 6. It would also be good to compare what Ezekiel was shown in chapter 1 of his book. We read in Jer. 17:12,

"A glorious THRONE, exalted from the first (or: beginning), [is; has been] the PLACE of the rising and standing of our SANCTUARY (place set-apart)."

The LXX reads: "An exalted **throne** of glory [is] our **Sanctuary** (effect of set-apartness; or: holy precinct)." Or, this could read, "A throne of exalted reputation [is] a result of our state of being set-apart" (JM). This concept is tied to Ex. 25:8, where Yahweh instructed Moses, "Thus they will make for Me a **Sanctuary**, and I will **tabernacle** in their midst." We see an echo of this in 21:3, below. Also, the same word family is used in Ex. 3:5 where Yahweh instructed Moses that, "the place on which you are standing, this is holy ground (or: a ground of set-apartness)." This was a revelation that established the fact that it was God's presence that made something or someone "holy," or, set-apart. From all of this, we can see a connection between God's tabernacle/temple in the OT being termed His Sanctuary (place that has been set-apart from common use). And Jeremiah, above, instructs us that THIS is the place of His **throne**. From these pronouncements we see that the Tabernacle, and Temple, represented "heaven" in OT symbology.

Micaiah "**saw** the Lord sitting on His throne and all the host of the heavens standing beside Him, on His right hand and on His left" (I Ki. 22:19). Micaiah said that he "saw" this, which indicates that it was a vision, and symbolic in nature, or his description was a parable which metaphorically brought the prophecy that followed. [Now consider: In that context a spirit came forward and stood before the Lord and volunteered to become a lying spirit (a spirit of falsehood) in the mouths of all His prophets (vs. 21-23). Is this a parallel of the first two chapters of Job?]

But for a moment, let's consider the discussion in Heb. 8:1-5. We have Jesus, the new Chief Priest, within the right part of the **throne** in the heavens (the same place as we see described here in Rev. 4), and He is a Servant of the Holy Things (or: Places) and of the True **Tabernacle** which the Lord pitched

[i.e., in the heavenlies, our atmosphere]. Verses 3 and 4, there, compare Him to the earthly priests, showing the differences and how they rendered service for “an example,” and BY A SHADOW, of the upper heavens, accordingly as Moses had been instructed, being about to finish the Tabernacle. Verse 5 ends saying,

“**Continue to observe so as to see that you make** (or: construct) **all things down from and in accord with the pattern** (the type; the impress made by a strike; the mark of the wound inflicted) **shown to you** (presented to your sight) **on** (or: in; in the midst of) **the mountain.**” [cf Ex. 25:40]

Can we conclude, then, that what Moses saw when he ascended into the mountain (a type of heaven, and a counterpart of Mt. Zion in Heb. 12:22) was the same scene that John here sees, and that the **Tabernacle** contains a type (in the Holy of Holies) of God's **throne room**? Are the cherubim on the veil and on each side of the mercy seat (throne) the same symbol as we will be seeing here in vss. 6-8, below? If so, then it may be helpful to keep the shadows of the Tabernacle in mind as we consider this present scene of the new reality (new creation). What will be seen here is a figure of the spiritual aspect of the covenant communities, which are His temple.

**3. And the One continuously sitting [was; is] for appearance (or: to [my] vision) like a jasper stone and a carnelian. And a rainbow, similar in appearance to an emerald, [was; is] around the throne.**

"One thing is certain; these were typical of the most precious stones ... they were a part of the rich array of the king or Tyre (Ezk. 28:13); they were among the precious stones on the breastplate of the High Priest (Ex. 28:17); they were among the stones which were the foundation of the Holy City (Rev. 21:19)." (Barclay, Vol. 1, *ibid* p 151)

Thus, the OT referents are unmistakable, and the tie-in with the end of the story (the latter chapters of the Unveiling) is clear. The setting of this vision is the holy of holies, in the Tabernacle/Temple. This description is an allusion to Ezk. 1:26-27a, amidst a description of the four living beings,

“Above the atmosphere that was over their head, like the appearance of sapphire stone, was the likeness of a throne. And on this likeness of a throne was a likeness like the appearance of a human (*adam*) on it, upward. And I saw what was like the sparkle of amber, like the appearance of fire enclosed round about it...” (CVOT; addition mine)

Similarly, Ezk. 10:1, “on the atmosphere which was over the head of the cherubim [there was something] like a sapphire stone; an appearance like a **throne** over them” (CVOT).

John, and his audience, were obviously supposed to connect the present vision with that which was given to Ezekiel, and thus to draw from those OT symbols and images. Since Ezk. was part of the “Bible” which the early Christians read, we can assume that they would have made these connections. Another allusion may be to Ex. 24:10, “And they saw the God of Israel, and beneath His feet as it were a work of sapphire tiling (or: a pavement of sapphire stones), even like the substance of the very heavens/sky, for brightness and purity.” Cf 21:11, 18, below. This chapter also has allusions to Dan. 7 and its visions.

We find the word **rainbow** used only one other place in the NT: in 10:1, below, where it is upon the Head of the Strong Agent of that vision. The word also means “iris,” the flower. It is used only once in the LXX, in Ex. 30:24, where it is used as an ingredient of the holy anointing oil. But the rain-bow is normally associated with Gen. 9:13-16, where God placed His “bow” in the cloud (a symbol of His covenant with Noah). The Hebrew word used for bow, in that passage, is the same word used for a “bow” that shoots arrows – which is its normal use in the OT. But the rainbow has taken on a traditional meaning of the Gen.9 promise: mercy in judgment. We find the word “bow” used of a rainbow in the description of the throne, and the One upon it, in Ezk. 1:27b-28:

“And [there was] a bright [light] round about Him, like [the] appearance of the bow which comes in [the] cloud on the day of downpour, so [was the] appearance of the bright [light] round about. It [was the] appearance of [the] likeness of Yahweh’s glory...” (CVOT).

The precious **stones** mentioned in this verse are an allusion to the stone and color described in Ezk. 1:26-27, along with Ex. 24:10, and prefigure those found in chapter 21, below. They are nuances of glory and sovereignty.

**4. Next, around (or: encircling) the throne, [were; are] twenty-four thrones (or: seats; chairs), and upon the thrones (seats; chairs), twenty-four elders (or: old people) continuously sitting, having been clothed in white garments. And upon their heads [were; are] golden wreaths (symbols of having won in a contest, or of festal celebration).**

This setting is likely an allusion to what some scholars have suggested as being a “divine-council scene,” such as described in 1 Ki. 22:19-22, Job 1:6-12; 2:1-6, Ezk. 28:2-19, Zech. 3:1-10, and possibly Gen. 1:26. Just as the Unveiling is a collection of visionary images that tell a story by symbols, it is likely that the OT passages, just cited, were also metaphorical pictures attesting to God’s sovereignty and control over the earth – set in pictures from familiar royal/kingdom situations on earth.

The Greek word *thronos* corresponds to our English word “throne” when used in connection with a king or ruler. But the Greek word also means just a “seat,” or a “chair.” In this verse the definite article is used with the first use of the word here, but not with the second. Thus, I have added the parenthetical options in the second use, since in vs. 10, below, we see these elders giving obeisance to “**the One continuously sitting upon the throne**” that is referred to in vs. 9.

The 24 Elders: Here Smith says that “numbers” in the book of the Rev. are “ideas,” not arithmetic. 24 is an idea. The idea is 12+12, as noted above. 12 is 3 (God in His “trinity”) X 4 (the complete coverage of the world; the 4 corners or directions of the earth; the totality of the universe). Thus, 12 = the triune aspect of God working out His purpose in the whole world. “When God was working out the totality of His purpose in the OT, you had the nation of Israel. When unfolding His purposes to man in the NT, He did it through 12 apostles” (Malcolm Smith, *ibid*). We find one of these 24 elders speaking with John in 5:5, and one again in 7:13-17. Then the 24 are making a proclamation in 11:16-18, below – they are a part of the setting for the eschatological play that these visions produce. The 144,000 sing their song before these same elders in 14:3, then these elders are brought back to the stage in 19:4 to add their chorus, “**Amen (Make it so; So be it). Praise Yahweh (Hallelujah)!**” Some scholars have pointed to the 24 renowned individuals in Israel’s history that received special mention in Sirach (Ecclesiasticus), chapters 44-49, as a possible source for this figure of “24.” The *Gospel of Thomas* 52 reads, “His disciples said to Him, ‘Twenty-four prophets have spoken in Israel, and they all spoke about you.’” In the Unveiling we find a number of themes that repeatedly recur, as threads in a tapestry. I would also suggest that since 24 is also 6X4, and since the number 6 is identified with humanity, it could represent God’s universal plan for mankind, if we take into account all the use of numbers in the OT – especially in religious dimensions (e.g., the tabernacle/temple) and the prophecies, such as Ezekiel’s.

So this picture may well represent the universal covenant community that is ruling and reigning with Christ. These 24 may be one figure of the old and new covenant overcomers – since we see that they are wearing **golden wreaths**, “symbols of having won in a contest,” i.e., an “overcomer.” Notice that they are seated:

**"and He jointly roused and raised (or: suddenly awakens and raises) [us] up, and caused [us] to sit (or: seats [us]; = enthroned [us]) together within the things situated upon [thus, above] the heavens**

(or: in union with the full, perfected heavenlies; or, although neuter: among those comprising the complete and perfected heavenlies; among the ones [residing] upon the atmospheres; in union with the celestials; among the folks [residing] upon the atmospheres) **within and in union with Christ Jesus**" (Eph. 2:6).

They are clothed in white garments (a promise to the overcomer – 3:5, above). It echoes the picture in Job 1:6 and 2:1 where God's sons meet with Him. Ps. 122 is titled "A song of Ascents," which refers to "the house of Yahweh" (vs. 1), Jerusalem (vs. 2) which vs. 4 locates as "where the tribes ascend... to acclaim the Name of Yahweh," and then we read in vs. 5, "For **there** are located thrones of judgment, the thrones for the house of David," with vs. 6 stating, "Ask for Jerusalem's well-being..." This picture lends more evidence that Jerusalem, the temple and God's people are the echo for this present vision.

Furthermore, we find thrones again in 20:4, below,

**"And I saw thrones (or: seats; chairs) – and they sit (or: sat; are seated) upon them, and judgment-effect (decision-result; judicial process and verdict) is given by them (or: authority to judge was given to them; decisions and separations are made by them) – and souls (inner lives) of those being ones having been cut with an axe (= beheaded) because of the testimony (witness) of (or: pertaining to; from) Jesus, and because of the Word of and from God – even those (or: also the ones) who do not (or: did not) worship the little wild animal (or: beast), nor its image, and do not (or: did not) take (or: receive) the imprinted mark (engraving; carve-effect; result of sculpting) upon their forehead and upon their right hand – and they live and reign (or: lived and reigned) with the Christ (the Anointed One) one thousand [other MSS: the thousand] years."**

Also, in 5:10, below, we have an allusion to sitting on a throne,

**"And You made (or: make; form; construct; produce) them [minuscule 792, the Clementia Vulgate (1592) and Primasius (6<sup>th</sup> century) read: us] kings [other MSS: a kingdom] and priests in (for; to; by) our God, and they [the Armenian, Clementia Vulgate (1592) and Primasius read: we] continue reigning [reading with Westcott & Hort (following A); other MSS: they will continue reigning] upon the Land (or: the earth)."**

In early Israel, and on through to the 1<sup>st</sup> century, the "elders" – the old people – were considered to be the leaders of the communities. Cf Ex. 12:21; 24:9 and Nu. 11:16-17; also: 1 Pet. 5:1-5, which in vs. 5 admonishes, "**you younger people be humbly placed, arranged and aligned by and with (or: subjected for support to and among) older folks.**"

This vision may also be picturing a fulfillment of Isa.24:23b,

"For Yahweh of hosts will reign in Mount Zion and in Jerusalem, and in front of His elders will He be glorified" (CVOT).

Heb. 12 describes this scene from another perspective:

**22. But to the contrary, you folks have approached so that you are now at Mount Zion – even in a city of a continuously living God; in "Jerusalem upon heaven" [cf 11:16, above]**  
(or: in a Jerusalem pertaining to and having the character and qualities of a superior, or added, heaven and atmosphere; or: in Jerusalem [situated] upon, and comparable to, the atmosphere) – **also among ten-thousands (or: myriads) of agents and messengers**  
(people with a/the message):

**23. [that is] in (or: to) an assembly of an entire people (or: an assembly of all; a universal convocation) and in (or: to) a summoning forth (or: a called-out and gathered community) of firstborn folks having been copied (from-written, as from a pattern; or: enrolled; registered) within [the; or: various] atmospheres (or: heavens), and in (or: to; with) God, a Judge (an**

Evaluator and Decider) **of all mankind, even among** (or: to; with) **spirits of just folks** (or: breath-effects from those who are fair and equitable and in right relationship within the Way pointed out) **having been brought to the destined goal** (perfected; finished; matured; made complete), [cf Rev. 3:12; 21:1-2; Eph. 2:6; Phil. 3:20; Rev. 14:1-5; Ex. 4:22; Gal. 3:19]

Another possibility for the significance of 24 is the 24 different courses of the priests, 1 Chron. 24:7-18. Each course had an "elder" (called princes or governors of God's house in vs. 5, there). The Levites were also divided into 24 courses for the work in the Temple, and they praise God with harps & cymbals (1 Chron. 25:6-31; see also 5:8, below). David Chilton notes Ezk. 8:16 where 25 men were engaged in sun worship: "the representatives of the twenty-four courses of the priesthood, plus the High Priest" (*The Days of Vengeance, An Exposition of the Book of Revelation*, Dominion Press, 1987 p 152). Recall that God's people are called a kingdom of priests (1:6, above). Beale (ibid p 326) notes that some identify these 24 with the names given as part of the construction of the new Jerusalem, in 21:12-14, below.

In 19:8, below, we read,

**"Then it was** (or: is) **granted** (or: given) **to her to the end that she may clothe herself with bright and clean fine cotton** (or: she may cast bright, pure, fine linen around her) – **for the fine cotton** (or: linen) **represents the effects of right relationship and equity in the life of the Way pointed out...**"

In Jn. 20:12 we find, **"two agents** (or: messengers) **in brilliant, shining white** (as being in a bright light), **remaining sitting down.**" Cf Acts 1:10. In 3:18, above, **white garments** were needed to cover one's nakedness (cf Gen. 3:10ff); in 6:11, below, the souls under the alter were given **white robes**; in 7:9 those before the throne and before the little Lamb are **clothed in white robes**. White robes seem to be the apparel for being in the temple, and in God's manifested presence. Does this relate to what Paul said in 2 Cor. 5:2,

**"within this one we are continuously groaning, utterly longing and constantly yearning to fully enter within and to clothe upon ourselves** (to dress upon ourselves) **our dwelling-house** (habitation) – **the one [made] out of heaven** (or: the one from, or made of, atmosphere; the [dwelling-house, or habitation] from out of the midst of [the] sky)"?

Or, how about Rom. 13:14,

**"you folks must clothe yourselves with** (or: enter within and put on) **the Lord, Jesus Christ**"?

Similarly, see: Rom. 13:12; 1 Cor. 15:53, 54; Gal. 3:27; Eph. 4:24; 6:11; Col. 3:10, 12; 1Thes. 5:8, where in each case the same verb is used. **"White garments"** are a symbol of the purity of Christ.

**5. Also – forth from out of the throne – lightnings and voices** (or: sounds) **and thunders repeatedly** (or: continuously) **proceed out. Furthermore, [there were] seven shining ones** (or: lamps; lights; torches) **of fire, which are the Seven Spirits of God** (or: God's seven Breath-effects), **being continuously caused to burn before the throne.**

The figure of the **thunder & lightning**, the **voices**, or, "sounds" (e.g., call of the trumpet) all call to mind the scene in Ex. 19:16-20 where Moses met with God and received the pattern, then later built the model, i.e., the Tabernacle. We find these visionary symbols again in 8:5, 11:19 and 16:18, below. Beale (ibid p 326) suggests that it is God, from His throne, that is the source of what happens in these later passages. The ark represents God's throne (the Mercy Seat). Ps. 99:1, "The LORD, enthroned on cherubim, is king." (Tanakh), or, in the CVOT, "Yahweh reigns; ... He is dwelling between the cherubim." The **seven shining ones** (lamps; lights; torches) are an allusion to Zech. 4:2 where he sees, "a lampstand... and seven lamps on it." This image is taken up in 1:12, 20 and 2:1, above. Putting these together, we can discern that the setting in chapter 4, here, is the same setting as chapters 2-3, i.e., the called-out covenant communities, which are the "new covenant" temple.

**The seven Spirits of God** (the shining ones, the torches) correspond to the seven lamps (flames of fire) of the lampstand in the Holy Place. Remember, a number in this book is an idea. Seven signifies completeness or the full extent. These speak of the fullness of God's Light that He has placed in His temple (the called-out communities). Cf 1:4, above. The setting of this vision is taken from the temple: the holy place now joined to the holy of holies by the removal of the veil that had separated those chambers, in the old covenant arrangement (Heb. 9:1ff). The worship and praise which the 24 elders offer to God in Rev. 4:9-11, below, correspond to the altar of incense that was in the holy place, just outside the ark chamber – God's throne. In that first chamber was the table of "the bread of the presence," having one loaf for each tribe, representing the whole of Israel, God's people. This corresponds to the 24 elders in this vision (a figure of the combined 12 patriarchs and the 12 apostles; God's universal called-out groups with the old covenant now pictured in a joined continuity to the new: one olive tree – Rom. 11:17; Eph. 2:15). The rainbow around the throne is represented in the colors woven into the veil, in the old arrangement (Ex. 36:35). The sea of glass can figure 1) the brazen sea which Solomon made – 1 Chron. 18:8, and speak of the washing of the water by the Word (Eph. 5:26), the cleansing aspect of the work of Christ; 2) a host of mankind – the sea being often a figure of people – having been calmed (no longer raging – Jude 13) by the sacrifice of the Lamb being slain (Who we meet in chapter 5, below) at the brazen altar.

"Read through chapters 4 and 5 in one sitting & you will see that what John saw was what Moses saw." (Malcolm Smith, from an audio teaching on Rev. 4)

The **lightnings** and the light of the **shining ones** echoes 1 Tim. 6:15, 16, "**The King of those reigning as kings, and Lord of those ruling as lords... the One continuously making inaccessible** (or: unapproachable) **light His home** (or: dwelling)." Also, Ps. 104:2, "Putting on light as a robe, stretching out the heavens as a curtain."

**6. And before the throne [is; was] a sea as of glass** (or: as a glassy sea), **like clear ice** (or: crystal). **Then, within the middle** (or: centered in the midst) **of the throne, and in a circle around the throne [were; are] four living ones** (or: living beings) **continuously being full of eyes in front and behind:**

In 1 Ki. 7 we find descriptions of Solomon's temple. Beginning with vs. 23 we find the "**sea**" that he had built, which was located in the court, just outside the holy place of the Sanctuary:

"He made the sea out of cast metal, ten cubits from its one lip unto its other lip, circular round about.... It was standing on twelve oxen, three facing north, three facing west, three facing south and three facing east. The sea was above, upon them.... It contained two thousand bath measures. He made the ten bases of bronze; four cubits, the length of each base; four cubits its width and three cubits its rise. This was the workmanship of the bases: they had insets... On the insets... [were] lions, oxen and cherubim" (vss. 23-29a; CVOT).

In vs. 25 of this passage, we see that the twelve oxen (a figure of the 12 tribes of Israel) that supported the "sea" were set in groups of three with each group facing one of the four directions, in a pattern that represented the proscribed encampments of the twelve tribes "from a distance around the tent of appointment (= the tabernacle)" – Nu. 2:2, 3, 10, 18, 25. An allusion to these oxen is seen in the "**resemblance of a young calf** (or: bullock)," in vs. 7, below. A discussion on the "**four living ones** (living beings)" will follow after the next verse, but here let us note that the imagery of "**a sea**" was a part of the temple complex, which in the new covenant is a picture of the called-out communities (2 Cor. 6:16; Eph. 2:19-22; 1 Pet. 2:5). In 2 Chron. 4:6, following the description of the sea, we find its use, and a possible explanation of its use as a ready source of water for the ten lavers, these latter being used, as follows:



“He also made ten lavers... to wash in them; they rinsed out in them the implements for the ascent offerings; but the sea was for the priests to wash in it” (CVOT).

This place of “washing” calls to mind Jesus washing the feet of His disciples (Jn. 13:5-14), who became priests of the new covenant (1:6, above; cf 1 Tim. 5:10; also: Acts 22:16; 1 Cor. 6:11), and the explanation in 7:14, below. The fulfillment of this OT figure is likewise found in Eph. 5:26,

**“that He may set her apart** (separate her; consecrate and make her holy), **cleansing** (purging) **[her] by the bath of the Water [that is] within a result of a flow** (or: in union with a gush-effect; or: in the midst of a spoken word, a declaration, or an utterance),”

as well as in the picture described in Tit. 3:5b,

**“a bath of, and from, a birth-back-up-again** (or: [the] bathing of a regeneration; note: can = a ritual immersion pool of rebirth) **and a making back-up-new** (of a different kind and quality) **again from a set-apart Breath-effect**

(or: of a renewal and renovation whose source is [the] Holy Spirit; or: a set-apart spirit's creating or birthing [us] back-up-new-again; a renewal which is a holy attitude).”

When we visualize the “throne” as being “the ark of the covenant,” located in the holy of holies, we can see that this “sea” was **“before the throne.”** So, our interpretation of this present chapter as being set in “temple imagery,” is hereby supported. This sea is **“as of glass”** because it is in a set-apart place, where there is peace and calm. The little Lamb, which we encounter in the next chapter, created this peace:

**“THROUGH Him at once to transfer the all** (the whole; = all of existential creation), **away from a certain state to the level of another which is quite different**

(or: to change all things, bringing movement away from being down; to reconcile all things; to change everything from estrangement and alienation to friendship and harmony and move all), **INTO Him – making** (constructing; forming; creating) **peace** (harmonious joining) **through the blood of His cross** (execution stake/pole): **through Him, whether the things upon the earth** (or: land) **or the things within the atmospheres and heavens”** (Col. 1:20).

The figure of “the sea” outside of this temple/heaven context, i.e., in the “world” of tribal religions, governments, economies and cultures, is a picture of turbulent, lost humanity that produces the dominating control systems which are pictured as “beasts,” or, “little wild animals,” as in 13:1, below. But here, folks are **“like clear ice, or crystal.”** Here people are transparent, having been purified by the work of Christ’s life. They are the ones of whom Jesus spoke,

**“Rivers** (or: Floods; Torrents) **of living water will continuously flow** (or: gush; flood) **from out of the midst of His cavity** (His innermost being or part; or: the hollow of his belly; [used of the womb]).’ [cf Isa. 58:11; Ezk. 47:1; Joel 3:18; Zech. 13:1; 14:8] **Now this He said about** (or: with regard to) **the Breath-effect** (or: Spirit; Attitude; [other MSS: Holy, or set-apart Spirit; Sacred Wind]) **of which** (or: of Whom as a source; [other MSS simple read: which]) **they – those trusting and believing into Him – were about to be continuously and progressively receiving”** (Jn. 7:38-39a).

In Ps. 28:3 we read “The voice (or: sound) of Yahweh is upon the waters.” Then in Ps. 28:10, “The LORD will continue settling and dwelling down on the water-flood” (LXX, JM); or, “The Lord will cause that which was deluged to be inhabited” (*The Septuagint Bible*, translated by Charles Thomson). Rotherham renders the Heb., “Yahweh, at the Flood, was seated (or: enthroned),” and the CVOT reads, “Yahweh, He sat [enthroned] above (Heb., for) [the] deluge.” I offer all these renderings to emphasize God’s involvement and close association with his called-out communities (figured by the temple complex), and also with humanity at large. He does not hold Himself back from human experience.

Beale (ibid p 328) points us to the Quran, Sura 27.44, which speaks of the Queen of Sheba entering into Solomon's reception hall, before his throne,

"It was said unto her, 'Enter the pavilion.' But when she saw it, she supposed it to be an expanse of water and bared her legs..." (*The Study Quran*, HarperOne, 2015 p 934-6)

Now if we connect "**a sea as of glass** (or: as a glassy sea), **like clear ice** (or: crystal)" with 15:2-3a, below, our understanding will be enlightened:

**"And I saw as it were a glassy (crystalline) sea having been mixed with Fire, and the folks (or: those) continually overcoming (being progressively victorious; presently conquering) – from out of [the power and influence of] the little wild animal (creature; beast), and from out of [the nature of] its image, and from out of [the identity of] the number of its name – standing (or: having made a stand) upon the glassy (crystalline) sea, continuously holding God's lyres (harps). And they repeatedly sing the song (or: ode) of Moses, God's slave, as well as (or: even) the song (or: ode) of the little Lamb..."**

Connecting this passage in chapter 15 with our present setting of the temple court, the place of the Lamb's sacrifice, we can see how it is that they "overcome" the influence of the wild, untamed nature, and the dominating "beast" system that demands compliance. Both the song of Moses and the song of the little Lamb are songs of deliverance – the former from Egypt, the latter from Rome and the estranged human nature. Note that these in 15:2 "make a stand." This calls to mind Rom. 12:1,

**"Consequently, brothers, I am repeatedly calling you folks alongside to advise, exhort, implore and encourage you, through God's compassions to stand your bodies alongside (or: to set or place your bodies beside) [the] Well-pleasing, Set-apart (Holy; Different-from-the-usual), Living Sacrifice by God (or: in God; for God; to God; with God), [this being] your sacred service which pertains to thought, reason and communication (or: your reasoned and rational service; the logical and Word-based service from you folks; or: = temple service)."**

That the living ones within and around the throne are cherubim is confirmed in Ezk. 10:15, "Then arose the cherubim - the same was the living one which I had seen by the river Chebar." (Rotherham) See also vs. 20. Note Ezk. 1:14, "And **the living ones** ran and returned – like the appearance of a **flash of lightning**." Ezk. 1:13 in the LXX reads,

"And in the middle of the living beings was an appearance like burning coals of fire, as the look of torches coming together between the living beings, and a radiance of the fire, and lightning was issuing from the fire" (NETS).

We will see, below, how these **living ones** correspond to the cherubim. Not only were they a part of the mercy seat (throne), as described in Ex. 37:6-9, Solomon put two cherubim in the holy of holies (2 Chron. 3:10-13). Cf Lu. 17:33, "**will bring [his soul] forth as a living being** (engender it as a living creature)."

The **eyes** will be discussed below. But as to their location, **in front and behind**, this suggests having perceptions from the past (Israel's roots and history, e.g., Rom. 11:16-18; the OT) while looking into the glories of the future. The picture: **full of eyes** suggests full vision and seeing everything; nothing would be missed; the whole picture would be seen. Metzger suggests that this would indicate "watchfulness" (ibid p 51). Milton Terry suggests that these descriptions are, "symbols of remarkable intelligence" (ibid p 318). This is an obvious allusion to Ezk. 1:18; 10:12, or Zech. 4:10, and in 2 Chron. 16:9 we read:

"For, [as regards] Yahweh, His eyes go to and fro through all the earth to reinforce the heart of those who are at peace with Him" (CVOT).

These visions repeatedly bring the types and shadows of the OT into their fulfillments within the new creation reality. But we must read them metaphorically, and through the lens of the new arrangement (covenant) formed through the resurrection of Christ. The old was the roots, but the new life is the plant that lives above, in the atmosphere (a figure of "heaven," or the life of the Spirit). Cf 1 Cor. 15:36-38.

Before we leave this verse, we should consider the implications of the phrases, “**within the middle** (or: centered in the midst) **of the throne, and in a circle around the throne.**” Why these contrasting, yet complimentary, descriptions of the locations of these **four living ones**? “Within the middle of” suggests being seated together with Christ. “In a circle around” suggests close attendance and a universal aspect which has the throne at its center. Could this suggest both ruling authority and full-spectrum influence? Both “kingdom authority” and participatory involvement in His influence and the activities of His reign? Perhaps the best rendering of the first phrase is the parenthetical one, “centered in the midst of the throne,” indicating that the throne is their “center,” their place of grounding. The picture in verse 6, here, is a close allusion to Isa. 6:2,

“And seraphim [in Heb., ‘burning ones’] had taken a stand, and now stood, in a circle round about Him (or: in His circle)” (LXX, JM).

This picture, here in vs. 6, is unpacked in 1 Pet. 2:9a,

“**Yet you folks [are] a picked-out** (selected; chosen) **offspring** (family; kin; lineage; race; species; breed) [Isa. 43:20; Deut. 7:6], **a royal** (kingly; palace) **priesthood** [Ex. 19:6; Isa. 61:6], **a set-apart** (holy; different) **multitude** (company; nation; body of people living together; swarm; association; ethnic group; caste; [Ex. 19:6; note: implies a sacred life]), **a people constructed into an encirclement** (made into a surrounding structure; set as a perimeter; made into a performance about [Him]; formed around as an acquisition; gathered into a surrounding [flock]).” [cf Isa. 43:21; Ex. 19:5]

How many folks are “in the midst” of God’s throne? In 3:21, above, we find the promise,

“**To** (or: In; For) **him who is habitually conquering** (repeatedly overcoming; normally victorious) **I will continue giving** [the right? the ability? the honor?] **to sit** (or: be seated) **with Me within My throne.**”

The Isa. 6 setting of the “burning ones” (*seraphim*) may correspond to the “**shining ones** (or: lamps; lights; torches) **of fire**” of vs. 5, above. If this is connected to the lampstands of 1:20 and 2:1, above, and we then connect these to the “tongues of fire” sitting upon Christ’s followers (the first called-out community) in Acts 2:3, the setting of this chapter (the temple) may point us to the conclusion that these visionary images are figures of Christ’s “priests,” the ministering body of Christ.

**7. the first living one resembling a lion, the second living one resembling a calf** (or: young bullock), **the third living one has a human’s face, and the fourth living one resembles a flying vulture** (or: eagle). [Ezk. 1:5-10]

To begin our consideration of what these symbols mean, Beale cites information from L. Gizberg (*Legends of the Jews*) and J.A. Seiss (*Apocalypse*) that lends insights from ancient Jewish tradition in regard to the four groupings of Israel in the wilderness:

“According to *Targum Palestinian* Num. 2, each group had a standard with the colors of the stones representing their tribes on the priest’s breastplate and with an insignia on it: a lion, a stag (originally an ox), a man, and a serpent (which tradition changed to an eagle)... If this material has a link with earlier tradition, it could suggest further that the living creatures in Rev. 4:8ff represent humanity...” (Beale, *ibid* p 331).

As to the original figure of a serpent, to which Beale refers (and which, being the last one, corresponds to the last listing of the groups, in Nu. 2:25, which was represented by the tribe of Dan), let us recall Jacob’s blessing of his son Dan, in Gen.49:17,

“Dan shall be a serpent by the way, an adder in the path, that bites the horse’s heels so that his rider shall fall backward.”

Dan Kaplan reminded me that the name Dan means “judge,” in Hebrew. And in Gen. 49:16 Jacob says of him, “Dan shall judge (or: adjudicate) his people...” I find it curious that the tribe of Dan is missing from

the list of the twelve tribes of those who are sealed by the agent, in 7:2-8, below. Could this be an allusion to the truth given us by Paul, in 2 Cor. 5:19b, that God is, “**not accounting to them [i.e., the aggregate of humanity; the world]** (not putting to their account; not logically considering for them; not reasoning in them) **the results and effects of their falls to the side** (their trespasses and offenses)”? And then there is Jesus’ admonition in Mat. 10:16,

“**Therefore, habitually come to be thoughtful, prudent, cautious and discreet** (or: = wary and on the alert; = observant, decisive and timely) – **as the snakes** (or: serpents) **[are]; and yet [still] unmixed** (pure; = without negative characteristics added) – **as the doves [are].**”

Is the serpent being transformed into a dove, in His followers?

Kaplan also pointed out that during the wilderness march of Israel, Nu. 10:25 informs us that it was the tribe of Dan that brought up the rear, acting “as rear guard for all the camps,” while Judah was in first place in the procession. With Christ at our Head, the “tail” of the judges is no longer necessary. We have arrived at Mount Zion (Heb. 12:22) and need no “rear guard,” and the new covenant Israel (figured by the twelve disciples: the 12 foundations of the New Jerusalem – Christ’s body) “**continue sitting down, upon twelve thrones, continuously separating [issues], making decisions and administering justice for the twelve tribes of Israel**” (Mat. 19:28b).

The resemblances listed here in vs. 7 correspond to what Ezekiel saw in Ezk. 1:10,

“As [for the] likeness of their faces, [each had the] face of a human, and the four of them had the face of a lion to the right, and the four of them had the face of a bull on the left, and the four of them had the face of a vulture (or: eagle).”

But in Ezk. 10:14, the face of the bull was replaced by, “the face of a cherub.” Also, in Ezk. 10:3 we see the context of the cherubim, there, which is, again, the temple:

“Now the cherubim were standing on the right side of the House [= Temple] when the man entered, and the cloud filled the inner court.”

Then in vs. 7, there, we see another clue: “Then a cherub put forth his HAND from among the cherubim to the fire which [was] among the cherubim, and he lifted it and gave it into both hands of the [man] clothed in linen.” This calls to mind the temple setting of Isa. 6, where in vs. 6 one of the “burning ones” takes a hot coal from the altar and uses it to purge Isaiah’s sin and iniquity (vs. 7).

So the **Four Living Ones** also correspond to the 4 cherubim. The number 4, recall, signifies the complete coverage of the earth, or land. In 7:1, below, we read of “**four agents** (or: messengers; folks with the message) **standing upon the four corners of the Land** (or: earth), **continuously holding in their power** (or: restraining) **the four winds of the Land** (or: earth), **so that wind may not be blowing upon the Land** (or: earth; soil),” and in 20:8, below, we read of “**nations** (multitudes; ethnic groups) **within the four corners of the Land** (or: earth).” So these “living ones” are symbolic of the whole Land (corresponding to the square encampment of Israel, in Nu. 2), or the whole earth (seen poetically as four-cornered, corresponding to the four cardinal directions).

But for what is a cherub a symbol? According to Young's Concordance the word *cherub* means, “one grasped, held fast.” The plural, *cherubim*, means “those grasped; those held fast.” Now imagine if the translators had “translated” these words instead of “transliterating” them. We would realize that when Ezekiel described the living ones, he would have been describing those who are grasped and held fast by God. I suggest the same applies here. Paul, in Phil. 3:12-14, says, “Yet I am pursuing, if I may be grasping also that for which I was grasped also by Christ Jesus . . . stretching out . . . toward the goal am I pursuing for the prize . . .” (CLNT). Again, in 1 Cor. 9:24,

“**Have you folks not seen, so as to know, that those progressively running, on the race-course within a stadium, are indeed all progressively running** (or: constantly and repeatedly

racing), **yet one normally** (= each time) **grasps** (takes; receives) **the contest prize** (victor's award)? **Be habitually running** (progressively racing) **so that you folks can** (may; would) **seize and take [it] down in your hands!**"

Here I see grasping and being grasped both associated with being "apprehended or seized [by God] (Phil. 3:12)," but also with winning, overcoming your opponents. I would thus suggest that the grasped ones, the cherubim, are another picture of the overcomers. Let us consider their description.

The cherubim are mentioned first in Gen. 3:24 where they are caused "to dwell at the east of the garden of Eden [Paradise]" along with "the flame of the sword which is turning itself round to guard the Way of the Tree of the Life." (Young) This setting would seem to be at the entrance of the garden. It would correspond to the entrance of the temple which also faced with its entrance to the east. I suggest that that entrance corresponds to the door of vs. 1, above.

Next we see the cherubim in Ex. 25, and there are two of them, one on each end, as a part of the ark in the Tabernacle. They each face toward the presence of God (upon the Mercy Seat), and face "a man towards a brother" (Ex. 37:9, literal Heb.). Here they each have two wings. Two is the number of witness. In Ex. 26 we also find them in the curtains (the entrance) of the Tabernacle.

Now let us move to Ezk. 1:5 to see, "... a likeness of four living ones, — and this was their appearance, the likeness of A MAN (Heb., Adam)." (Rotherham) "And they had four faces each, and four wings each" (vs. 6). Here the faces are of a man, a lion, an ox, and a vulture (or, eagle).

When John saw these living ones, the faces are the same as Ezk. 1, but they now have six wings apiece (vs. 8, below). In Ezk. 1:9, the wings were joined "a woman to a sister" (Heb., literal). These are balanced beings, having both masculine & feminine qualities; having four faces speaks of their universal aspect, they face the cardinal directions, they cover the earth, or with regard to Israel, the Land. Six wings speaks of humanity (his number is 6) having attained to the heavenlies, the realm of spirit. We see no wheels here (wheels are used upon the earth) for Christ has lifted those of His body above the heavens and has given them access to the heavens (Eph. 2:6).

Historically, the four faces have been associated with the four gospels, each face representing the central aspect, or focus, of one of the gospels, but there is no textual evidence for this. See also Bullinger's *Companion Bible* notes on Num. 2:2, 32, where he cites the *Targum of Jonathan* in regard to the tribal standards corresponding to the twelve constellations of the ancient Zodiac. J. Preston Eby has written a series of studies on "The Gospel in the Stars," which is excellent. Joseph A. Seiss wrote a book, *The Gospel in the Stars* (Kregel Pub., [1882] 1972).

Chilton (ibid p 158) makes some interesting observations:

"The faces of the cherubim, in both Ezk. And Rev., are the middle signs in the four quarters of the Zodiac: the Lion is Leo; the Bull is Taurus; the Man is Aquarius, the Waterer; and the Eagle... is Scorpio [figured as an Eagle, according to the Chaldean system then in vogue]." (brackets also Chilton).

He also observes (ibid p 159):

"The arrangement of the twelve tribes of Israel around the Tabernacle (Nu. 2) corresponded to the order of the Zodiac; and, like the cherubim, four of the tribes represented the middle signs of each quarter: Judah was the Lion, Reuben the Man, Ephraim the Bull, and Dan is the Eagle." [Cf Gen. 37:9 for Jacob, Rachael, and Joseph's brothers interpreted as "the sun, the moon and stars."] In contrast to these traditions, let us consider the symbolism as it would relate to God's people, specifically to the body of Christ. The lion, most readily associated with the Lion of the tribe of Judah,

speaks of the kingly, or ruling, aspect of the living ones. The calf, or ox, speaks of the sacrificial nature of this calling, and perhaps one of the qualifying factors, and speaks of those who, having His great love, lay down their lives for their friends. This animal also is a figure of strength for long endurance. The man speaks of the last Adam, humanity in Christ's image restored to Paradise (the realm of the spirit; heaven). The vulture, or eagle, signifies their access to, and movement in, the heavenlies (atmospheres), their ability to rise above the realm of earth, and symbolizes the divine nature having been implanted in their hearts. It also suggests long-range vision, able to see details on earth from a "heavenly" perspective. Terry adds these insights: "The elders and the cherubs may therefore represent, not different orders of created beings, but the whole body of the redeemed..." (ibid p 319).

**8. And the four living ones** (or: living beings), **each one of them having six wings apiece** [Isa. 6:2], **are continuously full of eyes in a circle around and internally; and day and night they continuously have no rest** (or: intermission), **constantly** (or: repeatedly) **saying,**

**"Set-apart, Set-apart, Set-apart** (Consecrated; Holy; Sacred)! **O Lord [= Yahweh] God, The All-strong** (the Almighty; the Strong Holder-of-all) [Isa. 6:3; Amos 3:13; 4:13] – **the One Who was and continued being, the continuously Existing One, even the One continuously** (habitually; repeatedly; progressively) **coming or going** (= the One constantly on the move)."

The **six wings** is an allusion to the *seraphim* (burning ones) of Isa. 6:2, and the number 6 associates these with humanity. The **eyes** speak of vision, the ability to see and perceive. The circle of eyes and the internal eyes signify total vision, both internally and externally. That the eyes are "in front and behind" describes their ability to prophetically discern the future and that which lies before them, and also understand the past and the purposes of those ages and events. Jesus instructed us that,

**"The eye is the lamp of the body. If, then, your eye may continue being single-fold** (or: simple and uncompounded; perhaps: single-focused and suggest being straightforward; may = healthy; may suggest generosity), **your whole body will continue being** (will continuously exist being) **illuminated** (enlightened; or: lustrous; luminous; radiant; shining)" (Mat. 6:22).

Then in, Eph. 1:18, Paul prays that,

**"the eyes of the heart of you folks** (= the insights and perceptions of the core of your [corporate] being) **having been and continuing enlightened into the [situation for] you folks to have seen and thus perceive and know what is the expectation of His calling** (or: from the invitation which is Him) **and what [is] the wealth and riches from the glory** (or: of the imagination and opinion; pertaining to the reputation) **of and from the enjoyment of His lot-acquired inheritance within, in union with, and among the set-apart, sacred people,"**

that is, among those same ones whose very being and existence continuously says, "Holy, Sacred, Set-apart, O Lord God, the Strong Holder-of-All," in vs. 8, below. This is the true opening of the eyes which counteracts what Eve was told, and what happened, in Gen. 3:5,

**"your eyes will progressively be fully opened wide** (or: be constantly opened throughout the midst) **and then you folks will continue existing** (or: being) **as** (or: in the same way as; like; as it were) **gods, continuously and progressively knowing – by intimate, existential experience and insight – [the] beautiful** (fine; ideal) **as well as of, and from, [the] misery-gushed** (painful; anguished; harmful; unsound; worthless; useless; unprofitable; disadvantageous; malevolent; wrong; bad; evil; laborious; malignant)." (LXX, vs. 6; JM)

Eyes speak of perception, awareness and experience – all of which lead to understanding.

Note that the living ones have not rest or intermission DAY & NIGHT in their continuous praise. Although they are in the heavens within, they must be on earth without, for earth is the place where there is day and night. This ceaseless action by these symbolic figures calls to mind Paul's admonitions to the called-out communities,

**“we ourselves also continuously give thanks to God** (or: affirm the goodness of the grace and favor in God) **by an unvarying practice** (or: incessantly; unintermittingly)” – 1 Thes. 2:13

**“Continuously think, speak and act with a view toward having well-being and goodness – unceasingly** (or: By habit be praying unintermittingly)” – 1 Thes. 5:17. Elsewhere he says,

**“[I] do not pause** (or: cease; stop myself) **in continuously giving thanks over you folks** (or: speaking good favor on your behalf; or: expressing the well-being of grace because of your [situation or condition])” – Eph. 1:16a.

This picture speaks of our daily living a life of thanksgiving in an attitude of gratitude. In the first clause of the repeated statement, we see a proclamation that everything is sacred. Metzger suggests that this picture of constant activity represents “their constant disposition – their every action is an expression of adoration.... the threefold repetition of ‘holy’ designates the superlative degree” (ibid p 51). All that they see is now perceived to be “set-apart” for God’s specific purpose for everything. All these eyes perceive His sovereignty and complete power; they perceive and acknowledge that Yahweh (note that this is a quote from the OT, where the Hebrew is literally God’s Name, not just “Lord”) is **“the One Who was and continued being, the continuously Existing One, even the One continuously** (habitually; repeatedly; progressively) **coming or going** (= the One constantly on the move).” Here Metzger instructs us that, “the use of the definite article with each of the three nouns in the Greek indicates totality” (ibid). We should not miss the fact that in 1:8, above, it is the symbolic manifestation of the risen Christ who says this same thing about Himself. An unbiased reading of these passages should conclude an identity between the risen Christ and Yahweh. He has always been “the One constantly on the move,” in His repeated **“coming or going”** – the Greek present participle has both meanings. We can observe Yahweh “coming and going” all through the OT, and in His letters in chapters 2 and 3, above, we see His promises to do the same with them. Only God is the **“continuously Existing One,”** when compared to our short-term existence here in this life.

Terry (ibid p 318-19) points out that where Isa 6:3 gives the “Holy! Holy! Holy! Yahweh of hosts!” with the affirmation, “The fullness of the whole earth (or: Land) [is] His glory” (Rotherham), or, with the CVOT, “... [manifests] His glory!,” here in 4:8 there is a kind of “enlarged” parallelism: **“was and continued being, the continuously Existing One, even the One continuously** (habitually; repeatedly; progressively) **coming,”** which describes Him, rather than referring to His glory, or to its relationship to the earth – or, perhaps more specifically, to the Land of Israel. That particular Land is no longer in view in the new creation and the new covenant.

**9. And whenever the living ones will repeatedly give glory and honor** (or: value; respect) **and thanks** (gratitude; good favor) **to the One continuously sitting upon the throne – to the One continuously living on into the ages** (or: indefinite time periods; most important eons) **of the ages.**

Note that not only do the living ones give glory and honor, but also thanks to God; they express their gratitude. Why? I suggest it is because of what He has done for them. They are thanking the One Who is continuously living. Jesus said to His disciples, **“Because I, Myself, am continuously living, you folks will also continue living.”** (John 14:19). And we see that these, too, are living ones.

The word “whenever” indicates that John was observing this scene for a period of time, and also suggests the habitual activity of the covenant communities, spread throughout the four directions of the Roman Empire, expressing their gratitude to God for the work of the Christ. Paul spoke of this in Col. 3:17,

**“And everything – whatsoever you may be habitually doing, in word or in action** (within a thought or message, or within a work or deed) – **[do] everything** (all; all things) **within and in union with [the] Name of [the] Lord, Jesus** [other MSS: of Jesus Christ; others: of {the} Lord,

Jesus Christ], **constantly giving thanks** (expressing gratitude) **to Father God** (or: in union with God, [the] Father) **through Him.**”

Then in Heb. 2:9 we read,

**“But yet, we are continuously seeing Jesus – having been made inferior for a brief time beside agents – having been encompassed with glory** (or: crowned by a good reputation) **and with honor** (or: in value) **on account of** (or: through) **the effect of the experience of death so that by the grace of and from God** (or: in the favor which is God) **He might taste of death over [the situation and condition of] all mankind** (or: for and on behalf of everyone).”

The writer of Hebrews speaks of a continuous vision of the resurrected Christ – or, he is describing an ongoing perception that is seen with **“organs of perception trained as in gymnastic exercise and thus being skilled, because of practice, and disciplined with a view to a discerning”** (Heb. 5:14b). But we find a striking parallel to vs. 9, here, in 1 Tim. 4:17 which should enlighten us regarding the meaning of the symbolic vision here,

**“So, to [the] King of The Ages** (or: eons; indefinite time periods), **to [the] incorruptible** (undecayable; unspoilable), **invisible** (unseen; not-able-to be seen) **One, to [the] only God** [some MSS add: wise; so: only wise God], **[be] honor** (value; worth) **and glory** (reputation which calls forth praise), **on into the ages** (or: indefinite time periods) **of the ages. It is so** (Amen)! (or: Now in and by the King to Whom belongs the ages – in and by the imperishable, invisible [and] only One – in and by God [is] honor and glory, [leading] into the [most important] eons of the eons. So it is!)”

What these four living ones are doing in this vision is what Paul does in his letter to Timothy. Peter also unpacks this in 1 Pet. 2:9b,

**“that you may tell forth the message of** (or: publish; declare abroad) **the excellencies and qualities of nobleness** (virtues of braveness, courage, good character, quality, self-restraint, magnificence, benevolence, reliability) **of and from the One calling you out of darkness into the midst of His wonderful** (marvelous; amazing) **light** [p72 reads: into the wonderful Light].”

The final phrases of these two verses (vs. 9, here, and in 1 Tim. 1:17) are identical in the Greek: **into the ages** (or: indefinite time periods; most important eons) **of the ages**. The parenthetical expansions offer other readings that illumine the Greek for us. The final phrase, “of the ages,” speaks of the totality of God’s creation program. It speaks of the whole tapestry from the Beginning of this particular opus until its conclusion, which may well be open-ended. Paul spoke of this overarching program in Eph. 3:11,

**“a purpose of the ages** (a fore-designed aim, plan and object [which He is bent on achieving] of the unspecified time-periods) **which He formed** (forms; made; constructs; creates; produced) **within the Christ by our Lord and Owner, Jesus** (or: in union with Jesus the Anointed One [= Messiah], within the midst of and for our Lord and Master).”

The same idea in speaking of an indefinite future expanse of time is given in the LXX of Dan. 4:31b, “His right from out of Being (or: privilege and authority) [is] an age-lasting (eonian) right of Being (privilege and authority), and His reign (kingly sphere of influence and sovereign activity) [is] into generation upon generation” (JM). But the phrase in Dan. 12:7 (LXX) reads, “the One continuously living on into the Age [of the Messiah] (or: into the indefinite future or time period of the eon)” (JM).

**10. the twenty-four elders** (or: older people) **will repeatedly fall before the One continuously sitting upon the throne, and will continue worshipping** (bowing; kissing toward) **the One continuously living on into the ages** (or: indefinite time periods; most important eons) **of the ages, and they will proceed casting their wreaths** (symbols of victory or celebration) **before the throne, repeatedly saying,**

This **“falling before”** and **“worshipping”** (the combined actions describe “doing obeisance”) by the 24 older people is also a symbol: a visionary figure, which like most of the other symbols in this book derive



from OT imagery. Such an action was a cultural way of acknowledging someone of a higher rank or social status, and was not necessarily a religious action. It is a physical picture of expressing honor and gratitude which demonstrates what the four living ones said, in vs. 9, above. We do not find this behavior as a normal part of Jesus' teachings, nor is it taught of in any of the letters by Paul or mentioned by the other NT writers, except Hebrews 1:6, which is a quote from the OT, and 11:21, which is speaking of Jacob. Other than quoting the OT, Jesus' only reference to "worship" (Jn. 4:21-24) spoke of a change from the old, and of a prostrating one's self "**in union with spirit and Truth** (in Breath-effect and Reality; within the midst of [the] Spirit and [the] Fact; centered in [life]-attitude and genuineness/actuality)." This speaks of a life-attitude of submission to, along with honor and respect for, God – not some form of religious behavior. The picture given by Paul in Eph. 2:6, is that of the Lord raising us up to His level and of participating with Him. It does not displace honor or respect, but it describes a new arrangement. We find the risen Christ saying virtually the same thing in 3:21, above. Paul referred to Christ as our firstborn **Brother** in Rom. 8:29b. Jesus called His disciples, "**friends** (beloved associates)" in Jn. 15:14-15. God is now relating to us as **family**; Christ is the Head of us, His body; He is the **Bridegroom**, and we are His **bride**. He has brought us up to His level, and at the same time has come down to live among us. We are His temple (which is the home of a deity) and He lives in us. All of this describes "union" and "oneness," rather than separation and duality. So the old pictures and "worldviews" have to change. The old has passed away and the new has come (2 Cor. 5:17).

In Lu. 22:27b, Jesus explained the new order and told His followers, "**I Myself am in your midst as the person constantly giving attending service.**" Jesus' life demonstrated God's relationship to us. In contrast to the behavior and social stratification where "**kings of the nations and ethnic multitudes are habitually acting as their lords and owners, and those exercising authority**" (vs. 25), He presented the new social order of God's reign: "**Yet you men [are] not [to be] thus** (or: [are] not [to behave] in this way), **but to the contrary, let the greater among you come to be like** (or: as) **the younger; and the one normally leading like** (or: as) **the person normally giving attending service**" (vs. 26). Jesus lived and manifested the personality and the character (and thus, the desires and expectations) of the Father. In Jn. 14:7, He told them, "**Since you men have personally and experientially known Me** (or: If you folks had insight of Me or were acquainted with Me), **you also will continue personally and experientially knowing and perceiving My Father,**" then adding in vs. 9,

**"I continue being (I am) with you folks so much time, and you have not come to intimately and experientially know Me, Philip? The one having discerned and seen Me has seen, and now perceives, the Father! How are you now saying, 'Show us the Father'?"**

All of this is an expansion of what He had just said in 14:6, "**I, Myself, am** (exist being) **the Way** (or: Path), **the Truth** (the Reality) **and the Life** (or: = I am the way to really live)." The Way is explained in Lu. 22:26, above, which describes the obliteration of social stratification and functional hierarchy in God's kingdom. He is One who washes our feet (Jn. 13:4-20)! And Jesus is a picture of God, in this act.

Consider His instruction in Lu. 12:36-37,

**"and you, yourselves, [be] like people habitually focused toward anticipating, welcoming and receiving their own master (lord; owner) – whenever he can untie [himself], loosen up [his involvement] and break loose from the midst of the marriage banquet – so that, upon coming and knocking, they might immediately open up to (or: for) him. Those slaves [are] happy and fortunate whom the master (lord; owner) – upon coming – will proceed to find being continuously awake, alert and watchful. Truly (or:It is so)! I say to you folks that he will proceed to gird himself about (as with an apron) and will continue in causing them to recline [at a meal]. Then, coming alongside, he will give attending service to them!"**

Walter Wink offers us the following insights on these verses in Lu. 12, and elsewhere,

"These are the words and deeds, not of a minor reformer, but of an egalitarian prophet who repudiates the very premises of which domination is based: the right of some to lord it over others

by means of power, wealth, shaming, or titles.... His followers are not to take titles: 'But you are not to be called rabbi, for you have one teacher, and you are all students.....' (Mat. 23:8-10). His followers are to maintain domination-free relationships in a discipleship of equals that includes women. The hierarchal relationship... is not to persist" (*When The Powers Fall, Reconciliation in the Healing of Nations*, Fortress Press, 1998 p 7).

Are we just to forget all this because of our religious traditions and perceptions? We need to change our thinking – and this is the point of my critique of “worship” in the Christian culture, as well as in the culture of other religions. But let me again emphasize that praise and thanksgiving remain high on our list of social behaviors toward God and toward our fellow humans. Expressions and acts of honor are always in order.

The restatement of the descriptive title of the One is given for emphasis, “**living on into the ages** (or: indefinite time periods; most important eons) **of the ages.**” He sits enthroned (vs. 9) and continuously lives throughout all the ages. For the original listeners of this message, this would have been a stark contrast to the Roman emperors who obviously did not live on throughout the ages. The function of the four living creatures, who are mentioned fourteen times in the book, seems to be that of leading everyone else in vocal recognition of the value, and now the reputation (or: glory), of God and what He has done in the Christ.

The casting of the wreaths is a figure to say that He is the one Who did the overcoming in them, that He gets the credit for these victories. Metzger instructs us: “In typical oriental fashion they lay down their crowns [more literally: wreathes] as a sign of their homage, and as a dramatic demonstration of their acknowledgment of God’s sovereignty” (ibid p 51; brackets added). Foy E. Wallace, Jr., saw this as “a sign of surrender to God’s will” (*The Book of Revelation*, Richard E. Black Pub., 1997 p 130). This could also be a picture of the old order (including the time of the disciples, prior to Christ’s resurrection), the former arrangement and covenants, submitting and yielding priority to the reign of Christ. This scene may reflect the firstfruits of what Paul describes in Phil. 2:10-11,

“**to the end that within The Name: Jesus!** (or: in union with the name of Jesus), **every knee** (= person) – **of the folks upon the heaven** (or: [situated] upon the atmosphere) **and of the people existing upon the earth and of the folks dwelling down under the ground** (or: on the level of or pertaining to subterranean ones; [comment: note the ancient science of the day – a three-tiered universe]) – **may bend** (or: would bow) **in prayer, submission and allegiance, and then every tongue** (= person) **may speak out the same thing** (would openly agree, confess) **that Jesus Christ [is] Lord** (Master; Owner) – **[leading] into [the] glory of Father God** (or: unto Father God's good reputation and a manifestation which calls forth praise!)”

11. **"You are constantly worthy** (or: of equal value), **our Lord [= Yahweh] and God, to receive** (or: take) **the glory** (or: the reputation; “the opinion which is based on the whole of human experience” – Paul Tillich), **and the honor, and the power, because You create all things** (or: You brought the whole from chaos, disorder and wildness to framed and founded order), **and because of Your will, intent and purpose, they were existing, and continued being, and they are** (or: were) **framed and created."**

Thus do they say that He is worthy to receive the glory and the honor, because He is the one that brought them to these seats, and that it was His **power** that has done all. Then they acknowledge that it was He Who created every situation, formed all circumstances, created all the ages and everything within them, and did it all for His own purpose,

“**in keeping with** (or: down from; corresponding to; in accord with) **a before-placed** (or: destined) **aim, design and purpose of the One continuously operating** (effecting; energizing) **all things**

(or: the whole) **in accord with** (or: down from; in line with; in correspondence to; following the pattern of) **the deliberated purpose** (intent; design; plan; determined counsel) **of His will** (or: resultant decision of His resolve; effect of His desire)," (Eph. 1:11).

Everything and everyone exists because it is His will and purpose for them to exist! Terry (ibid p 320-1) sees the threefold "glory... honor... power" as a literary design. It could be echoing the Holy, holy, holy of 8b, above. Terry also considers the last half of this verse as, "a pledge of the final glorification of the creation of God..." (ibid). This part of the verse may be an allusion to Gen. 1:1ff, or Ex. 20:11. But if it is speaking of the new creation (2 Cor. 5:17a), then we should consider Col. 1:16,

**"because within Him was created the whole** (or: in union with Him everything is founded and settled, is built and planted, is brought into being, is produced and established; or: within the midst of Him all things were brought from chaos into order) **– the things within the skies and atmospheres, and the things upon the earth** (or: those [situations, conditions and/or people] in the heavens and on the land); **the visible things, and the unseen** (or: unable to be seen; invisible) **things: whether thrones** (seats of power) **or lordships** (ownership systems) **or governments** (rulers; leadership systems; sovereignties) **or authorities – the whole has been created and all things continue founded, put in order and stand framed through means of Him, and [proceeds, or were placed] into Him** (or: = He is the agent and goal of all creation)."

This is similar to Eph. 3:9,

**"to illuminate all people** (give light to everyone) **[as to] what [is] the execution of the detailed plan and household administration of the secret** (or: mystery) **pertaining to that having been hidden** (concealed) **away, apart from the ages** (or: disassociated from the [past] periods of time), **within the midst of God – in the One forming and founding** (framing, building and settling from a state of disorder and wildness; creating) **all things** (the Whole; everything)."

Then in Eph. 4:24, we are instructed to,

**"enter within** (or: clothe yourselves with) **the new humanity** (or: the Person that is different and innovative in kind and quality) **– the one in accord with and corresponding to God** (or: the person at the Divine level) **– being formed** (framed, built, founded and settled from a state of disorder and wildness; **created**) **within the Way pointed out** (or: in union with fair and equitable dealings with rightwised relationships, justice, righteousness and covenant participation; centered in [His] eschatological deliverance) **and reverent dedication** (or: benign relationship with nature) **pertaining to the Truth** (or: in intrinsic alignment with reality, which is the Truth)." Cf 10:6, below.

In reading this apocalyptic writing of the *Unveiling* (Rev.) it is helpful to keep in mind the "unveilings" given to others on the same or similar topics regarding God's new arrangement in Christ. This chapter has been a prelude to what will take place in Chapter 5, and vs. 11 is echoed in 5:12, below.

## Chapter 5

1. **Then, upon the [open] right [hand] of the One continuously sitting upon the throne, I saw a little book** (or: scroll; perhaps: codex) **having been written within and behind** (i.e., written on both sides), **having been sealed with** (or: by) **seven seals.**

Terry remarks that, "The division of chapters at this point is unfortunate, and tends to mislead the common reader" (ibid p 321), i.e., what John now sees is a continuation of what has gone immediately before in chapter 4. As John continues to describe the scene, the first thing he notes is a scroll which is **"upon"** the hand of **the Enthroned One**. This term would suggest that the hand was perhaps extended, but specifically that it was open, palm up. Were it closed around the scroll, it would have been "in" His hand. The significance of this is that the scroll is being offered, presented to whomever is found worthy to open its seals. In vs. 7, below, the Little Lamb takes the scroll which has been presented.

A similar situation is seen in Ezk. 2:9-10. There, however, the scroll is not sealed, but is spread before Ezekiel. It, also, is written on both sides, and contains dirges, a soliloquy, and woe. He is commanded to eat this scroll (a figure for taking its words into himself and “digesting” its contents) and then to go and speak these words to the house of Israel. A scroll is also used in Zech. 5 as a symbol of a curse which is going forth over the face of all the Land (or, earth). However, in Ps. 40:7 it says, “Then I said, Behold, I have come. In the roll of the scroll it is written concerning me.” Thus, unless specified here, let us not presume that this scroll in this Unveiling signifies woe or a curse. I think that the scroll is a figure of a message from God: a revelation; a disclosure. Let us remember here that we are reading and studying *An Unveiling of, and from, Jesus Christ*.

That it is written on both sides (not an everyday procedure) might tell us that it was a lengthy production: it contains a lot of information, or speaks of a subject of vast and detailed process. In Ex. 32:15 we see that the tablets of the Testimony were inscribed on both sides, front and back. Verse 16, there, tells us that these tablets were the work of God.

But this is classified information and there is only One in the entire universe Who is worthy to open its secrets to us. Seven seals is an idea. “The one ordinary document sealed with seven seals was a will. Under Roman law the seven witnesses to a will sealed it with their seals, and it could only be opened when all seven, or their legal representatives, were present” (William Barclay, *ibid* p 166). Another thought is that this means that it was completely sealed; “indicating absolute inviolability” (NIV Study Bible). The fact that there were seven seals, may signify that it is completely inaccessible for being read (vs. 3, below), or that its contents are a complete secret, or are hidden (*cf* Metzger, *ibid* p 52). Paul spoke of that which was secret and had been hidden:

**“we habitually speak God's wisdom within the midst of a secret** (or: we normally speak – in [the form or realm of] a mystery which only the initiated understand – the wisdom which is God): **the [wisdom] having been hidden away and remaining concealed, which God before marked out and set its boundaries** (or: previously designed) – **before the ages – [leading] into our glory** (our manifestation which calls forth praise; our good reputation)” (1 Cor. 2:7).

And in 1 Cor. 4:5 he instructs us,

**“do not be constantly evaluating** (or: stop judging, making decisions about or critiquing) **anything before [its] season** (before a fitting, due or appointed situation; prior to a fertile moment): **until the Lord [= Yahweh or Christ] would come – Who will continue giving light to** (or: shine upon and illuminate) **the hidden things of the Darkness** (or: the hiding things which are things in the shadows and dimness of obscurity), **and will progressively set in clear light** (or: keep on manifesting) **the intentions and purposes** (designs, dispositions, motives and counsels) **of the hearts – and then the praise and applause from God will repeatedly be birthed** (happen; come into being) **in each human** (or: for every person)!”

It is possible that what Paul has said, here, pertains to the contents of these visions.

Perhaps Isaiah gives the best answer: “So the entire vision shall become to you like the words of a sealed scroll, which, when they give it to one acquainted with script, saying, 'Please read this,' he says, 'I cannot, for it is sealed’” (Isa. 29:11; CVOT). Or, Dan. 12:4,

“Now you, Daniel, obstruct the words (bar passage of the messages; shut up the ideas) and seal the scroll until a season of ends joining together (or: fertile moment of completion; fitting situation from a consummation), until many can (or: would; may) be taught (instructed; trained) and then the intimate, experiential knowledge and insight can be multiplied to the full.” (LXX, JM)

In chapter 6, below, we will begin to see what happens when the seals are opened, but not specifically what is written in the scroll. Some have suggested that this scroll contains the remainder of the revelations of this book. Others have suggested that it contains the plan and purposes of the ages which

the Little Lamb opens to us. What do you think this scroll meant to the church of the first century? What does it now mean to us? Does it contain prophesies of the future? Is it the timeless Word of God? Does it contain the Good News of the Kingdom, i.e., the Gospel? Terry suggests that, "The unsealing of the book is the apocalypse itself, 'the revelation of Jesus Christ,'... (4:1)" (ibid). Metzger suggests that the scroll is "the book of the... decrees of God" (ibid). Let the Spirit speak to your heart, concerning this.

Judson Cornwall, in his book, *Elements of Worship* (BridgePublishing, 1985), suggests that the scroll here in chapter 5 should be understood with a view to the Jewish laws of redemption. On pp 28-29 he maintains that this scroll concerned a forfeited inheritance, saying,

"There was an automatic redemption and there was an intermediary redemption. Their property would be returned to them automatically in the year of Jubilee, or, a kinsman-redeemer could buy back their lost estates at any time.... The terms of redemption were established at the time the property was sold. When an inheritance was sold, encumbered, or transferred away, there were two scrolls, or instruments of writing, made of the transaction. One was open; the other was sealed. The unsealed one stated the right of possession to the purchaser; basically it was the public record of the transaction. The second scroll, however, contained both the details of the sale and the terms of redemption. This scroll had the signatures of witnesses written on the back side, and then it was rolled up and sealed."

The seals would be opened when redemption was paid, according to the specifications written within the scroll (*cf* Jer. 32:6-15). Cornwall continues,

"A sealed scroll, then, became a demonstrable sign of an alienated inheritance which could be recovered at Jubilee or through a *goel* [kinsman-redeemer] according to the terms specified inside the sealed copy" (ibid).

2. **Next I saw a strong agent** (or: messenger; person with a message) **repeatedly proclaiming** (announcing a message openly and publicly) **in a great** (= loud) **voice,**

**"Who is worthy** (of equal value) **to open the little book** (or: scroll; codex), **and to loose** (or: destroy) **its seals?"**

The idea of "**worthy**" or of being "of equal value" is answered in vs. 3, below: it would be one who, "**had power or was able.**" In the book of Ruth we see that the right, or "ability," to redeem a person was first given to the person who was the closest kinsman (Ru. 3:9-4:11a), and of course this person would have needed to have the purchasing power (possess corresponding value), as well.

Apparently it is God's desire to have the scroll opened. This is not something done in secret. There follows, in vs. 3, an open quest for one who is worthy, and the search covers first heaven, then earth, then down under the earth. The idea suggested by calling the proclaimer of this public question a "**strong agent**" may be to show how he or she would be able to "**proclaim in a great voice.**" This suggests that the message was going far and wide – to the extent described in vs. 3, below. There is nowhere that this question was not to be heard, or contemplated. Even the realm of the dead (**down under the earth**, vs. 3) would hear it. Jesus spoke of such a situation in Jn. 5:25, 28-29,

**"I am presently continuing to say to you folks that an hour is progressively** (or: presently in process of) **coming, and even now exists** (or: = is now here), **when the dead folks WILL be repeatedly hearing the voice of God's Son** (or: the Voice from, and which is, the Son of God), **and the ones hearing WILL proceed to be living!.... an hour is progressively** (or: presently; or: repeatedly) **coming within which all the people within the memorial tombs** (or: graves) – **will be continuously or repeatedly hearing His voice, and they will proceed journeying out: the ones doing virtue** (producing, making or constructing good) **into a resurrection which is Life** (or: of, from and with the quality of Life); **the ones practicing careless** (base, worthless,

cheap, slight, paltry, inefficient, thoughtless, common or mean) **things into a resurrection of separating and evaluating for a decision** (or: a resurrection which is a judging)."

We will find echoes of this, below, in the visions of this book.

From 1:10, above, through 21:3, below, voices play a significant role in this book. John the baptizer was a voice that was crying out in the wilderness (Jn. 1:23). In Jn. 3:29 he rejoiced at hearing the Voice of the Bridegroom. A voice always suggests a message, and the question here may be to point out that throughout the coming of the Messiah and the message of goodness, ease and well-being there were great voices proclaiming this message, and the unveiling of God's plan for mankind. One of those "people with a message" was Paul, who indeed had a "great voice."

Dan Kaplan has suggested that this "strong messenger" (One with a message) might be a visionary symbol for the Holy Spirit. We need to keep in mind that it is not only the book or the seals that are figurative in this spiritual play. Might not this "**repeatedly proclaiming** (announcing a message openly and publicly) **in a great** (= loud) **voice**" be an instance of what was repeatedly instructed to the seven called-out communities, beginning with 2:7, above, "**Let the person having an ear hear what the Spirit is repeatedly saying to, in and by** (or: the Breath-effect is continuously laying out for) **the called-out communities**"?

Kaplan pointed to Jn. 14:26 where Jesus told us,

**"Now the Helper** (the One called alongside to aid, comfort, encourage and bring relief; the Paraclete), **the set-apart Spirit** (or: the Sacred Breath; the holy Breath-effect; the holy attitude), **which the Father will proceed sending within, and in union with, My Name, that One will be progressively teaching you all things** (everything) **and will continue reminding you of** (calling to your mind and causing you to think about) **everything** (all things) **which I, Myself, said to you.**"

The "teaching" which the **set-apart Spirit** brings to us is a "message," and thus He is a Messenger. Jesus also spoke of God's Sacred Breath-effect, the Spirit of the Truth, in Jn. 15:26,

**"Whenever the One called alongside to aid, comfort, encourage and bring relief** (the Helper; the Paraclete) **should come – the Spirit of the Truth** (or: the Breath-effect of, and which is, reality) **Which** (or: Who) **is constantly** (habitually; progressively) **proceeding and traveling out from beside the Father** (= emanating from the Father's presence; or: from a presence which is the Father), **[and] Which** (or: Whom) **I, Myself, will continue sending to you from the Father's side** (or: from the presence which is the Father) **– that One will continue bearing witness** (giving testimony; showing evidence) **about Me.**"

It will be worthwhile to read what Jesus further said in Jn. 16:7-14, concerning the Spirit's role within the called-out, covenant communities:

7. **"Nevertheless, I, Myself, am telling you the Truth** (or: speaking reality to you). **It progressively bears together for you people** (It continues being expedient and advantageous in you; It is now for your benefit) **to the end that I should go away. For if I should not go away, the One called alongside to aid, comfort, encourage and bring relief** (the Helper; the Paraclete) **will not come** [other MSS: may by no means come] **to you and be face to face with you folks. Yet if I should journey on** (or: would travel on to another place) **I will habitually send Him to you.**

8. **"And upon coming, that One will be progressively testing and putting the System** (the world of culture, society, religion, economy and politics) **to the proof** (or: exposing and presenting convincing arguments about the aggregate of humanity) **concerning error** (failure; deviation; missing the target; sin) **and about fairness and equity in rightwised relationships which comprise the Way pointed out** (or: concerning eschatological deliverance that produces

covenant inclusion) – **and about dividing and separating for evaluation and decision** (or: judging). [comment: thus, the Paraclete replaces the Law]

9. **"About error** (failure; missing the mark; sin; deviation), **on the one hand, because they are not constantly trusting or progressively believing into Me.**

[comment: this now defines sin and failure to hit the Target (Christ)]

10. **"About fairness and equity in rightwised relationships** (or: concerning eschatological deliverance that produces covenant participation) **on the other hand, because I am progressively leading [everything] under control by withdrawing toward** (or: to; [to be] face to face with) **the Father, and so you folks are no longer continually gazing upon and contemplatively watching Me.**

11. **"And about dividing and separating for evaluation and decision, because the ruler** (one in first place; chief) **of this System** (world of culture, economics, religion or politics) **has been sifted, separated, evaluated and decided about, and now stands judged**

(or: Yet concerning judging, because the Prince and Leader of this universe and the aggregate of humanity has had a decision made about Him, and He now stands judged [by the System]).

12. **"I still have** (or: hold) **many things to be progressively telling you folks, but yet, you continue not yet being able** (or: having no power) **to habitually or progressively pick it up and carry** (or: bear) **it right now** (at present).

13. **"Yet, whenever that One – the Spirit of the Truth** (or: the Breath-effect from Reality; the attitude which is genuineness) – **may come** (or: Nonetheless, at the time when that spirit which is truth and reality should come), **It** (or: He) **will constantly be a Guide and will progressively lead you on the Path** (or: it will continue leading the way for you) **directed toward and proceeding on into all Truth and Reality** (or: into the midst of every truth and genuine reality) – **for It** (He; it) **will not habitually speak from Itself** (or: Himself), **but rather, as many things as It** (He; it) **continuously hears, It** (He; it) **will proceed speaking, and will continue reporting back to you the things presently and progressively coming, as well as those that are habitually coming and going.**

14. **"That One will glorify Me** (will give Me a good reputation; will give a manifestation of Me which calls forth praise), **because It** (He; it) **will constantly take from out of what is Mine** (or: receive from the one from, and which is, Me) **and will repeatedly report back to you folks** (or: will continue announcing to and informing you).

We see another figurative Agent described in 10:1-3, below, which many scholars have rightly interpreted to be a symbol of the risen Christ:

**"Next I saw a Strong Agent** (other MSS: another Agent, a Strong One) **progressively descending** (stepping down) **from out of the atmosphere** (or: sky; heaven) – **having been clothed with a cloud, and the rainbow upon His head, and His face as the sun, and His feet as pillars of fire – and constantly holding in His hand a tiny scroll having been opened up.... Then He uttered a cry with** (or: by) **a great Voice, even as a Lion is roaring...."**

Thus, as we come across the various "players" in this cosmic opera, let us listen to what the Spirit is saying to us through the designation of each character within each vision.

3. **And yet no one** (or: not one person) **within the atmosphere** (or: heaven; sky), **neither upon the land** (or: earth; ground) **nor down under the land** (earth; ground), **had power or was able to open the little book** (or: scroll; codex) **nor to see or observe it.**

The three realms mentioned in this verse are also spoken of in Ex. 20:4, "Thou shalt not make to thee an image, or any form, that is in the heavens above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the waters beneath the earth (ground)." (Rotherham) Also, we read in Phil. 2:10b,

**"of the folks upon the heaven** (of those belonging to the super-heaven, or [situated] upon the atmosphere) **and of the people existing upon the earth and of the folks dwelling down under the ground** (or: on the level of or pertaining to subterranean ones; [comment: note the ancient science of the day])..."

In the Exodus reference it is likely that the third level referred to the creatures in the sea or in lakes, etc. But here in 5:3, 13, and in Phil. 2:10, above, the reference to a level, or realm, down under the earth (or: ground) seems to be a separate category. Terry understood that the three locations mentioned denoted the entire universe (ibid p 322), i.e., what scholars today refer to as a "three-tiered universe," which was the worldview of the 1<sup>st</sup> century, in the Middle East.

One obvious reference is to the grave. In Gen. 50:5, Joseph quotes Jacob as saying, "in my grave which I dug for myself, in the land of Canaan, there shall you bury me." The old prophet, in 1 Kings 13:30, "laid his [the man of God's] dead body in his own grave." Jonah speaks figuratively of his situation in the bowels of the great fish as "the belly of the unseen (*sheol*; *hades*)." Then in 2:6 he said, "the earth, [with] its bars, are about me for the age, yet You will bring up my soul from ruin, Yahweh, my God."

In Ps. 88:3 we read, "For my soul is sated with misfortunes, and my life has drawn near unto the unseen (*sheol*; *hades*)." Then in vs. 4, "I am counted with them who descend into the pit." Verse 5: "Among the dead I am free, like the slain that lie in the grave." Jacob, speaking of his dying says, "Surely I will go down mourning towards the unseen (*sheol*; *hades*), unto my son" (Gen 37:35; cf Gen. 42:38; 44:29, 31). 1 Sam. 2:6 records, "Yahweh doth kill, and makes alive – He takes down to the unseen (*sheol*; *hades*) and brings up." So what does the Lord mean here in 5:3? We see in the verses above that the unseen is associated with (although not identical to) the grave. Obviously, those in a grave are no longer seen. But is this what the Lord is speaking of here? Is he referring to the dead as a state of existence? Or, is this referring to those (being dead) located, existing, in *hades* (the unseen)? We get more views, during OT times, in the following Psalms:

9:17, "The wicked shall return to the unseen (*sheol*; *hades*)"

16:10, "For You shall not forsake my soul in the unseen (*s.*; *h.*)"

18:4, "The cables (meshes; Rotherham) of death have enveloped me, ....

18:5, "The cables (meshes; Rotherham) of the unseen (*s.*; *h.*) surrounded me;"

55:15, "May death lure them away; may they descend to the unseen (*s.*; *h.*) alive."

86:13, "... and You have rescued my soul from the unseen (*s.*; *h.*) beneath."

139:8, "And should I make my berth (couch) in the unseen (*s.*; *h.*), You are there."

Then in Pr. 15:11, "The unseen (*s.*; *h.*) and destruction are before Yahweh" and in Pr. 15:24, "The way of life is upwards to the prudent, that he MAY DEPART from the unseen (*s.*; *h.*) beneath," then in Pr. 23:13, 14, "Withhold not from a youth correction .... You with the rod shall smite him, and you shall deliver his soul from the unseen (*s.*; *h.*)."

Some of these verses would seem to refer to a literal death and subsequent entrance into *sheol*, the unseen, which is referred to as being "beneath." What we must consider is whether the term "beneath" is literal or figurative. Tradition has said that it is literal. Yet God continually sits upon His throne; His throne is in the heavens (which are "above"); but David says that if he makes his bed in the unseen (*sheol*; *hades*) that God is there. Of course God is everywhere – that was David's point. But, this seems to suggest that the unseen (*sheol*; *hades*) is a condition rather than a place. David was speaking figuratively, but in what way? Did he mean that if he made a mess of things in his life that God was still



there to help him? Or, did he mean that if he ordered his life and lived in such a way that he would be judged as wicked (Ps. 9:17) and end up in the unseen, that even in that condition (or, place; or, sphere) God would still be present and even, perhaps, there to help him?

Let's look at another scene. Turn to Isa. 14. Let me begin by saying that most scholars agree that Ezk. 28 is a parallel passage to this, and I agree, so I may make occasional reference to it while considering the subject of Isa. 14. This is a subject all its own, but perhaps a short review of it will shed some light upon our current discussion. The setting is when Israel is given rest upon their own soil (which is also Yahweh's – vs. 2) and they are taking captive their captors. [Can we see a figure here of entering into His rest and overcoming?] They are to take up a taunt (Rotherham; "proverb"- CVOT; "simile" - Young) concerning the king of Babylon. It begins in vs. 4: The oppressor has ceased; Yahweh has broken the staff of the wicked and the sceptre of rulers. In vs. 9, since he was laid low, the unseen (*sheol*; *hades*) beneath is disturbed at him and, among other things, makes all the kings of the nations to rise from their thrones. [Do we get the sense that this is a figurative piece?] In vs. 10 we see that he has been made weak (without strength, ill) like the kings of the earth! [this could not possibly be describing a spirit, a principality of the heavenlies, or "Satan"] His pride is brought down to the unseen (*sheol*; *hades*), "the maggot is berthing under you, and the worm is covering you" (vs. 11, CVOT). Maggots eat flesh; worms eat flesh & earth.

Then in vs. 12, "How you have fallen from the heavens [Eden, God's paradise – Ezk. 28:13]!"

"So here we have a fall from one place (realm, or, condition): the heavens, to another place: the unseen, the recesses of the pit (vs. 15), yet, these verses [16-20a] seem to take place on earth, not in the realm of the dead (Sheol)" (Herbert Wolf and John H. Stek, NIV Study Bible, 1995).

This is also the place of maggots and worms. Ezk. 28:2 says, "Because your heart is lofty (haughty), and you have said, 'I am a god (or, I am God),' ....whereas you are Adam (a man) and not God." This last phrase is repeated in vs. 9, then in vs. 17 it says, "Upon the earth did I cast you," and in vs. 18, "And I turned you to ashes [Heb. also means "dust"] on the ground (earth)."

Without diverging to a lengthy study on this subject, let me just point out that it would seem that there are really only two conditions, places, or realms in the view of this context: heaven and earth. These two are contrasted throughout the Scriptures. The unseen, from our look at Isa. & Ezk., above, seems to be upon (or, in a figure, within) the earth. Death and corruption are the conditions of one who is in the unseen - be these literal, or figurative. Both lack light and life.

Now let's look at 1 Pet. 3:18-20, where we read of Christ,

**"because even Christ** (or: considering that Messiah also) **died** [other MSS: suffered], **once for all, concerning and in relation to failures to hit the target** (about errors and mistakes; around and encompassing sins [some MSS: our failures; other MSS: your failures]) – **a Just One** (a rightwised One; One in accord with the Way pointed out; a fair and equitable individual) **over [the situation of]** (or: for the sake of) **unjust ones** (capsized folks; those out of accord with the Way pointed out; unfair and inequitable people) – **to the end that He at once may bring** (or: can lead; would conduct) **you folks** [other MSS: us] **to** (or: toward; to be face to face with) **God. [He], on the one hand, being put to death in flesh** (= a physical body), **yet on the other hand, being made alive in spirit** (or: indeed, being put to death by flesh {or: = the estranged human condition}, yet, being engendered a living one by Breath-effect {or: [the] Spirit}), **at one point journeying** (going from one place to another; passing on) **within which** (or: in union with Which), **He also proclaimed** (published; preached; heralded) **the message to and for** (or: among) **the spirits in prison** (within a guardhouse): **to and for those being at one time unconvinced** (unpersuaded; disobedient; noncompliant) **within [the] days of Noah...**"

Where was this prison? The text does not say. We can presume, I think, that the prison was (or, was in) the unseen, whether this is understood as an existential condition (expressed metaphorically) here in this life, or a sphere of existence after an earthly life, prior to the advent of Jesus, the Messiah.

From all of this, I think the term "down under the earth" of 5:3, here, refers in figure to the unseen: the *sheol* of the Hebrew; the *hades* of the Greek. How we interpret this depends upon our worldview. That no one **"had power or was able to open the little book nor to observe it,"** was this not the state of humanity (the former "shining one" of Isa. 14) before the emergence of the Lamb of God on the earth?

4. **And so I was greatly weeping, that no one was or is found worthy (of equal value) to open the little book (or: scroll; codex) nor even to see or observe it.**

We are reminded of Jn. 11:35, **"Jesus sheds tears** (let tears flow; gave way to tears; or: bursts into tears)." Yet He also told His followers, **"Happy and blessed [are] the folks presently crying! – because you will proceed to be laughing"** (Lu. 6:21). Perhaps John was so caught up in the drama of this cosmic opera that he momentarily forgot about the work of the Christ. One of the old people remind him of this, in the next verse. That no one else could **see or observe it** suggests a state of general blindness, perhaps an allusion to 2 Cor. 3:14-16, **"the results of their mental conceptions, intellectual workings and thought processes were petrified.... a head-covering (veil) continues lying upon their heart (= the innermost being of the group)."** Jesus referred to such folks,

**"They exist being blind guides of the Path (or: blind leaders of the Way). Now if a blind person should ever lead or guide [another] blind person, both people will proceed to be falling into a pit"** (Mat. 15:14b).

Only in Christ can we observe and see, as Paul instructs us in 1 Cor. 2,

9. **But to the contrary, according as it has been and stands written,**  
**"Things which an eye has not seen and an ear does not hear, neither does it ascend (climb up) upon [the] heart of a human, so as to conceive – so many things God prepares and makes ready in, for and by the folks habitually loving (accepting and urging toward reunion with; fully giving themselves to) Him."** [Isa. 64:3; 52:15]

10. **Yet [other MSS: For] God unveils [them] in us (reveals [them] to us; uncovers [them] for us; discloses [these] among us) through the spirit (or: the Spirit; the Breath-effect), for you see, the spirit (or: the Spirit; the Breath-effect; the Attitude) constantly and progressively searches, examines and investigates all mankind, and all things – even the depths of God!**

The focus of opening the book/scroll is an allusion to Dan. 7:10b, where, "a tool for evaluating and a standard for deciding was installed (or: He seated a tribunal) and the books were opened." (LXX, JM) That context speaks to the Unveiling, here, and 20:12, below.

5. **Then one forth from among the elders (or: old people) is saying to me,**  
**"Do not continue weeping! Consider! The Lion out of the tribe of Judah, the Root of (from) David, overcame to open the little book, and to loose (or: destroy) its seven seals [with other MSS: He conquers! He is presently opening the scroll, as well as its seven seals]."**

This picture (figure) of the visionary **elder** reaching out with encouragement to John may be a parable for the older folks of the called-out communities, who have insight like this elder, to encourage others when the picture looks hopeless to carnal perceptions. This quote alludes Isa. 11:1, "Then a Branch will shoot out from the Stock of Jesse and a Shoot from his roots will spring up, and upon Him the Spirit of Life will remain..." (Ferrar Fenton). Jer. 23:5 picks up this theme: "I will raise for David a righteous offshoot, and royal king, who will govern and do justice and right in the land" (Fenton). Paul's address to the Jews in

Antioch references Jesse and David, connecting this lineage to Jesus, in Acts 13:22-23, concluding in vs. 22,

**“From the seed of this one** (or: From this person's descendant) – **corresponding to and in accord with [the] promise – He brought to** (or: for; in; by) **Israel a Deliverer** (Savior; Rescuer; Restorer to health and wholeness), **Jesus.**”

In 22:16, below, the risen Jesus proclaims, **“I am** (I continuously exist being) **the Root and the Offspring of** (Family from; Race which is) **David,**” which is to say, “the Alpha, or Source, and the Omega, or Final Product,” of the Davidic prophecies; the origin and the product of what David represented.

Paul presented the expanded unveiling which includes the Gentiles, the ethnic multitudes of the nations, by quoting Isa. 11:10 in Rom. 15:12,

**“There** (or: He) **will continue being The Root** (or: the Sprout from the root) **of Jesse, even the One habitually standing up** (placing Himself back; raising Himself up) **to continue being Ruler** (being The Chief; to repeatedly be the Beginner) **of multitudes** (ethnic groups; of nations; of Gentiles). **Upon Him ethnic multitudes** (non-Jews; nations) **will continue placing their expectation** (will rely; will hope).”

This corresponds to the picture in vs. 6, below, where we note that the little Lamb is **“standing”** within the midst of the throne. And from Isaiah we see the universal reach of this little Lamb.

"Stop crying!" (vs. 5, Barclay translation) This means that there is a solution:

"Swete has an interesting comment on this. John was weeping and yet his tears were unnecessary. Human grief often springs from insufficient knowledge. If we had patience to wait and trust, we see that God has his own solutions for the situation which brings us tears" (Barclay, *ibid* p 169).

The title, **Lion out of the tribe of Judah**, goes back to Gen. 49:9, where Jacob prophetically blesses his sons. Note that this is also one of the faces (identities, characters, aspects) of the living ones. This title speaks of the royal, kingly quality of Christ and affirms Christ as being in the continued line of God's people. There is one continuous plan. Scholars have seen this figure as an allusion to the late 1<sup>st</sup> century, AD, 4 Esdras 12:31-32,

“And as for the lion that you saw rousing up out of the forest and roaring and speaking to the eagle and reproving him for his unrighteousness, and as for all his words that you have heard, this is the Messiah whom the Most High has kept until the end of days, who will arise from the posterity of David, and will come and speak to them...” (*The OT Pseudepigrapha*, Vol. 1, Hendrickson Pub., 1983, p 550, trans. by B. Metzger).

He **overcame** (conquered) - or, as this is the Gk. aorist tense, "overcomes (conquers)" – and His work still applies; He is still overcoming in us. Now He has the power to open the scroll and loose, or destroy, its seals.

**6. And then within the midst of the throne and of the four living ones, and within the midst of the elders, I saw a little Lamb standing, as one having been slaughtered, having seven horns and seven eyes – which are the Seven Spirits of God** (or: God's seven Breath-effects/Attitudes): **the Ones having been and still being sent forth as envoys** (representatives) **into all the Land** (or: earth) –

Imagine John's surprise: expecting to see a lion, he sees a **little Lamb**. The Jews had expected a Messiah that would be like a lion, but they found Jesus to be a non-violent man who did not resist the Roman Empire (Isa. 53:7) or liberate Judea from its dominating system of rule. He laid down His life (Jn.

10:18) for His friends (Jn. 15:13). And yet John, here, might have quickly recalled John the baptizer's proclamation,

**"The next day** (or: On the morrow) **he is looking at and observing Jesus** [= Yahshua] **progressively coming toward him, and he begins saying, "Look!** (Pay attention, see and perceive)! **God's Lamb** (or: the Lamb from God; the Lamb having the character and qualities of God; or, in apposition: the Lamb which is God), **the One continuously lifting up and progressively carrying away the Sin of the world, and removing the sin which belongs to and is a part of the System**

(or: habitually picking up and taking away the failure and error brought on by the organized system; progressively removing the falling short and the missing of the goal from the world of culture, religion, economy and government, society, and from the aggregate of humanity)" (Jn. 1:29).

The present participle here in Jn., "continuously lifting up and progressively carrying away," corresponds to the perfect participle "**having been slaughtered**" in vs. 6, above, for the perfect tense "expresses an abiding condition as a result of the past act of being slain" (Beale, *ibid* p 352).

In 1 Pet. 1:18-19 Peter makes a similar reference to the crucifixion of Jesus, and the effects it had upon humanity:

**"having seen, and thus knowing, that you folks were not unbound and released by a ransom of corruptible things** (things that are perishable and subject to spoiling)... **but rather by Christ's precious blood** (or: in valuable blood, which is [the] Anointed One; by costly blood from [the Messiah]) – **as of a flawless** (unblemished) **and spotless Lamb.**"

The same imagery is seen in Heb. 9:1-28, where in vs. 14 we read,

**"to how much greater an extent shall the blood of the Christ** (Anointed One; [Messiah]) – **Who through means of a spirit** (or: attitude; [the] Breath-effect) **pertaining to the Age offers Himself** (or: brought Himself face to face and offers Himself) **without blemish by and with God** (or: in, to and for God) – **continue cleansing and pruning your conscience and shared consciousness from works of death** (or: dead procedures and activities; deeds of dead folks) **[leading] into [the situation] to be continuously rendering sacred service, as well as habitually doing the business and duties of life, for, in, by, to and with the living, as well as true and real, God?"**

Then in vs. 24 we are informed:

**"Christ did not enter into set-apart places made by hands** (= by humans) – **representations** (things formed after a pattern) **of the true and real things – but rather into the atmosphere and heaven itself, now to be manifested** (exhibited to view; caused to appear in clear light; made apparent) **by the presence of God over us** (or: in God's face and countenance [being] on our behalf)."

And then in vs. 26b we are told,

**"Yet now** (at this time), **once, upon a conjunction** (a joined destiny; a bringing of [two] ends together ["denoting the joining of two age-times" – E.W. Bullinger]) **of the ages, He has been and remains manifested** (has been brought to light and continues visible) **into a displacement of the failure** (from the error, sin and deviation from the target) **through the sacrifice of Himself** (or: through His sacrifice; or: by means of the sacrificial altar-offering which was Himself)." [*cf* Rom. 6:9-10]

The Gospels portray Christ as a new Moses, and His crucifixion was at the time of the Passover festival, which was a memorial of Israel's deliverance from slavery in Egypt. But that festival was not about a cleansing of Israel from their mistakes and sins, rather this was annually accomplished for all of Israel on the Day of Atonement, when the chief priest entered, only once a year, for the cleansing of Israel, and the

bearing away, out of the community of Israel, of all Israel's sins by the scapegoat. Hebrews chapter 9 is about the Day of Atonement, as we see in these verses, quoted above – especially vs. 24.

Now look again at the proclamation of John the baptizer, quoted above: “**continuously lifting up and progressively carrying away the Sin of the world, and removing the sin which belongs to and is a part of the System**” seems to picture the Day of Atonement, but now he applies it not to just Israel, but to “the world of culture, religion, economy and government, society, and from the aggregate of humanity.” The entire world was cleansed by Christ's sacrifice. Peter's reference to “**a flawless and spotless Lamb**” has a similar allusion. The Heb. 9 theme, from vss. 1 to 28, also speaks of the Day of Atonement.

Peter's description, “**unbound and released by a ransom,**” sounds like a reference to Passover, and Israel's release from the **bondage** in Egypt. So it was all accomplished by the “**little Lamb standing, as one having been slaughtered.**”

Where this little Lamb is standing is in the center of all that John is seeing. He is the center of the universe (just as He is in the center of this temple imagery, for the temple was a figure for the heavens, and the people of Israel were a figure of the Land, or, the earth). So in this picture, above, we see everyone else surrounding the throne and the little once-slain Lamb, in the temple's holy of holies.

Now let us consider the second half of vs. 6: “**having seven horns and seven eyes – which are the Seven Spirits of God** (or: God's seven Breath-effects/Attitudes): **the Ones having been and still being sent forth as envoys** (representatives) **into all the Land** (or: earth).” Horns were OT symbols representing power, or the strength of a nation (*cf* Deut. 33:17; 1 Ki. 22:11; Ps. 89:17; Dan. 7:7-8:24). That the Lamb has *seven* horns signifies the fullness of his strength. In this verse these horns would be a symbolic representation of what the risen Jesus said in Mat. 28:18,

“**All authority** (or: Every right and privilege from out of Being) **is** (or: was) **given to Me within heaven and upon the earth** (or: in sky and atmosphere, as well as on land!)”

It seems best to understand “**seven horns and seven eyes**” together, as a paired unit depicting aspects “**which are the Seven Spirits of God.**” Recall the previous characterization of the “fullness of His Spirit” in 4:5, above, where we see the same thing pictured as “**seven shining ones** (or: lamps; lights; torches) **of fire.**” The phrase, “**the Ones having been and still being sent forth as envoys** (representatives),” is another perfect participle, thus my rendering, “and still being sent forth.” The participle is a form of the verb *apostellō*, and the noun form is the word commonly transliterated “apostle,” which really means an envoy or a representative. The verb carries the sense of being sent with a commission, or being sent as a missionary. To connect all this to the traditional term “apostle,” we would have a transliterated phrase for the participle: “sent forth as apostles.” We bring up this tradition (even though it is not a proper rendering of the Greek term) to suggest that these “horns and eyes” can be seen as figures of the Lamb's body, i.e., His commissioned communities.

The figure of “**eyes**” is an allusion to Zech. 3:9, “For behold the stone that I have laid (or: set) before Joshua; upon one stone are seven eyes... and I will remove (take away) the iniquity of the Land (or: earth) in one day.” And of course what comes to mind is Christ, the Rock, as well of the Stone that becomes a great mountain (i.e., a kingdom) and fills the whole earth, in Dan. 2:34, 35, 44, 45. Back in Zech., we read of Judea's governor, concerning the rebuilding of the temple, in 4:10, “And they will rejoice and see the stone [of the] plumb [line] in the hand of Zerubbabel; these seven [are] the eyes of Yahweh; they [are] going to and fro in the entire land (or: whole earth).” These seven Spirits represent God's awareness and activities in the earth, which are often through members of humanity. We are God's co-laborers. We are Christ's sent-forth envoys and representatives.

7. **and it came** (or: went), **and it has taken** (or: received) **so that it has the scroll** (or: book; codex) **from out of the right [hand] of the One continuously sitting upon the throne.**

Standing behind this picture which depicts the little Lamb approaching God's throne is Dan. 7:13-14, "I was observing, and continued noticing and contemplating, within the night vision, and then, consider this: One as a son of a human (or: [the] Son of man; = a human being) progressively coming with the clouds of the sky (or: atmosphere; heaven), and He overtook as far as, and so arrived at, the Ancient of days (or: the Old One, from the days [gone by?; having passed?]), and He was brought near toward Him (or: he was carried to be face-to-face with Him; he was presented to Him; he was borne along by Him). Then the beginning (or: the primacy; or: the headship and rule) was given to Him, along with the honor and the reign (or: kingship; kingdom), and so the peoples, tribes and languages continuously perform as (do the duties of) slaves for (or: to) him. His right from out of Being and Existing (or: his privilege and authority) [is] an eonian right from Existing (or: a privilege pertaining to the Age of the Messiah; an age-lasting authority) which will not pass away – and His reign (kingship; kingdom; sovereign activities) will not be ruined, corrupted or destroyed" (LXX, JM).

Was it from this passage in Daniel that Paul regarded himself as a "slave of Jesus Christ" (Rom. 1:1)? And did Christ's reign play out according to how Daniel understood that it would? In vs. 10, below, the living ones and the twenty-four elders sing a song that states that Christ made them (or: us) to be kings and to continue reigning. This follows what Jesus told the poor, in Mat. 5:3,

**"The destitute folks [are] happy in spirit and attitude, because the reign and dominion of the heavens is continually belonging to, and made up of, them."**

We, represented by the 4 and the 24 in this passage, regard Christ as the One that **"is worthy** (of value) **to take** (receive) **the power and ability, as well as wealth and riches...**" (vs. 12, below), but as we saw earlier, He brings us up to His level and seats us with Him. He did away with social stratification in His reign, but WE always know Who is the Head.

This scene calls to mind the words that opened this book, in 1:1a,

**"An unveiling of, and which is, Jesus Christ** (or: A disclosure from Jesus [the] Anointed; A revelation which pertains to Jesus [the Messiah]) **which God gave by Him** (in Him; for Him; to Him) **to point out to His slaves that which continues necessary to come to be** (or: be birthed; happen) **in swiftness** (= speedily; or: shortly).

God gave it to Him, for Him and by Him. So it is with this little scroll. Here Metzger comments, "In short, Jesus does not change the divine plan; he unfolds its eternal and unchangeable nature by his obedience, even unto death on the cross" (ibid p 53).

So the Little Lamb went and took the scroll. The call of the strong messenger of vs. 2 has been answered. One who humbled Himself to become a servant (Phil. 2:7) now possesses all power and moves to the place of God's power (**the right hand**) and takes control of this most significant scroll. He now has the ability to loose the seals and to begin the process of bringing forth His life into the universe.

8. **Now when it took** (or: received) **the little book** (or: scroll; codex), **the four living ones and the twenty-four elders** (older folks) **fell before the little Lamb – each one constantly holding lyres** (or: harps) **and golden, shallow bowls being continuously brimming full of incenses** (things passed off in fumes), **which are the thoughts and speech toward having things going well and being at ease** (or: prayers) **of, and from, the set-apart folks** (or: holy ones; saints; sacred people).

The action of taking the scroll causes **the four living ones** and the **24 elders to fall before the little Lamb** (vs. 8) and **sing a new song** (vs. 9, below). My sister, Rebecca, remarked about the resulting mess of burning incense all over the floor; the clang of the golden bowls hitting the sea of glass (4:6, above); and the cacophony from the crash of 24 lyres adding to the din – IF this scene were interpreted literally! Selah. The word “**fell**,” here, is not the normal Greek word for “worship” or for “giving obeisance.” It simply mean that they fell. If we look back to the types and shadows of the O.T. we will find that praise, worship and prayer before the throne only happened in the Tabernacle of David, which he set up to house the Ark of the Covenant (2 Sam. 6:17, "And they brought in the Ark of the Lord, and set it in His place, in the midst of the Tabernacle that David had pitched for it; and David offered burnt offerings and peace offerings before the Lord"). Prior to this, when the Ark was in the Tabernacle of Moses, only the high priest could enter into the Holy of Holies (a type of this present scene here in Rev. 4 & 5) once a year on the Day of Atonement. In David's tent there was no veil and he was neither a priest nor a Levite, yet he had access to the Mercy Seat (the Throne of Grace - Heb. 4:16).

See 1 Chron. 25:1-7 where David set up 24 Orders of Singers "for song in the house of the Lord, with cymbals, psalteries, and harps, for the service of the house of God ..." (vs. 6). We see here in Rev. that the 24 elders have instruments for praise and **bowls brimming** with things **offered** in sacrifice, and they sing a new song. The Tabernacle of David was a type of the heavenlies, the realm of spirit and praise (Jn. 4:24), in which Christ is the Priest-King after the Order of Melchisedec (typified by David), and in which the called-out communities offer up praise and acknowledgement for what He has done (vs. 9, below) and sing the new song, while having or speaking “**thoughts and speech toward having things going well and being at ease.**”

Note that what the 24 elders figuratively offer (the bowls of incenses) are defined here as “**the PRAYERS of, and from the set-apart folks** (or: holy ones; saints; sacred people).” This identifies who these 24 elders represent: they are priests; this scene is a picture of the sacred communities of Christ, whose lives answer to the past figure of the work of the priests in the physical temple. "Let my prayer be before Thee counted as incense; and the lifting up of my hands as an evening sacrifice." (Ps. 141:2) And in Lu. 1 we see the priestly work of Zacharias doing the course of Abiah, where in vss. 8b-10 we observe:

**“in his arranged order and appointment of the daily [service division] within the presence of and facing before God, [and] corresponding to and in accord with the custom of the priesthood, he obtained by lot the [duty] to burn incense, after entering into the [holy place] of the inner sanctuary of the Temple of the Lord. Also, during the hour of the incense offering, all the full capacity, of the people normally praying, was outside.”**

Also, in Eph. 5:2, Paul admonishes,

**“keep on walking** (= progressively living and maintaining your life) **within, and in union with, Love** (self-giving acceptance and the urge for union), **according as the Christ also loves** (or: to the same level and commensurately as the Anointed One loved, accepted and achieved reunion with) **you folks, and also gives** (or: gave) **Himself over in our behalf: a bearing toward and a bringing to be face to face, even an offering by** (or: in; with; or: to; for) **God [turning] into a fragrant odor** (or: and unto a sweet-smelling incense-sacrifice amid God).”

9. **And they repeatedly sing a new song** (an ode or hymn different in character), **constantly saying, “You are worthy to take** (of equal value to receive) **the scroll** (or: codex; book) **and to open its seals, because You were** (or: are) **slaughtered and bought us by God** (for God; in God; with God), **within Your blood** (or: in union with the blood which is You), **from out of the midst of every tribe and tongue** (or: language) **and people and ethnic multitude** (or: nation).

Now see that the community of Christ, His separated ones, continuously, or habitually, sings a

**new song** (representative of the new deliverance from bondage, the new creation and the New Covenant, or arrangement) of praise to Christ for what He has done: He was slaughtered, and thus bought us for God. This purchase was transacted "**within Your Blood**" and was made "**from out of the midst of every tribe and tongue** (or: language) **and people and ethnic multitude** (or: nation)." This shows that the work of Christ went beyond the Jews and Israel and that this scene is representative of the universal body of Christ, of which the covenant with Israel was the type. He gave His life a ransom for MANY (Mk. 10:45). Also, "**Christ bought us [back] out** (or: redeems and reclaims us out [of slavery] and liberates us) **from the midst of the curse** (or: adversarial prayer; imprecation) **of and from the Law...**" (Gal. 3:13)

We find here a very strong allusion to Ps. 98:1,

"You folks should in celebration sing to, for, in and with the LORD (= Yahweh) a new song (a celebrative ode that is different in character), because the LORD (= Yahweh) has done (made; formed; created; produced) marvelous and wonderful things. His right hand and His sacred, set-apart arm rescued, brought deliverance (or: saved) and restores to health and wholeness" (LXX, JM).

In Ps. 33:2-3 we read, "Praise Yahweh with a harp.... Sing unto him a new song; play skilfully with a loud noise." And in Ps. 144:9-10,

"O Elohim, let me sing a new song to You; On a zither of ten strings let me make melody to You [Who are] giving salvation... setting loose..." (CVOT). Cf Isa.42:10; Ps. 149:1a.

Ps. 96:1-3 is another witness:

"Sing to Yahweh a new song; sing to Yahweh, **all the earth!**.... Bear the tidings of His salvation day after day! Recount His glory among the nations; among all the peoples, His marvelous works" (CVOT).

We should note the dative form of the word **God**, here (as with Ps. 98:1, above). There is no expressed preposition in the text, so we must consider the functions of the dative that will make sense to the verse and the larger context. Only MS A omits the word **us**, following the word **bought**, but many translations follow A. These then have to add a word either after "bought" or before the complex phrase beginning with "**from out of**," which is usually a limited term, like "persons" (NWT) or "saints" (NRSV) or "men" (NIV). The reading "**us**" solves the problem without having to add a word to the text. Those singing the song are representative (a symbol) of all that He bought and set free. The 24 and the 4 represent people from all four directions and times. So now we consider the options of the preposition that is to follow **us**: **by** shows that this purchase was done "**by God**." "For" indicated that we were bought "for God." "In" indicated the realm and sphere in which this transaction took place. "With" tells us that God was the currency used. It was God's life that bought us out of slavery to failure and sin. Thus, it makes sense that it happened "**within [His] blood**;" it was God's blood, through His Son's life; it happened within the sphere of His life and "in union with the blood which [was Him]." Here the blood is also an allusion to the blood on the door posts when Israel was set free from Egypt. And so, what seems to be an ambiguous reading actually fits all the functions of the dative case, and we have a fuller picture of what took place on the cross.

The last long phrase is as complete a statement as could be made to express the universality of the effect of His sacrifice: tribe, tongue, people and ethnic multitude (or: nation). This is like saying "in all four directions of humanity" or, from all the world. This speaks of the cross proclaiming the ultimate end of all domination systems, and calls to mind Jesus' words,

"**And so then I, if I should be lifted up from out of the earth** (or: when I can be exalted forth from the midst of this Land), **I will progressively drag** [note: drag as with, or in, a net; or: draw,



as drawing water with a bucket, or a sword out of a sheath] **all mankind** (or: everyone) **to Myself**" (Jn. 12:32).

But in John's day, the called-out communities were just the beginning, as we read in Jn. 1:18, "**from being pregnant He gave birth to us** (brought us forth; prolifically produced us) **by a Word** (in a collected thought; for an expressed idea; with a message) **of Truth and from Reality – into the [situation for] us to be** (or: to continuously exist being) **a specific** (or: a certain; some) **firstfruit of His created beings.**"

A "firstfruit" implies a harvest that will come later.

10. **"And You made** (or: make; form; construct; produce) **them** [minuscule 792, the Clementia Vulgate (1592) and Primasius (6<sup>th</sup> century) read: us] **kings** [other MSS: a kingdom] **and priests in** (for; to; by) **our God, and they** [the Armenian, Clementia Vulgate (1592) and Primasius read: we] **continue reigning** [reading with Westcott & Hort (following A); other MSS: they will continue reigning] **upon the Land** (or: the earth)."

This continues the song, saying that those whom He bought He **makes** (forms into) **kings and priests**, and that these are to rule as kings upon the earth. This also shows a break from the old covenant, for under the old both kings and priests had to descend from the blood line of either a king or a priest, respectively. These are taken from every tribe, tongue & nation, or ethnic group. This is no longer just about Israel. Yet the type is followed, in the sense that this purchase was made within His blood. Thus we, being placed within His blood, are into His blood line, but it is a blood line of the last Adam, the Second Humanity (1 Cor. 15:45-48). We are born again and are made sons of God; His sons. He being a priest & king, His sons are priests & kings. He, the Last Adam, has joined us to Himself and to the place of caretaking for which the first Adam was created: to reign in love upon the earth. This is restoration, but into a new creation (2 Cor. 5:17a).

Once again, background OT allusions are seen here. An echo of vss. 9b-10 is found in Ex. 19:5-6, "For, in, to and with, Me you folks will continue existing a people being encircled around [Me], laid up as a super-abounding acquisition of property [cf Tit. 2:14b], [separated] from all the ethnic multitudes (nations), for you see, all the earth is Mine. But further, you folks will continue existing for Me, in Me, and with Me, a royal effect of a body of priests..." (LXX, JM).

In Dan. 7:22b, the LXX reads, "then the season came on and the set-apart folks fully possessed the reign of sovereign influence," and 7:27 reads, "And the reign (sovereign influence)... was given to the set-apart folks belonging to the Most High," and in 7:18b, "and so set-apart folks belonging to the Most High shall receive alongside and take to themselves the reign (sovereign influence), and they shall continue holding down and fully possessing it as far as an Age of the ages" (JM).

But keep in mind that this kingdom does not look like other kingdoms or systems of rule. It is not a domination system, but a life of serving, healing and giving life. Cf the teachings of Jesus, in the Gospels.

Notice the present tense, **continue reigning**. That was happening in the 1<sup>st</sup> century, and has continued through those who have remained joined to the Vine (Jn. 15:1ff) since Jesus was enthroned and was given "all authority" (3:21, above; Mat. 28:18). Furthermore, this reigning is not in some far off "heaven," but right here, **upon the Land** (meaning the Land of Israel and the habitable regions of the Roman Empire, in the 1<sup>st</sup> century), or, "upon the earth" (in our day).

11. **Next I saw and also heard a sound** (or: a voice) **of many agents forming a circle around the throne, the living ones, and the elders. And the number of them [is; was] innumerable groups of innumerable groups** (myriads of myriads), **even thousands of thousands,**

The next phase of this vision is the perception by John of countless multitudes of messengers (**agents**) **forming a circle around the throne**, and around those about the throne. They, too, continuously give witness of the worthiness of the little Lamb (vs. 12), but they say something a little different than what the new song said, above, as we see in the next verse. The **number** echoes Nu. 10:36 (LXX), "Turn again (or: Turn back), so that they are changed, O LORD (= Yahweh), [the] thousands – [the] innumerable thousands (myriads) – within the midst of Israel" (JM). But a closer allusion is in Ps. 68:17,

"The chariot of God [is] ten thousand-fold: thousands of progressively thriving and continuously prospering folks: [the] LORD (= Yahweh) [is] among them – [as] in Sinai, [so] centered within the midst of the holy place (= the temple; or: in the set-apart place)" (LXX, JM)

Then, of course, is Dan. 7:10a,

"A river (or: stream) of Fire was continuously and progressively drawing, in His presence [other MSS: progressively passing along forth from before Him; continuously went out from in front of Him]; a thousand thousands were continuously ministering and serving as priests for Him, and ten thousand ten thousands (a myriad of myriads) having taken a stand alongside in His midst, and remaining standing with and for Him" (LXX, JM).

The different MS readings in Dan. 7:10a give varying pictures. The "drawing" by the river of Fire sketches a scene of all returning into the midst of Him (Rom. 11:36); the "passing along forth from before Him" draws a picture of His fiery love on the move into His creation, purifying as it goes. Cf Heb. 12:22

The picture described by the phrase "**forming a circle around the throne**," calls to mind a similar picture found in 1 Pet.2:9-10,

"**Yet you folks [are] 'a picked-out offspring [Isa. 43:21; Deut. 7:6], a royal priesthood, a set-apart multitude, a people constructed into an encirclement** (made into a surrounding structure; made into a performance about [Him]; gathered into a surrounding [flock])'.... **[you] who [were] once** (or: formerly) **'not a people,' but now [are] 'God's people;'** **[formerly] being the ones having 'not been given mercy,' yet now [are] 'folks being mercied** (being given mercy)." [Hos. 2:23]

Paul uses a corresponding word picture,

"**a freedom of the encircling acquisition, which is that which has been constructed as a perimeter around [Him]; into the praise and approval from** (or: which is) **His glory**" (an alternate rendering from Eph. 1:14).

And in 2 Thes. 2:14, "**He also called you folks** [other MSS: us] **into an encompassing** (or: forming an encirclement; establishing a perimeter; creating a surrounding) **of the glory** (or: which is the glory) **of our Lord, Jesus Christ.**"

## 12. repeatedly saying with a great voice,

"**The little Lamb, the One having been slaughtered, is worthy** (of value) **to take** (receive) **the power and ability, as well as wealth and riches, and wisdom and strength and honor and glory** (or: reputation) **and blessing** (a word and message of goodness, ease and well-being)."

The elders & living ones say that He is worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, but these say He is worthy "to take **THE POWER**, even **wealth** and **wisdom** and **strength** and **honor** and **glory** and **blessing**." Is this perhaps an expansion, or an explanation, of the significance of the scroll and its being opened? Does this eulogy perhaps describe the characteristics of His reign and God's kingdom? Is the scroll not only the plan and purpose of the ages, the plan of redemption, the Word pertaining to Christ, but also the power, ability, authority and blessings of the Kingdom of God? Notice that this proclamation comes "**with a great voice**," like that of the agent/messenger in vs. 2, above.

The eulogy of this verse may be an allusion to 1 Chron. 29:11-13, spoken of Yahweh:

“Yours, O Yahweh, are greatness, mastery, beauty, permanence and splendor; indeed, everything in the heavens and on the earth. Yours, O Yahweh, is the kingship, lifting Yourself up as Head over all. Riches and glory, [come] from before You, and You are ruling over all... And now, our Elohim... we are acclaiming You and praising Your beautiful Name” (CVOT).

The LXX of this passage uses the same word, “power and ability,” “wealth and riches,” “strength,” and “glory” that are found in our text, here, in 5:12.

Only a **slaughtered lamb** can be worthy of such honor, and be entrusted with this **power and ability**. The symbol refers, of course, to Jesus, but it also applies to His followers who have taken up their execution stakes. We read these qualifications, given by Jesus, in Mat. 16:24-27,

24. **At that point Jesus said to His disciples, "If anyone continues intending** (purposing; willing; wanting) **to come on behind Me, let him at once deny, reject and disown himself, and then in one move lift up his execution stake and after that proceed to be by habit continuously following after Me!**

25. **"You see, whoever may intend** (or: should purpose; might set his will; happens to want) **to keep his soul-life safe** (to rescue himself; to preserve the interior life that he is living) **will continue losing-it-away and destroying it. Yet whoever can lose-away and even destroy his soul-life** (the interior self) **on My account, he will continue finding it!**

26. **"For what will a person** (or: mankind) **proceed being benefited, or in what will he** (or: they) **continue helped or augmented, if he can or would advantageously procure [for himself** (or: themselves)] **and gain the whole ordered system of society: government, economy, culture, religion – even the whole universe, yet would be undergoing the loss of, receive damage to, or be made to forfeit, his soul-life** (his interior self [in its reality])? **Or what will a person** (or: mankind) **continue giving, as a price paid to change his** (or: its) **soul back** (or: to effect the interior transformation of himself/itself, back again to make himself/itself other than he/it is)?

27. **"You see, the Son of the Man is presently about to continue progressively coming within the glory** (the manifestation which calls forth praise) **of His Father, with His agents** (messengers). **And at that time, He will proceed giving back** (or: repaying; recompensing) **to each one in corresponding accord with his practice, behavior and operation of business."**

We should keep this passage in mind as we read the rest of this *Unveiling*.

13. **And then all creation** (or: every creature) **which exists within the sky** (or: atmosphere; heaven), **and on the earth, even down under the earth** (or: ground; soil), **as well as which is upon the sea – even all things** (the whole; everything) **within them – I heard repeatedly saying,**

**"The blessing** (word of goodness and well-being) **and the honor and the glory** (good reputation) **and the strength** (might) **[are] in** (by; for; to; with) **the One continuously sitting upon the throne, and in** (by; to; for; with) **the little Lamb, on into the ages of the ages."**

In this next scene, **all creation** in every realm and in all places echo a witness back to God, and to those described in this scene, the last part of the eulogy just pronounced by the countless groups of agents. This is a universal pledge of allegiance by all creation to God and to Christ. "Wherefore, also, God highly exalts Him, and graces Him with the Name that is above **every name**, that in the Name of Jesus **every knee** should be bowing, celestial and terrestrial and subterranean, and **every tongue** should be acclaiming that Jesus Christ is Lord, for the glory of God, the Father" (Phil. 2:9-11, CLNT). Paul apparently had the same vision that John had. NONE are left out. He also gave us an expanded version of vs. 13 in Eph. 3:20-21,

**“But by (or: Now in) the One being continuously able and powerful to do (make; form; create; produce) above and beyond all things – surpassingly above, over and beyond things which we are repeatedly asking for ourselves or are normally grasping with the mind (apprehending; imagining; considering; conceiving) – in accord with (or: down from; corresponding to; in the sphere of and along the line of) the power and ability [which is] continuously operating (making itself effective; energizing itself; working and developing) within us, and in union with us, by Him (to Him; for Him; in Him; with Him) [is] the glory (the manifestation which calls forth praise) within the called-out community (the summoned-forth congregation) as well as within Christ Jesus: unto (or: [proceeding] into) all the generations (births; progenies) of the Age of the ages (= the most significant, or crowning, Age of all the ages)!”**

This is one of the most universal confessions of God and of Jesus that can be found in all of Scripture. Nothing, and no one, is left out: **all creation**; every creature. The whole universe affirms God and the little Lamb **on into the ages of the ages**, i.e., into the unforeseeable future, and beyond! The Christ event inaugurated cosmic transformation which resulted in what is recorded here.

The first clause is the common, 1<sup>st</sup> century view of the universe. Those who had been buried were considered to be **down under the earth**. But the message is not about their state or condition, but that all who ever lived will be a part of this praise for God. Every conceivable realm (**all things**; the whole; everything), whether now dead, or living, proclaims **blessing, honor and glory** to God.

Metzger observes that in the Greek of verses 12 and 13 there are, “The seven terms [which] symbolize the fullness of praise” (ibid p 54; brackets added): power/ability, wealth/riches, strength, wisdom, honor, glory/reputation, and blessing/words-of-goodness.

14. **And then the four living ones say (or: said), "It is so (Amen)!" And the elders fall (or: the older people fell [forward]) and worship (or: worshiped; kissed the hand toward [the throne] and paid homage).**

The question is: did John see something that then existed in heaven, in the spirit realm? did he see something that existed then and continued to exist into the present? did he see something that would exist in the future? Was this a case of God "calling the things not being (existing) as being (existing)" (Rom. 4:17)? Perhaps the answer is "Yes" to all these questions. If we agree that what John saw here was what Moses saw and of which he built a pattern, or that he saw the shadow of this at least, then what John saw perhaps existed from the foundation of the world, for Jesus was

**"the little Lamb" – the One having been slaughtered from a casting-down of [the; an] ordered arrangement (or: on account of [the] establishing of [the] world of culture, religion, government and economics; or: from [the] world's founding; or: from a disrupting, down-casting of [the] aggregate of humanity)" (13:8, below).**

This is His unveiling, and He is the same yesterday, today and on into the ages (Heb. 13:8). So, in regard to the little Lamb and the One on the throne, we can say that this is a timeless scene. But the event (universal redemption, vss. 9, 13, above) which is the subject of the song, that these four living ones and the 24 elders sing (vs. 9), has its origin at the cross. Thus, this scene existed in John's time, and yet we can conclude that the situation continues to exist since it pictures the spiritual atmospheres. What can we say about the innumerable groups of agents surrounding this inner circle? This picture calls to mind Heb. 12:22-24, quoted above. We would suggest that this passage in Hebrews is talking about the same group, describing them first as agents, next as an assembly of an entire people, then as a called-out community of firstborn folks who are the spirits of just folks that have been brought to the goal.

The pronouncement by the four living ones, that **"It is so,"** speaks of the accomplishment, and the present existence of what has just been said in vs. 13. We observe the **"until now"** time-frame given by Paul in Rom. 8:22,

**"You see, we have seen, and thus know and are aware, that all the creation keeps on sighing, groaning or querulously moaning together, and yet progressively travailing together as in childbirth** (continues suffering common birthing pains) **until now** (to the point of the present moment)."

What we read in vs. 13, above, does not sound like **sighing, groaning or querulously moaning together**; it does not sound like **travailing together as in childbirth**. It sounds like the praise and rejoicing of the accomplished work of Christ, as seen from the view of being seated with Christ in the spiritual realm (Eph. 2:6). But there is an existential factor to Rom. 8:18-25 because people are still being born into this earth-existence, and must walk out their human journey. This whole creation was still groaning in Paul's day, and I think that most of it is still groaning today. Rom.8:23-24a records,

**"Yet not only [this], but further, even we ourselves – constantly holding** (or: having; possessing) **the firstfruit of, and which is, the Spirit** (or: the Firstfruit whose source is the Breath-effect; or: the first offering, or first portion, which is spirit and breath, and is from the Attitude) – **we ourselves also continually sigh and groan within** (in the center of) **ourselves, continuously accepting and with our hands taking away from out of a placing in the condition of a son** (or: [the] deposit of the Son; a setting in place which is the Son; a constituting as a son; a placing in the Son): **the process of the release of our body from slavery** (or: [and] the loosing from destruction pertaining to the [corporate] body, which is us; or: = the unbinding and release of the body [of Adam; of humanity], which belongs to us).

**For in the expectation and with hope we are suddenly made whole and healthy**

(or: You see, by the expectation we are delivered and saved; or: For we were at one point rescued to expectation; or: To be sure, we were kept safe for this expectation)!"

Where vs. 13, above, shows us a picture of the final goal and end of all people and of the entire creation, this praise for the gift of the Christ-life comes to us, **"each person within the result and effect of his or her own class** (or: ordered place; appointed position [in line]; arranged time or order of succession; = place in a harvest calendar, thus, due season of maturity)" (1 Cor. 15:23a). The work in view, in vs. 13, above, is the completed work of Christ. But the ages keep rolling on. As a part of His firstfruits, we can join in with the praise for His death and resurrection. But the rest of the harvest still groans until their crop (or: class) has matured to the ripeness described in Eph. 4:13,

**"until we – the whole of mankind** (all people) – **can** (or: would) **come down to the goal** (or: attain; arrive at; meet accordingly; meet down face-to-face): **into the state of oneness from, and which is, The Faithfulness** (or: the unity of, that belongs to and which characterizes that which is faith; or: the lack of division which has its source in trust, confidence and reliability, has the character of and is in reference to the loyalty and fidelity), **even which is the full, experiential and intimate knowledge** (or: and from recognition; and of discovery; as well as pertaining to insight) **which is** (or: of; from; in reference to) **the Son of God, [growing] into [the] purposed and destined adult man** (complete, finished, full-grown, perfect, goal-attained, mature manhood) – **into** (or: unto) **[the] measure of [the] stature** (full age; prime of life) **of the entire content which comprises the Anointed One.**"

In this verse, **the four living ones** only speak, but **the twenty-four elders do obeisance** (as it were, being overwhelmed) from the effect of the praise that all levels of creation and every creature give forth to God and to the little Lamb, which they just heard, in vs. 13. The elders, being figures both of tribal cultures and tribal religions, cannot remain seated in their normal positions, nor continue enthroned as the heads of human religions. We find the twelve tribes (corporate Israel) as entry points to the new city

(figured as “gates” in 21:12, below) and the twelve sent-forth representatives symbolically figured as the foundations of the city (21:14), this latter being an echo of Eph. 2:20,

19. **Consequently then** (or: Thereupon), **you folks no longer continuously exist being strangers** (foreigners) **and sojourners** (folks being or living beside a house; temporary residents in a foreign land), **but in contrast, you continually exist being fellow-citizens of those set apart to be sacred people** (or: folks residing together in a City belonging to, and composed of, the holy ones): **even God's family** (members of God's household),

20. **being fully built as a house upon the foundation of the sent-forth representatives** (or: emissaries) **and prophets** (folks who had light ahead of time), **Jesus Christ continuously being a corner-foundation [stone] of it** (or: there being an extreme point and head of the corner, or, capstone/keystone: Jesus Christ Himself),

21. **within and in union with Whom all the home-building** (all the construction of the house; or: = every house that is constructed, or, the entire building), **being continuously fitted [and] progressively framed together** (closely and harmoniously joined together; made a common joint by a word), **is continuously and progressively growing into a set-apart temple** (or: separate, different and holy inner sanctuary) **within [the] Lord** [= Christ, or, Yahweh]:

22. **within the midst of** (or: in union with) **Whom you folks, also, are continuously and progressively being formed a constituent part of the structure** (or: being built together into a house) – **into God's down-home place** (place of settling down to dwell; abode; permanent dwelling) **within [the] Spirit** (or: in spirit; or: in the midst of a Breath-effect and an attitude).

If we can see both the Christ event and the called-out covenant communities (figured by those of chapters 2 and 3) as the subject of chapters 4 and 5, then we might conclude that Dan. 7 was fulfilled in the 1<sup>st</sup> century. More on this conclusion will be seen in the following visions. We can see a comparison between the concluding portions of 4:11, above, and 5:9-13. We can observe the same connection both in Rom. 5:12-21 and 1 Cor. 15:42-49.

This chapter has been interpreted by many as the risen Christ's enthronement scene, following His ascension (Acts 1:9). But we should keep in mind that chapters 4 and 5 are figures of the “holy of holies” in the midst of God's temple, which is the body of Christ, the called-out covenant communities. The mercy seat, God's throne from which Christ now reigns, is in the heart of the temple: the heart of the corporate communities, and the core of each individual's being. So may we “**let the peace, which is God, act as the umpire in our hearts**” as we play the games of this life and run our course.

## Chapter 6

The following scenes, of the vision that continues from chapters 4 and 5, begin showing John apocalyptic action, as viewed from the realm of the Spirit, to where John was caught up, in 4:2, above. So what we will be considering is still a spiritual vision of this cosmic opera that is being shown to John. This compares to what Moses saw when he ascended into the top of Sinai, to receive the pattern for the Tabernacle. The setting is the atmosphere, or, heaven, and it is similar to the disciples seeing Moses and Elijah speaking with Jesus on the “mount of transfiguration” (Mat. 17:15). As with the visions in the OT that had a literal application to the lives of ancient Israel, these too have a first-layer application to the folks living in the 1<sup>st</sup> century. The literal message was not for the distant future, but for their time and location. In the following visions, you will note that I normally translate the Greek word *gē* as “Land,” referring either to Palestine or to the areas defined by the Roman Empire. When you read each verse that has this word, think of that first, and then, to receive the message that can apply to us, think of this word as “ground” or “earth” in the sense of being in distinction to “the atmosphere,” or, “heaven,” i.e., the

realm of the Spirit. Keep in mind Acts 17:28, “**in Him we live, and are moved, and exist.**” Our God is ever present, and so is the realm of His life and His activities.

So, following a 1<sup>st</sup> century application, which corresponds to the Preterist interpretation, I will share a more “timeless” application that applied to all who have read this Unveiling ever since the 1<sup>st</sup> century.

We will also share the varying viewpoints of other scholars who have written about these visions. For example, Metzger understands:

“With the sixth chapter, the main action of the book may be said properly to begin. The section extending from chapter 6 to the end of chapter 11 is intended to bring before the reader not only the struggle of the church amid conflict and persecution, but also the judgments of God upon the church’s enemies” (ibid p 55).

He interprets the first four seal-openings as “opened at once, and will together make up one picture.”

Also, he states:

“Then the fifth and sixth seals will be opened together making up one picture.... The seventh seal, in turn, is really the introduction to a new series of visions.... The trumpets more or less repeat the revelation of the seven seals, though they present it more from God’s standpoint.... Thus, the seven seals and the seven trumpets essentially tell the same thing, each time emphasizing one or another aspect of the whole” (ibid p 55-56).

This provides us with a good framework for a basic understanding of what we will be shown. Beale, as well, considers the opening of the four seals as being “simultaneous,” noting that,

“(1) the fourth seal summarizes the prior three (see below on 6:8); (2) the models of Ezk. 14:12-13; Zech. 6:5-8, and the Synoptic eschatological discourse, on which Rev. 6:1-8 is based, portray events of tribulation occurring simultaneously...” (ibid p 370-1).

As we read these visions, it is imperative to keep in mind the “unveiling” given to Paul, concerning our existential situation, in Eph. 1:

9. **[This occurred] while making known to us** (acquainting us by intimate, experiential knowledge) **the secret** (mystery; hidden knowledge) **of His will** (determined purpose; resolve) – **in accord with** (or: down from and following the pattern of; corresponding to; in line with) **His good thought which He before placed within Himself**

(or: – corresponding to the measure of His pleasing imagination and intent of well-being which He designed beforehand and determined by setting it forth in union with Himself),

10. **[leading] into an administration, implementation and realization from a detailed plan of the effects of that which fills up the appointed seasons and fertile moments** (or: unto a dispensing of the entire contents of the opportune situations; into an administration of the full effect from the eras), **[designed] to itself bring back again all things up under one Head** (or: to gather everything around the main point and sum it all up in unity; to unite and return all things to the Source) **within and in union with the Christ: those things upon [other MSS: within] the heavens** (or: the atmospheres) **and the things upon the land** (earth) – **centered in, within the midst of, and in union with, Him!**

What Paul described about “**bring[ing] back again all things under one Head within and in union with the Christ**” is the same as the little Lamb, here in the Unveiling shown to John, being enthroned within God’s Temple (His people). Notice that Paul also included “**the heavens** (or: the atmospheres) **and the things upon the land** (earth),” a shortened version of “the universe of creation.” Here in chapter six, the little Lamb is opening “**the secret** (mystery; hidden knowledge) **of His will** (determined purpose; resolve)” – pictured as being contained in a sealed scroll, or book.

D'Aragon's view, which is similar to Metzger's, concerning verses 6:1-8 is, "This homogeneous group [of the first four seals] forms a unit expressed in a literary parallelism formed by the repetition of the same expressions: 'When the Lamb had opened,' 'I heard,' 'Come!'" (ibid p 476; brackets added). He further understands that,

"The riders, who personify these misfortunes, symbolize a conquering power and the three evils that follow from it: war, famine and pestilence" (ibid p 476-7).

This interpretation fits the historical, 1<sup>st</sup> century application that Preterists embrace, who see the "war" as the Jewish war against Rome, with the famine and pestilence that followed the devastation of that war.

Here Chilton suggests,

"[T]he Seals are not meant to represent a progressive chronology. It is more likely that they reveal the main ideas of the Book's contents, the major themes of the judgments that came upon Israel during the Last Days, from AD 30-70" (ibid p 181).

He also points us to the apocalypses in the Gospels: Mat. 24:6-31; Mk. 13:1-6 and Lu. 21:9-27. It will be fruitful for the reader to review those passages before proceeding in our present chapter, here.

Before continuing into the chapter itself, let us read from Zech. 6:1-8 in order to directly observe this OT background imagery:

"And I turned and lifted my eyes and saw, and behold, four chariots coming out from between two mountains, and the mountains were bronze mountains. On the first chariot were red horses, and on the second chariot black horses, and on the third chariot white horses, and on the fourth chariot various shades of dapple-gray horses. And I answered... "What are these, lord?" And the angel [literally: agent; messenger] who talked with me answered and said, 'These are the four winds of the sky; they go out to attend on the Lord of all the earth.... And he said [to them], 'Go, and patrol the earth [or: Land].' And he shouted and spoke to me, saying, 'Behold, those who go toward the north country have caused my rage [or: rushing passion] to rest in the north country'" (LXX, N.E.T.S., p 815-16; brackets mine).

In Zech. 1:8, 10b, we read,

"In the night I have seen, and behold, a man riding on a red horse! And this one stood among the shaded mountains, and behind him were red and gray and spotted and white horses.... And the man who stood among the mountains answered and said to me, 'These are those whom the Lord has sent to patrol the earth'" (ibid p 814).

The next OT passage which we should review is Ezk. 14:12-23,

"The word of Yahweh came to me, saying: 'Son of humanity, when it is sinning against Me by offending with offense, then I will stretch out My hand against it and break its staff of bread, and send famine upon it and cut off from it human and beast.... Or... bring a sword on that land.... Or... send a plague upon that land.... My four evil judgments, sword and famine and wild animal and plague I send against Jerusalem, to cut off from it human and beast...' (CVOT)

Notice that the recipient of the four judgments was Jerusalem, not Rome. And in Ezk. 14:1-11 it was the elders of Israel, and their idolatry (the "offense" of vs. 13), that brought the judgment upon all the inhabitants of that Land.

Other allusions for this next section in chapter 6, below, can be found in Lev. 26:21-33,

"And if you [Israel] walk contrary unto Me, and will not hearken unto Me, I will bring seven times more plagues upon you, according to your sins. I will also send wild animals among you.... I will bring a sword upon you.... [break] the staff of your bread.... also, in fury, I, even I, will chastise you seven times for your sins... I will destroy your high places [pagan temples or idol locations] and cut down your images.... make your cities waste and bring down your sanctuaries unto



desolation.... bring the Land into desolation.... And I will winnow and scatter you among the nations..." (brackets added).

This is a picture of Jerusalem and Judea, in AD 70. So while the echoes from Zechariah seem mystical and quite figurative (though with a literal, historical reference and meaning), the allusions from Ezekiel and Leviticus are narratives, with promises of judgment. These four pictures of 6:2-8, below, refer, in their first application, to contemporary historical events.

However, we shall also investigate a second layer of interpretation that speaks to events in our lives that God brings to His followers as they bear their execution stakes. Thus it is that Ray Prinzing titled his book: *Revelation, A Positive Book*, and I consider *The Unveiling* (Revelation) to be the NT's fifth Gospel. We will share some of Prinzing's comments, below. If we see, from the OT allusions, that God is the source of what follows, we may ask: "Where is grace and mercy in all of this?" If the Preterist view is correct, the following visions would be a picture of Yahweh's final judgment on Israel, under the Mosaic covenant, which would fulfill the prophecies given by Jesus and end the old temple cultus, along with the termination of the Law. They predict the fall of Jerusalem in AD 70 (cf 11:2, below), which demonstrated that God had ushered in a new arrangement with humanity – a new covenant that has its source in Christ, through the Holy Spirit. So let us now read on.

**1. Then I saw when the little Lamb opened one from out of the seven seals; and I heard one from out of the midst of the four living ones repeatedly saying, as a sound (or: voice) of thunder, "Come (or: Be coming; or: Go; Pass on; [TR, with Aleph, add: and see])!"**

"In the first section of the visions, 6:1-8, the AV consistently follows a form of the Greek text which makes each of the four living creatures say: 'Come and see!' (vss. 1, 3, 5, 7). In all the best Greek manuscripts it is simply, 'Come!' as translated in the RSV. This is not an invitation to John to come and see; it is a summons to the four horses and their riders one by one to come forward ..." (William Barclay, *ibid*, Vol. 2, p 1).

Simmons disagrees, favoring the TR reading of the later Majority Text tradition,

"In the present case, manuscripts, version, and fathers all testify to the veracity of the present [TR] words; Victorinus, bishop of Petau, martyred in AD 304, quotes them in his commentary at this place." (*ibid* p 143; brackets added).

This reading would remove **the living one** from directing the action, having them only call John to a place where he can view what is taking place. John is called in this way in 17:1 and 21:9, below, but the text uses a different Greek word *Deuro*, "**Come here!**" while in this chapter the Greek word used is *Erchou*, "Come," or, "Go!" Also, if we consider the text of Zech. 6:7 to which our present verse seems to allude, the agent (or: one) is quoted as directing the four charioteers, saying, "You [four] be progressively and continuously going, passing on from one place to another: travel about and patrol the Land (territory)" (LXX, JM). This seems to lend evidence to the older MS's shorter readings, "**Come** (or: Go; the Greek verb has both meanings)!"

The message given in the opening of the seven seals is normally concluded to be a message of Divine judgement. Of what or whom is a much debated subject. But let us return to the question, To whom was this message first delivered? Did this vision have significance to their situation? The "Preterist" viewpoint would see this "exclusively in terms of its first century setting, claiming that most of its events have already taken place" (NIV Study Bible). I think that those who first read this chapter would have seen practical applications of these figures in their lives and times. "We note that the origin of this vision is in Zech. 6:1-8. Zechariah sees four horses which are let loose upon the earth to deal out vengeance on

Babylon and Egypt and the nations which have oppressed God's people." (Barclay, *ibid* p 2). This setting is the allusion, a "type": but what is its meaning here in the Unveiling?

When Zechariah first sees the various colored horses in chapter 1:8, and then in vs. 9 says, "What are these, my lord?" As we saw, above, the messenger tells him in vs. 10, "These are those whom Yahweh sends to walk to and fro in the Land." They report to the Messenger of Yahweh, "We walk in all the Land (earth), and behold! all the earth is sitting still and is quiet (or: at rest)" (vs. 11). The setting is at the end of the seventy years of judgement & exile of Judah (vs. 12), "the time of the Jewish restoration from Babylonian captivity" (NIV Study Bible). Now, in vs. 16, "Therefore thus says Yahweh: I return to Jerusalem with compassions; My house shall be built in it, (averring is Yahweh of Hosts), and a tape shall be stretched out on Jerusalem." This picture of measuring is echoed in 11:1-2, below. We heard a similar description of the report given to Yahweh in Zech. 1:10 by one of God's agents in Job 1:7,

"And Yahweh said unto the adversary (Heb., *satan*), 'From where have you come?' Then the adversary (*satan*) reported, 'From going to and fro in the Land (or: on earth), and from walking up and down in it.'"

This should give us pause, to consider these parallel reports, and those who made them.

Zech. 2:1-2 continues this same theme of measuring (seen in Zech. 1:16, which also spoke of building His house) with the figure of a man with a measuring line in his hand, obviously one of the craftsmen of chapter 1:20-21. Thus, we see that the Lord's purpose is to build His house, His body, and that the horses have been involved. The building theme is seen in Zech. 4:10 when it speaks of the plumb line in the hand of Zerubbabel. Paul picks up the building theme in 1 Cor. 3:9-17 where he identifies us as God's building, God's temple. He references it again in Eph. 2:20-22,

**"you folks... exist being... God's family, being fully built as a house upon the foundation of the sent-forth representatives and prophets, Jesus Christ continuously being a corner-foundation [stone] of it, within and in union with Whom all the home-building (all the construction of the house; or: the entire building), being continuously fitted [and] progressively framed together (closely joined together; made a common joint by a word), is continuously and progressively growing into a set-apart temple within [the] Lord: within the midst of (or: in union with) Whom you folks, also, are continuously and progressively being formed a constituent part of the structure (or: being built together into a house) – into God's down-home place (or: permanent dwelling), within [the] Spirit."**

Zechariah spoke concerning the literal temple; new covenant building concerns Christ's body: the heavenly temple, the called-out folks gathered in God's atmosphere and Spirit.

Returning to the horses, Zech. 6:1-3 presents four chariots coming out from between two mountains made of brass (brass is often a figure of judgement). The horses pulling the chariots are of similar color to here, but the order is different: 1<sup>st</sup>) fiery red, 2<sup>nd</sup>) black, 3<sup>rd</sup>) white, and the 4<sup>th</sup>) diversely colored (e.g., dappled, or iron-gray). These are identified in vs. 5 as "four spirits of the heavens faring forth from stationing themselves with the Lord of the entire earth." (CVOT). These horses are sent out in the four cardinal directions, "so they went throughout the Land (territory; earth)" (vs. 7). The Lord's Spirit was given rest when the black horses brought judgement in the land of the north (primarily Babylon), vs. 8. If we keep in mind that God's main purpose – the theme that threads through these eight verses in Zech. 6 is the restoration of His people from Babylonian captivity, and the rebuilding of Jerusalem and His temple – then we will have a clue to the purpose of the judgement and dealings of the four horses in Rev. 6. With this in mind, let us return to the Unveiling and consider its context.

**2. And so I saw; now consider: A bright-white horse, and the One (or: He) continually sitting upon it is constantly holding a bow. And a victor's wreath was given to Him, and He came forth (or:**

went out; passed on) **repeatedly overcoming** (continuously conquering), **even to the end that He may overcome** (conquer; be Victor).

Here the picture is One riding a white horse, and His purpose is stated: "**and He came forth** (or: went out; passed on) **repeatedly overcoming** (continuously conquering), **even to the end that He may overcome** (conquer; be Victor)." The bow He is holding is a symbol of battle. "In the O.T., the bow is always the sign of military power. In the final defeat of Babylon her mighty men are taken and their bows – i.e., their military power – are destroyed (Jer. 51:56). God will break the bow of Israel in the valley of Jezreel (Hos. 1:5)" (Barclay, *ibid* p 4). "Your arrows, sharpened, [ Pierce] the breast of the King's enemies; peoples fall at Your feet" (Ps. 45:6, Tanakh). Paul spoke of Christ in similar terms,

**"after Himself causing the sinking out and away of** (or: stripping off and away [of power and abilities]; undressing [them of arms and glory]; putting off and laying away [of categories and classifications]; or: divesting Himself of) **the governments and the authorities** (or: the ruling folks or people of primacy, and the privileged folks). **And then He made a public exhibit, in a citizen's bold freedom of speaking the truth, leading them in a triumphal procession within it [i.e., the cross/suspension-pole]"** (Col. 2:15).

Then in I Cor. 15:25,

**"For it is binding and necessary for Him to be continuously reigning** (ruling as King; exercising sovereignty) **until which [time or situation]** (or: until where) **He would put** (or: may place; could set) **all the things that have or hold ruin** (or: the enemies) **under His feet."**

Recall 3:21, above, "**To** (or: In; For) **the person who is habitually conquering** (repeatedly overcoming; normally victorious)... **as I also conquer** (or: conquered; overcome; overcame and was victorious)." The identity of this Rider here in 6:2 is made completely clear in 19:11-12, below, for as Malcolm Smith says, "the code must be consistent." Here we have the Rider of the white horse identified:

**"Then I saw the atmosphere** (or: sky; heaven), **having been opened – and consider! A bright, white horse. And the One continually sitting upon it being constantly called 'Faithful** (Full of Faith; To Be Trusted; Trustworthy; Loyal) **and True** (or: Real),' **and He is continuously judging** (making decisions and evaluations) **and battling** (making war) **in eschatological deliverance** (within equitable dealings; in justice, fairness and righted relations which accord with the covenantal Way pointed out). **And His eyes [are] a flame of fire; and upon His head [are] many diadems** (kingly bands), **having a name having been written** [other MSS: having names written, and a name] **which no one knows except Himself."**

Verse 2, here, together with 19:11-12, may be an allusion to Ps. 45:3-5,

"Gird your sword upon [Your] thigh, O powerful One, with your glory and your majesty, and in your majesty ride and draw [the bow] prosperously on behalf of truth and humility and righteousness... Your arrows being whetted, peoples beneath You shall fall, [struck] in the heart..." [MT and LXX]. The reign of God is within, and among, us.

In 19:15, below, we see that, "**He will continue shepherding them with an iron staff,**" which calls us back to 2:27, above, where this same thing is spoken in regard to the overcomer (victor). And in 19:16 we read that on His thigh (a part of His body) a Name is written, "**King of kings and Lord of lords,**" which might be considered to be His new Name (3:12, above) since we see in 11:15, below, that,

**"The reign of the ordered System** (of the world of religion, culture, government and economy; or: of the realm of the religious and secular) **suddenly came to belong to our Lord** [= Yahweh or Christ] **and to the anointed of Him**

(or: The kingdom of the arranged system at once became our Lord's and His Christ's; The rule as king which pertains to the world, was birthed to be the possession of [Yahweh], as well as of His Anointed), **and so He will continue reigning..."**

But now the question before us is: Who is this Victor riding out to conquer? Is it Israel, or in the 1<sup>st</sup> century, the Jews, as we look back to Lev. 26 and Ezk. 14, cited above? Or is it Rome, as Barclay, above, interprets Zech. 6 to be describing Yahweh's judgment on Babylon and Egypt, back in Zechariah's day? Or, is it us (humanity), as Prinzing suggests, below? Perhaps it is all of these, each in their own time and situation. The book of Job contrasts God's sovereignty (prologue, Job's assessment, and epilogue) to the wisdom of his day (figured by the discourses of Job's "friends"). In Job 6:4 is his statement that echoes into our text, here:

"For the arrows of the Breasted-One (*Shaddai*; = the One Who Supplies and Suffices; the All-bountiful) [are] in me; my spirit has been drinking their venom. Frightening [things] from God are arrayed [toward] me." (JM)

Then in Ps. 38:2, "Your arrows stick fast in me; Your hand presses down on me."

The OT book of Lamentations is "a series of laments over the destruction of Jerusalem in 586 BC.... Orthodox Jews customarily read it aloud... [on] the date of the destruction of Herod's temple in AD 70" (Ronald Youngblood, NIV Study Bible, *ibid* p 1207; brackets added). There, in 3:12-13, we read,

"He positions His bow and is setting me as [a; the] target for arrows; He pierces my innermost being [with the] sons of His quiver" (CVOT).

Allusions to these OT texts suggest a similar context for the imagery of chapter 6, here in the Unveiling.

"HE IS REIGNING NOW! HE IS RIDING NOW!" (Ray Prinzing; emphasis original) We see a time reference to Christ's righting of things in 1 Pet. 4:

17. **because [it is; this is; now is] the [other MSS: a] fitting situation and fertile moment of the appointed season for the result of the judgment** (the effect of the separating for evaluation and decision) **to begin** (to start) **from God's house. Now if first from us, what [will be] the closing act** (the final stage; the end; the consummation; the outcome; the finished product) **pertaining to those continuing unpersuaded and unconvinced by** (or: uncompliant to; disobedient to; stubborn in) **God's message of goodness and well-being** (or: good news)?

18. **"And if the rightwised one** (the fair and just person in right relationships in accord to the Way pointed out) **is repeatedly delivered** (rescued; brought to safety; made healthy and whole) **with difficult labor, then where will the irreverent** (the person without pious awe) **and the failure** (the one who makes mistakes and cannot hit the target; the sinner; the outcast) **proceed in making an appearance?"** [Prov. 11:31]

19. **So then, also, let those repeatedly feeling the effects of experiences and of suffering which correspond to, and [are] in the sphere of, God's will** (intent; purpose) **continuously commit their souls to a Faithful Former** (or: Loyal Founder; Trustworthy Creator), **within [the] producing of good** (in union with making of virtue; in construction of excellence; within the midst of performing goodness).

Note that He is given a victor's wreath! Prinzing continues with a second layer of interpretation – a spiritual one:

"GOD IS PREPARED TO DO BATTLE IN YOU! Whatever warfare is necessary, still He purposes to redeem you, to cleanse, purify, transform, until IN YOU He hath 'made all things new.' He who wrestled with Jacob 'until the breaking of the day,' (Gen. 32:24) will wrestle with you for however long it is necessary, until HE WINS.... It is essential that first He RIDES IN YOU, before you ride WITH Him.... All of this is working to bring forth 'a revelation of Jesus Christ' to us, in us, and through us. 'It pleased God ... to reveal His Son in me ...' (Gal. 1:15-16)" (Ray Prinzing, *ibid*).

Thus, where the literal events of AD 70 involved war, famine and destruction, they were part of the transition of the kingdom from Israel to Christ's followers (Mat. 21:43), and so have a positive outcome.

Ps. 110:1 reports, "Yahweh said unto my Lord, 'Sit at My right hand (= join Me in My reign) until I make Your enemies Your footstool (= a support for Your feet)." This is quoted three times in the NT: Mat. 22:44; Lu. 20:43; Acts 2:34-35. In Isaiah we read:

"When Your judgments are in the Land (or: earth; territory), the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness!" (26:9b).

"Look unto Me and be saved, all the ends of the Land (or: earth)" (45:22).

When we tie all this in to Paul's unveiling regarding God's program of reconciling all mankind to Himself (2 Cor. 5:19), the insights from Walter Wink apply: "Reconciliation is a process... the issue is complex" (ibid p 28). It involves the death of the old (Jn. 12:24), in order to produce germination of the new; it involves crosses in peoples' lives (Mat. 16:24ff). And thus we will see the process acted out by these four horsemen, below, as the end of the old is "opened" to us as the prelude to the beginning of the new. But for us in the "new," we should be guided by Paul's admonitions in 2 Cor. 10:3-6,

3. **For though habitually walking about and ordering our behavior within [the] flesh** (= in a physical body; or: = in the human condition), **we are not waging warfare** (or: performing military service) **in correspondence and accord to flesh** (= on the level of estranged or enslaved humanity, or in line with human condition; or: = in the sphere of old covenant Jewish reasonings),
4. **for you see, the tools and weapons of our military service and warfare [are] not fleshly** (= do not pertain to our human condition; ["are not the weapons of the Domination System" – Walter Wink]), **but rather, [are] powerful ones and capable ones in God** (or: by God), **[focused] toward [the] pulling down** (demolition) **of effects of fortifications** (or: strongholds; strongly entrenched positions [of the "Domination System" – Walter Wink, *Engaging the Powers*]),
5. **progressively tearing down and demolishing conceptions** (concepts; the effects of thoughts, calculations, imaginations, reasonings and reflections) **and every height** (or: high position; high-effect) **and lofty [attitude, purpose or obstacle] that is habitually lifting itself up against** (or: elevating itself up on so as to put down) **the intimate and experiential knowledge of God, and then taking captive every thought – one after another – and leading them prisoner into the hearing obedience of the Christ** (or: the humble attentive listening, which comes from the Anointed One; or: the submissive paying attention, which is the Anointing),
6. **even continuously holding [them] in a ready state and prepared condition to support fairness and equity, while maintaining rightwised relationships from out of the Way pointed out, for every mishearing** (or: hearing-aside; setting of our attention to the side; or: disobedience) – **whenever your hearing obedience may be made full** (or: as soon as the humble attentive listening and submissive paying attention has been brought to full measure, from, and with regard to, you folks)!

As for the color of this horse, Barclay instructs us,

"When a Roman general celebrated a triumph... his chariot was drawn by white horses, the symbol of victory" (ibid p 5).

Concerning the colors of all of the horses, Metzger notes that this vision, "borrows [from Zech. 6] only the symbol of the horses and their color..." (ibid p 56; brackets added). Metzger also observes that the riders say nothing, and, "We do not know in which direction they ride, because the Greek word that has been traditionally 'Come!' may also be translated 'Go!' Do they ride from heaven to earth, or from one place on earth to another place on earth?" (ibid p 57). Apparently these details were not considered important. The important message is that God sends them on their missions.

3. **Next, when He opened the second seal, I heard the second living one repeatedly saying, "Come** (or: Go; [other MSS add: and see])!"
4. **And so another horse, fiery** (fiery-red; of the character or color of fire), **came forth** (or: went out), **and to the One continually sitting upon it, to Him it was given to take the peace out of the Land** (or:

earth; territory; ground) **so that they would slaughter (kill) each other. And a great sword was given to Him.**

With the opening of the second seal we see a fiery-red horse. This color is from the root *pur* which means "fire." Call to mind that "**our God is a consuming fire**" (Heb. 12:29). And,

**"He, Himself, will proceed immersing (baptizing) you folks within the midst of a set-apart Breath-effect and Fire (or: will repeatedly submerge you to the point of saturation, in union with [the] Holy Spirit, even to the permeation of a Sacred Attitude, as well as with [the] Fire)... yet the chaff (straw and husks) He will continue completely burning, in an inextinguishable Fire."**  
(Matt. 3:11, 12)

"For, lo, Jehovah as fire cometh, and as a hurricane His chariots, to refresh in fury His anger and His rebuke in flames of fire. For by fire and by His sword doth Jehovah do judgment with ALL FLESH and many have been Jehovah's pierced ones" (Isa. 66:15-16, Young). See also Mal. 3:2-3, "He is like a refiner's fire ...He shall purify ... and purge."

"Remember, all of this serves to bring forth another expression of 'the revelation of Jesus Christ.' And He said, 'Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword. For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother ... and a man's foes shall be they of his own household' [Matt. 10:34-36]." (Prinzing, *ibid*).

So to this One on the fiery horse it was given to take the peace out of our personal earth (our bodies): He was given the great sword to use on us. There is a season in our lives when He swears "they shall not enter [His] rest" (Heb. 3:11 & 4:3) "because of [our] incomppliance (disobedience, unbelief)" (Heb. 4:6) and because we may be "hardening [our] hearts, as in the incitement to bitter feelings from the day of the putting to the proof in the desert" (Heb. 4:8). As Israel in their desert testing, sometimes we are "led astray (caused to wander) by the heart" (Heb. 3:10). So He ruffles our nest and removes peace from our situation [remember we are to "let the peace of Christ be arbitrating (presiding) in your hearts," Col. 3:15] and then He, the living Word of God becomes "operative and more cutting above every two-edged sword" (Heb. 4:12). Eventually this same sword will be beaten (transformed) into a plowshare (Isa. 2:4) to plow up our hard earth so that a new crop can be planted (the Seed of the Word) on our burned-over field (Heb. 6:4-8). It all depends upon what He sees that is needed in our lives to make us "good soil" (Matt. 13:8).

This vision is an echo of Mat. 10:34-36,

34. **"You folks should not assume from custom or infer from the Law that I come (or: came) to throw peace [= shalom] upon the Land (or: earth). I do (or: did) not come to throw peace, but to the contrary, a sword (a curved weapon for close combat)!**

35. **"You see, I come (or: came) to disunite (to make to be two and then pit):**

**'a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and a bride against her mother-in-law,'**

36. **"And so,**

**'a person's enemies [are/will be] those of his own household.'** [Micah 7:6]

We may also see here an allusion to Jer. 16:5b-6a,

"I have taken away My peace from this people.... Both the great and the small shall die in the Land..."

From the writings of Josephus, we find that this actually happened in the Jewish Wars, ending in AD 70. But there was another meaning to Jesus' words. He called His followers out of the old system of religion and into the reign of God. His sword is the "sword of His mouth," i.e., His Word, as we read in Heb. 4:12,

**“For the Word of God** (or: God's thought, idea and message; or: the expressed Logos from God; or: the Word which is God) **[is] living** (or: alive), **and active** (working; operative; energetic; at work; productive) **and more cutting above every two-mouthed sword, even passing through** (penetrating) **as far as a dividing** (or: parting; partitioning) **of soul and spirit** (or: of inner self-life and breath-effect), **both of joints and marrows, even able to discern** (separate; judge; decide) **concerning thoughts** (ponderings; reflections; in-rushings; passions) **and intentions** (notions; purposes) **of a heart** (= core of the being).”

His teachings separated His followers from those who could not receive Him. He turned custom and tradition on their heads. The disciples' enemies came to be those of Israel's household. He came to bury the old covenant in order to resurrect it with new life, in a different form (or, body – Jn. 12:24; 1 Cor. 15:37-38).

Their Messiah came in peace bringing a new kind of Peace (literally: a Joining; Jn. 14:27), in the order of Melchisedec (Heb. 7:11, 15, 17), and thus as **“King of Peace and of Harmony from the Joining”** (Heb. 7:2b). When the Jewish leadership rejected His peace/joining and had Him crucified, and God's reign of, **“eschatological deliverance into fair and equitable dealing which brings justice and right relationship in the Way pointed out** (being turned in the right direction; rightwisdom; also = covenant inclusion and participation), **peace** (harmony from the joining; = shalom) **and joy** (or: happiness; rejoicing) **within set-apart Breath-effect** (or: in union with and amidst a dedicated spirit and a sacred attitude; or: in [the] Holy Spirit)” (Rom. 14:17),

was given to a people who would produce its fruit, they soon rose up in rebellion against Rome and began to slaughter one another in that rebellion. Cf Joseph, *Wars*. But before that, Saul of Tarsus began to rage against Christ's covenant communities, and then other Jews tried numerous times to kill him. God's Word (Christ, His message and Paul's unveilings) did the work of Heb. 4:12, cited above. It was a dividing between covenants, and between ages. That sword ushered in “eschatological deliverance, justice and equity,” and a new creation. The spirit exemplified by this **fiery red horse** brought first the lampstands of chapters 2 and 3, above, and also the later burning of Jerusalem. In both cases, it took **the peace out of the Land**. Still, they had the promise given by Jesus in Mat. 10:29b, **“And yet not one from among them [i.e., the sparrows] will proceed falling upon the ground without being with** (or: being away from) **your Father.**” Then He follows with vs. 31, **“You folks continuously carry on through so as to excel and be of more consequence than** (be superior to and thus of more value than) **whole flocks of sparrows.**”

So on the natural level, the sword carried by this rider was a figure of the coming war with Rome. But on the spiritual level, the level of the kingdom within and among us, it has been used to trim off the old flesh nature that saw itself as estranged from God, and from other people.

**5. Then, when He opened the third seal, I heard the third living one repeatedly saying,**

**“Come** (or: Go; [other MSS add: and see])!”

**And I saw; and so consider! A black horse, and the One continually sitting upon it [is] constantly holding a pair of balances** (or: a balance bar) **in His hand.**

With the opening of the 3<sup>rd</sup> seal we see the emergence of a **black horse** whose Rider holds a set of **balances** in His **hand**. One obvious purpose that can be seen here is that He intends to bring balance into our lives.

“Why does He 'set men in depression'? (Ps. 90:3, Fenton). Why this BLACK MOOD that settles upon some? Why the dark night of the soul? Because in divine wisdom He incorporates the night with the light, and calls it 'a day.' 'And THE EVENING and the morning were day one' (Gen 1:5). And the sequence is most proper — for however dark the night might be, yet the process

ends with the dawning light of that perfect day. 'For His anger endures but a moment; in His favor is life: weeping may endure for a night but joy cometh in the morning' (Ps. 30:5). Through it all He brings a balance to the inner man." (Prinzing, *ibid*)

"HE RIDES WITH A BALANCE IN HIS HAND — 'Every valley shall be filled, and every mountain and hill shall be brought low; and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough ways shall be made smooth; and all FLESH shall see the salvation (deliverance) of the Lord.' (Luke 3:5-6).  
...The black horse rides for this!" (Prinzing, *ibid*; emphasis original)

"Even darkness, it is not darkening to You, and the night, as the day, is giving light; darkness is as light."  
(Ps. 139:12, CVOT)

The called-out folks in the first century would likely have seen this Rider on a black horse as being sent to accomplish the same thing as did the symbolic black horses in Zechariah's day: to bring judgment in the land of the north – Babylon. But now, in their day, once again the "Faithful City" (Isa. 1:21) had become a prostitute (with Rome, politically, and by incorporating the concepts of "eternal punishments" from the pagan religions of the countries with which they had been in contact: Egypt, Persia, Greece, etc. – See Gary Amirault's "The History of the Doctrine of Eternal Torment" at [tentmaker.org](http://tentmaker.org) – their traditions had made His Word to them to be ineffectual and lifeless, not producing children of the kingdom), and we later find her called "Secret (Mystery) Babylon" in 17:5, below. Thus would they see here a prophecy of the destruction of Jerusalem and the Jewish polity that was persecuting them. Yet we should not presume that they could not also see the need for setting things right (judgment) internally, within themselves, and would not see that this was the fierceness of His love, for His judgment to begin in them who had now become the House of God.

The symbol of the balances had another meaning, for the natural level of interpretation. Ezk. 4 has the prophet mimic a siege of Jerusalem, and in vs. 10 he is told to weigh his food. This is explained in vs. 16 where God told him, "I will break the staff of bread (or: cut off the supply of food) in Jerusalem: and they shall eat bread by weight, and with care; and they shall drink water by measure, and with astonishment." Lev. 26:26 gives a similar picture, "they will deliver your food again by weight: you shall eat, and not be satisfied." Cf 2 Ki. 7:1. We should remember the proximity of this chapter in Ezekiel to the four living ones in Ezk. 1. The overall setting there is similar to the setting here.

Another allusion for the sword and scales can be found in Ezk 5:1-4,

"Now, son of man, take a sharp sword and use it as a barber's razor to shave your head and your beard. Then take a set of scales and divide up the hair. When the days of your siege come to an end, burn a third of the hair with fire.... For I will pursue them with drawn sword.... A fire will spread from there to the whole house of Israel."

Once again, these allusions point to 1<sup>st</sup> century Jerusalem, and its destruction by Rome. But for the communities to which this picture was sent, the **balances** would remind them:

**"for it continues** (or: is repeatedly) **necessary for us – the all** (= the whole of humanity) – **to be manifested in front of Christ's elevated place** (a step, platform, stage, or place ascended by steps to speak in public assembly in the center of a city; or: = an official bench of a judge or public official), **to the end that each one may himself take into kindly keeping, for care and provision** (= be responsible for), **the things [done] through** (or: by means of; or: [during our] passing through [with]) **the body – [oriented] toward what things he practices** (or: she accomplished), **whether good or bad, whether serviceable or inefficient, whether fair or foul, whether capable or careless.**



(or: for you see that it continues binding for us all to be set in light so as to be clearly seen in the presence of the judgment seat which is Christ, so that each should keep and provide for the things performed through the body, with a view to, and face to face with, what things [were practiced], whether virtuous or vile)" (2 Cor. 5:10). Cf Rom. 14:10b-14

Now let us look for keys to unlock the meaning of the color black. In vs. 12, below, the sun becomes "**black as sackcloth made of hair.**" This may be an allusion to Isa. 50:3, where Yahweh says,

"I clothe the skies (or: heavens) with blackness, and I make sackcloth their covering."

That came following His arguments that His people should trust Him (vs. 2). But in Jer. 4:27-29a we see a different picture:

"For thus has Yahweh said, 'The whole Land shall be desolate; yet I will not make a full end. For this shall the Land mourn, and the skies above be black: because I have spoken, I have purposed (or: resolved), and I will neither regret nor turn back from it: the whole City will flee from the noise of the horsemen and bowmen...'"

Jeremiah gives us another picture of this color in 8:21, "For the hurt of the daughter of my people am I hurt; I am black; astonishment has taken hold on me." This is the opposite of a "bright countenance." From hurt and astonishment, we see black describing pain and fear on the people facing a fierce army, in Joel 2:6, "Before their face the people will be much pained: all faces shall gather blackness." In Nahum 2:10b he describes the desperate situation of Nineveh, saying, "much pain [is] in all loins, and the faces of them all gather blackness." Then we find another use in Lam. 5:10, "Our skin was black, like an oven, because of the terrible famine." These all describe what we would metaphorically call "dark days." Black seems to speak of hard times, and especially when one's city is under siege. Josephus, in *Wars of the Jews*, reported famine during the time of the Roman siege – especially in the City.

But even when all is outwardly well, emotional losses or concerns, as well as psychological stress, can bring a personal "dark night of the soul," as many have attested. Yet, David comforts us in Ps. 23:

4. **For you see, even if I may** (or: should; would; could) **be caused to journey** (travel; pass from place to place) **within the midst of a shadow of death** (or: death's shadow; a shadow, from death), **I will continue not being caused to fear bad [times]** (will not be repeatedly frightened by worthless [situations or people]; will not be habitually afraid of misfortunes, harmful [experiences] or base [schemes]), **because You are, and continue being, with me: Your rod and your staff – these, from a call to be at my side, give me aid and impart relief, encouragement and comfort** (these are paracletes to help me). (LXX, JM)

6. **And I heard a voice within the midst of the four living ones repeatedly saying,**

**"A small measure** (a *choenix*: about a quart) **of wheat [for] a denarius** (a silver coin equivalent to a day's pay), **and three small measures of barley [for] a denarius; and you may not act unjustly to** (wrong; harm; violate; injure) **the olive oil and the wine."**

This voice does not seem to come from the four living ones, but rather from the One on the throne, around which they have been positioned. The allusion is that God, as in OT times, has decreed this situation. We also see the little Lamb (Christ) within the midst of the throne, in 7:17, below, as well as in 5:6, above.

So now we have wheat and barley being sold. This, like most things in this book, has been seen in various, and opposing, ways. One view is that this speaks of famine, for the small measure of grain is sold for the equivalent of a day's wage, for the working man. A man's daily earnings would only buy enough **wheat** to feed just himself, or, if he bought **barley** (a cheaper, though less nutritious grain) he

could feed himself plus two others. A picture of survival, but nothing more. A prediction of AD 70. Metzger instructs us,

“Usually a denarius could purchase eight to sixteen times more grain than the amounts mentioned/ here. In other words, warfare is followed by inflation and famine” (ibid p 58).

An opposing view is presented by Malcolm Smith: 1) there are luxury items – **oil and wine**; 2) there is **wheat and barley** – if you've got the money!; 3) care is to be taken not to injure or do injustice to these luxury items. His conclusion: this is economical persecution. Jesus' teaching-prayer comes to mind, **“Repeatedly give (or: Keep on giving) to us our bread – the one that has been made upon being and has reference to existence (or: the dole that is sufficient for today and the coming day), the one that corresponds to and accords with [the] day”** (Lu. 11:3).

In 2 Ki. 6:24-25 the king of Aram laid a siege to Samaria which lasted so long that there was a great famine. The 7<sup>th</sup> chapter gives Elisha's prophesy that "about this time tomorrow, a seah [about 7 qts.] of flour will sell for a shekel [about the normal cost of flour] and two seahs [14 qts.] of barley for a shekel at the gate of Samaria" (vs. 1, NIV). This figure of the end of the famine, and thus the end of the siege, was literally fulfilled the next day (vs. 16). This would seem to lend weight to the "famine" interpretation of the situation in 6:6, here, but let us remember that this is a book of figures. Consider Amos 8:11, "Behold! the days are coming (averring is my Lord Yahweh), that I will send a famine into the land, not a famine for bread, nor a thirsting for water, but rather for hearing the Word of Yahweh." Here, then, is a word to us.

Ray Prinzing sees another aspect to this picture, "Jesus said to Peter, 'Satan hath desired to sift you as wheat: but I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not'" (Lu. 22:31, 32). Why the sifting? To sift out all the uneven particles – the doubt, the unbelief, the self-will, etc. until only 'fine flour' remains. We get so tossed and shaken we think all balance is gone – but all of this is working that He might bring us into HIS balance" (ibid).

Consider also Dan. 5:26-27, "an accounting has God made of your kingdom and He balances it; ... weighed are you on the scales and found lacking" (CVOT). But Prinzing brings out that "'He maketh peace thy borders, and fills you with the finest of wheat.'" (Ps. 47:14). He is the One that 'binds up our wounds, pouring in oil and wine' (Lu 10:34)" (ibid).

If we consider all of the above aspects of the black horse: the set of balances, the cost of food, and the protection of the oil and the wine, we can draw a few more conclusions:

1) The black horses in Zech. seemed to speak of God's judgment of His people's enemies. His enemy within us is the minding (disposition) of the flesh (Rom. 8:7). His judgment is for purification and cleansing (Mal. 3:3, 5). The Jewish leadership had positioned themselves as enemy of Christianity, until AD 70. Rome became Jerusalem's enemy in order to crush the Zealots' rebellion; prior to that they maintained peace and order as an occupying domination system. The Jewish leadership approved of this arrangement and situation (Jn. 11:48).

2) If the weighing out of food speaks of famine, or oppression, then perhaps we can see something in the type of the Law: Lev. 26:21-26, "If you go contrary to Me ... then I will add smittings to you sevenfold according to your sins. I will send the animal of the field against you .... I will bring the sword on you .... I will send the plague .... When I break the stock of bread for you then ten women will bake your bread in one stove and return your bread BY WEIGHT so that you will eat and not be satisfied." So the balances weighing out the wheat and the barley could speak of the Lord's judging His people, His house (1 Pet. 4:17): the Jews, then, by Rome in AD 70; the

covenant communities, now, by oppressive domination systems. So for the first level of interpretation, this could apply to the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70.

3) That the oil and the wine are to be protected would speak of His concern for the healing of His people (Lu. 10:34, binding up the wounds). Further, it could suggest that the anointing of the Spirit is yet present, and that new life (the new wine) will come of this. As an OT allusion, Joel 1:10 describes severe famine as lacking both oil and wine (as well as a lack of grains, vs. 11). So if this description speaks of famine, it is not as severe as it could be. The phrase, “**you may not act unjustly to** (wrong; harm; violate; injure) **the olive oil and the wine**” could speak of dishonest marketing, or cheating folks (suggested by Giblin, cited in Beale, *ibid* p 381) – which would support Smith’s view, cited above. Chilton cites J. M. Ford (*Revelation: Introduction, Translation and Commentary*, Doubleday & Co., 1975, p 107) who “mentions an order by Titus during the siege of Jerusalem that olive groves and vineyards were not to be disturbed” (*ibid* p 191).

4) The idea of “a pair of balances” is only suggested in the text, for the Greek is only “a balance beam, or bar.” This lends weight to the presentation by Ray Prinzing that His main purpose is to bring us into balance. This could also speak to the balance and equity that has progressively come from His reign and constant sovereign activities in the affairs of humanity. Justice has always been one of God’s priorities.

#### 7. And when He opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth living one repeatedly saying, “Come (or: Go; [other MSS add: and see])!”

It is noteworthy that each horse-and-rider has been called upon the scene, or sent out, by one of the **four living ones**, by number. The first one, corresponding to the white horse and Rider, resembled a Lion (of the tribe of Judah?); the second, corresponding to the fiery-red horse and Rider, resembled a calf (or, young bullock – a sacrificial or servant figure?); the third, corresponding to the black horse and Rider, has the face (identity; personality; character) of a human (the Son of man figure?); the fourth, corresponding to pale, yellowish-green horse and Rider, resembled a flying vulture (the creature that consumes dead flesh) – as we read in 4:7, above. In Ezk. 1:5 the four living ones each “had the likeness of a man (Hebrew: *adam*; a human; Adam?),” but there vs. 6 tells us that each one had four faces, and vs. 10 identifies these as a face of a human (*adam*; Adam), of a lion, of a bull (or: ox) and a vulture.

The fourth one, here in vss. 7-8, is associated with Death (personified, by giving it a name), which leads dead folks to the Unseen (figured, especially in the OT, by the grave and those buried in the dust). This is the final state of one who has been conquered by the Lion’s horse, then passed through the fires of the sacrifice, with the Calf/Bullock’s horse, and slain by His Word (sword), then brought into balance by the impartation of the new humanity of the Son of man’s horse, to finally experience the death that came when the One died (2 Cor. 5:14) and through Him we were,

“**immersed** (or: were then baptized) **into His death.... were buried together** (entombed together with funeral rites) **in Him** (or: by Him; with Him), **through the immersion** (baptism) **into the death....** [and thus] **our old, former humanity is crucified together** (or: was simultaneously and jointly impaled and put to death on an execution stake) **with [Him]**” (Rom. 6:3, 4, 6).

Although a natural interpretation of these figures can be related to the Jewish rebellion that ended in AD 70, with this final horse speaking to the death of the many who were killed, a second layer of interpretation can speak to the work of Christ in all of these images, which all happened together as He once-for-all completed His work on the cross. Christ rode this pale colored horse to end the reign of death (Rom. 5:21) by taking Death to His grave. So in experiencing “death,” Rom. 5:18b explains:

**“through one just-effect and the result of one right act which set [all humanity] right and in accord with the Way pointed out** (through the result of one act of justice, equity and solidarity; through a single decree creating rightwised relationships; through one effect of rightwising which turns [people] in the right direction) **[it comes] into ALL MANKIND** (all humanity; all people; = the whole race) **[bringing them] into a setting right of Life and a liberating rightwising from Life [including them in covenant community]**

(or: Life’s turning [folks] in the right direction resulting in right relating, equity and justice which is in accord with the Way pointed out; a making of situations and conditions to be right, which pertain to Life; an expressing of fairness and equity, which is LIFE; a rightly directed solidarity coming from Life; a just-acting deliverance having the qualities of life).”

**8. And I saw, and consider! A pale, yellowish-green** (pallid; ashen; colorless) **horse, and the name for Him [Who is] continually sitting upon it [is] Death, and the Unseen** (Greek: *hades*; or: = the grave) **has been following with Him. And authority** (privilege; jurisdiction; right from out of Being) **was given to** (or: by) **Him** [other MSS: them] **upon the fourth of the Land** (or: earth) **to kill within broadsword, and with famine, and within death, even by the little animals of the Land** (or: earth).

The color, or lack thereof, would seem to suggest the sickness and fading of life which precedes death. Thus we are told that Death rides this horse, and the Unseen (*Hades*) follows with Him. As stated above, the natural application of this verse would fit the context of the Jewish rebellion, which ended in the death of Israel as a political entity, with the physical death of most of those who challenged Rome’s dominion. Taken literally, these descriptions, from **broadsword to little animals of the Land**, speak of that war and its aftermath. But what does this verse say to us, on another level of interpretation? This is the ultimate call of the cross, for on this we die, and in this we experience oblivion and can see nothing until His morning awakes us. Note that only 1/4 of our land is killed with the Sword of the Spirit: He doesn’t do it all at once. Crucifixion is a drawn-out process! And each person has this existential experience in his or her own, appointed time (1 Cor. 15:22-23).

Now famine is mentioned specifically, but I think this is when He restricts His voice from us, and on our cross we too cry, "Father, why have You forsaken me?" We experience this state to the full within the particular metaphorical death that we are allotted by this Rider. We experience emptiness, nothingness. Even the little animals He sends to torment us (like barking dogs or infestations, etc.) – remember Lev. 26, above – or the mean spirits in people, their carnal, un-Christ-like attitudes and behaviors, e.g. as in Ps. 49:20, "A human (Adam), though wealthy, who does not discern has made himself a by-word: he is compared to senseless cattle and is like them."

We see here in 8b that **authority** – literally “that which is out of being,” or, “right from out of Being” – **was given to**, or **by** Him (the dative case, with no expressed preposition in the text). So either God gives this Rider authority, or this Rider gives authority to others, to do what follows. The Majority Text [TR] tradition has this reading, **Him**, but Nestle-Aland reads, “them.” If **Him** is the correct reading, then the authority was given to the Rider; if “them” is the correct reading, then this may be referring to all four horsemen, and this last half of the verse is a summation of the work of all of them. The reading “**Him**” seems to better fit the pattern seen in vs. 2 and vs. 4, above.

Prinzing suggests that where it mentions that "the fourth part of the earth" is killed (this being the fourth & final horse of this scene) that this is the concluding blow which finishes His process in us. That this dealing is really of Him, remember 1:18, above, "**I ... continuously hold the keys** [hold & control the power] **of Death and the Unseen.**" Furthermore, we have the unveiling concerning both of these in 1 Cor. 15:

53. **For it continues being necessary** (it is habitually binding) **for this perishable and corruptible to at some point plunge** (or: sink) **in and clothe itself with** (or: slip on; put on) **incorruption and imperishability, and for this mortal** (one that is subject to death) **to at some point plunge and sink in and clothe itself with** (or: put on; slip on as a garment) **immortality** (or: the absence of death; deathlessness; undyingness).

54. **Now whenever** [other MSS add: this corruptible would (or: may) put on incorruption and] **this mortal would** (or: may) **plunge, sink in and clothe itself with** (or: slip on; put on) **the Immortality, then will continue taking place** (or: proceed being birthed; successively come into existence) **the word** (the thought; the message; the saying) **which has been written,**

**"The Death was drunk down and swallowed into Victory** (or: overcoming)!" [Isa. 25:8]

55. **"Where, O Death, [is] your victory** (or: overcoming)?"

**Where, O Death, [is] your stinger** (sharp point; sting; goad; spur)?" [Hos. 13:14; note:

TR reads "O Unseen (Hades)" in the second line, following the LXX and Heb.]

56. **Now the sharp point and stinger of** (or: the sting, thus, the injection from) **the Death [is] the Sin** (the mistake; the error; the failure), **and the power and ability of the Sin [is] the Law.**

57. **But grace and joyous favor [is] in God** (or: by God) – **the One presently and progressively giving the Victory** (or: the overcoming) **to us, in us and for us through our Lord** (Owner; Master), **Jesus, [the] Christ!**

Take note that the **Victory**, which Isa. 25:8 describes as being the **swallowing of Death**, has been **given to us**. And because Christ has swallowed down Death, He has also ingested **the Unseen** (*hades*).

Beale notes:

"The LXX uses 'death' (*thanatos*) and 'Hades' (*hades*) in combination almost synonymously in reference to the region of the dead (e.g., Ps. 6:6[5]; 48[49]; Prov. 2:18; 5:5; Cant. 8:6; Job 17:13-16; 33:22)" (ibid p 382).

In 20:13-14, below,

**"And the sea gives** (or: suddenly gave) **[up; back] the dead folks within it, and death and the Unseen give** (or: = the grave gave) **[up; back] the dead folks within them.... Next the Death and the Unseen** (or: = the grave) **are cast** (or: were thrown) **into the lake** (or: basin; artificial pool) **of the Fire** (or: the marshy area where there is fire). **This is the second death: the lake of the Fire** (or: the basin which is fire)."

Verse 14, there, describes the death of death, the swallowing up of the Unseen (*hades*), as Paul described in 1 Cor. 15:54, above. The basin of the Fire is a symbol of God in His purging action. Cf Mal. 3:2-3. This picture answers to Rom.11:36 where ALL THINGS return "into the midst of God."

Dan Kaplan insightfully pointed to the scribes and Pharisees as examples of the realm of the dead:

**"you Law scholars and Pharisees... you continue closely resembling whitewashed** (i.e., smeared or plastered with lime) **tombs** (sepulchers; grave sites), **which indeed, from outside, continue being made to appear in the prime of beauty, for a time – yet inside they contain a full load of bones of dead folks, as well as every uncleanness**" (Mat. 23:27).

He also suggested a metaphorical interpretation of Mat. 27:52-53, suggesting that this picture represented folks who had been dead (like the scribes and Pharisees, cited above) and experienced the inner resurrection of the Christ-life (as did Abraham, who "saw Christ's day"):

52. **Later, the memorial tombs were opened up, and many of the bodies of the set-apart** (holy; sacred) **people – of the folks who had fallen asleep and continued sleeping – were aroused and raised up!**

53. **Then, upon going forth out of the memorial tombs – after His arousal and resurrection – they entered into the set-apart (holy) City and they were made visible in the midst of many people** (or: were made to inwardly shine to many folks; or: were made to appear in association with many).

Now a literal interpretation of this event would have these folks entering Jerusalem, “**the present Jerusalem**” (Gal. 4:25) which in Paul’s day, “**continue[d] in slavery** (or: bondage) **with her children;**” a metaphorical interpretation would have them entering, “**the Jerusalem above [which] continues being free, [and] who is** (or: which particular one continues being) **our mother**” (Gal. 4:26). This latter is the New Jerusalem that we meet in 21:2, below.

Consider the following OT texts:

"See now that I, I am He, and there is no other god with (beside) Me: I Myself put to death, and I make alive, I have smitten, and I heal ..." (Deut. 32:39). "Go, and we will return to Yahweh, our God, for He tore to pieces, and He will heal us: He was smiting, and He will bind us up" (Hos. 6:1). "Fire and hail, snow and fume, tempestuous wind, performing His word" (Ps. 148:8). "[There is] no glorifying of negative forces – because HE IS IN CONTROL" (Prinzing, *ibid*; brackets added; emphasis original). Again, he continues, "It is by death that death is rendered powerless, and there shall arise a new life – His:

**'in order that through means of death He might render useless** (or: deactivate; idle-down; discard) **the one normally having the strength** (or: the person presently holding the force) **of death** (or: which is death; or: whose source is death), **that is, the adversary**

(or: that which throws folks into dualism with divided thinking and perceptions; or: the one that throws something through the midst and casts division; the one who thrusts things through folks; the slanderer who accuses and deceives; or, commonly called: the 'devil')

(Heb. 2:14b).

He is able to marshal the bestial nature of men about us, so that they are His instruments to put to death in us that which is not pleasing to Him. They might well be termed 'vessels of wrath fitted to destruction.' (Rom. 9:22), but they are under His control. 'For You, O God, have proved us: You have tried us, as silver is tried. You brought us into the net; You laid affliction upon our loins. YOU CAUSED MEN TO RIDE OVER OUR HEADS; we went through fire and through water: but You brought us out into a wealthy place'" (Ps. 66:10; – Prinzing, *ibid*).

Recall Dan. 4:16, "let the heart of a beast be given unto him." As to Prinzing's quote of Ps. 66:10, wild animals were used in Dan. 7 to represent kings and kingdoms – folks who had ridden over Israel, in the past. We should also note that here, in vs. 8, the Greek word for "wild animals" is in the diminutive form, thus they are **little animals**. They are not formidable, in God's view. They may simply eat the carrion, the dead flesh, leaving us as Israel in the valley of dry bones (Ezk. 37). But recall that when the Breath from the "four winds" breathed upon those bones, they lived and stood on their feet: they were resurrected (vss. 9-10).

First the natural (i.e., pertaining to the old covenant), afterwards that which is spiritual (i.e., the new; cf 1 Cor. 15:46). First the historical death at AD. 70, now they become a type and shadow for us. If the first four seal-openings are seen as a unit, we might see an allusion to Ezk. 14:21,

"For thus says my Lord Yahweh: Indeed, then, My four evil judgments, sword and famine and wild animal and plague I send against Jerusalem, to cut off from it human and beast." (CVOT)

Note to whom they were sent. In AD 70 He sent them to her again. Ezk. 14:13 started this passage, "When the Land (a metaphor for the people living in that Land) sins against Me..." The Land had done this again, in the 1<sup>st</sup> century. The destruction of AD 70 was the final judgment upon Israel: it was the final act of bringing the death of the first creation. In Christ's new economy, Jew and Gentile were joined to be "**one new humanity**" (Eph. 2:14-15). But we should keep in mind what Paul said in Rom. 11:20b-21, "**Stop being haughty** (Don't constantly have high opinions; Do not continually think lofty things), **but to the contrary, [be constantly having] an attitude and mindset of respectful awe** (or: [Godly] fear;

healthy respect)! **For you see, since** (or: if) **God spares not** (or: was not thrifty with) **the natural branches** (the branches down from, or, in accord with, nature), **neither will He continue sparing you!**"

A thought on the opening of the little scroll: a scroll when closed is rolled up. Before it can be unrolled, all the seals (7 in this case) must be broken. So what we see here in the opening of the seals is a process of breaking. The 7 seals being opened, or broken, is one process which will allow the scroll to be opened. Remember that 7 is an idea in this book: completeness; an entire process. As the visions of this book are not necessarily successive on some time-line, let us consider that the same may be true of the opening of these 7 seals. They may each simply describe a specific aspect of the entire process. Beale considers this fourth horseman as a summary of the first three, noting that it only affects **the fourth of the Land**. Others have seen this fraction as a symbol of God's mercy: a partial dealing that is not completely overwhelming. It is the Father giving measured discipline to His children (Heb. 12:5-9).

**9. Then when He opened the fifth seal, I saw, down under the altar of burnt-offering, the souls of the folks having been slaughtered [as in sacrifice] because of the Word of God** (or: God's message), **and because of the witness** (testimony; evidence) **which they were holding** (or: continued to have).

With the opening of the 5<sup>th</sup> seal we have a change in the metaphor. No longer do we see horses proceeding into our earth, we see the result of the work of those four. The picture is the brazen altar of sacrifice, the temple setting:

"That picture is taken directly from the sacrificial ritual of the Temple. For a Jew the most sacred part of any sacrifice was the blood; the blood was regarded as being the life and the life belonged to God (Lev. 17:11-14, 'the soul of the flesh is in the blood'). Because of that, there were special regulations for the offering of the blood. 'The rest of the blood of the bull the priest shall pour out at the base of the altar of burnt offering' (Lev. 4:7). That is to say, the blood is offered at the foot of the altar. This gives us the meaning of our passage here. The souls ... are beneath the altar" (Barclay, *ibid* pp 10-11)

In Phil. 2:17 Paul said,

**"But even more, since** (or: if) **I am also repeatedly poured out as a drink offering upon the sacrificial offering and public service pertaining to your faith** (or: which comes from your trust; in regard to the faithful loyalty which comprises you people), **I am constantly rejoicing** (or: glad) – **even continually rejoicing** (glad) **together with all of you!**"

Then in 2 Tim. 4:6a he said, **"You see, I, myself, am already being progressively poured out as a drink offering..."** Rom. 12:1 instructs us:

**"Consequently, brothers, I am repeatedly calling you folks alongside to advise, exhort, implore and encourage you, through God's compassions to stand your bodies alongside** (or: to set or place your bodies beside) **[the] Well-pleasing, Set-apart** (Holy; Different-from-the-usual), **Living Sacrifice by God** (or: in God; for God; to God; with God), **[this being] your sacred service which pertains to thought, reason and communication** (or: your reasoned and rational service; the logical and Word-based service from you folks; or: = temple service)."

Also, in Phil. 3:10, Paul speaks of his own desires:

**"to intimately and with insight experientially know Him, and the ability – even the power – of His resurrection and also the [other MSS: a] common existence** (participation; partnership, sharing and fellowship) **of the results and from the effects of His experiences** [note: these include good times/feelings and passions, as well as sufferings] – **being a person that is being continuously conformed by** (being progressively brought together with the form of; being habitually configured to) **His death.**"

In regard to the particular context of 1 Cor. 15:31, Paul shares, "**Daily I am repeatedly facing death** (or: progressively dying)!" And we have Mat. 16:24, 25,

**"At that point Jesus said to His disciples, "If anyone continues intending** (purposing; willing; wanting) **to come on behind Me, let him at once deny, reject and disown himself, and then in one move lift up his execution stake** (pole for suspending a corpse; cross), **and after that proceed to be by habit continuously following after Me! You see, whoever may intend** (or: should purpose; might set his will; happens to want) **to keep his soul-life safe** (to rescue himself; to preserve the interior life that he is living) **will continue losing-it-away and destroying it. Yet whoever can loose-away and even destroy his soul-life** (the interior self) **on My account, he will continue finding it!"**

With these allusions to Paul and Jesus, it might be that the deaths, described as sacrificial slaughters, should be taken metaphorically, and thus could have multiple applications. The last sentence of Mat. 16:25 shows that Jesus was speaking figuratively. The **altar**, here in vs. 9, is the equivalent of the cross. These folks had taken up their metaphorical execution stakes and had taken their stand (Rom. 12:1). So, following Jesus on His Path, their next place would be inside the "holy place," as "lampstands" (1:20b, above), or as priests in the temple (7:15, below), i.e., His body, offering the incense of prayers and eating from the "loaves of the Presence" as they serve. (I owe this picture to Dan Kaplan, in a private conversation). The slaughter/offering of these folks need not be interpreted literally, although in the 1<sup>st</sup> century, and on to our present time, physical death may likely have attended their **sacred service**.

These have been slaughtered **because of God's Word** (or, Message), and because of the witness and testimony which they were continuously holding. They were His WITNESSES, and as we see from Paul and Jesus, above, their situation can also apply to us. It of course had a 1<sup>st</sup> century application, as we see from 1:9, above, as well as in 13:15, 18:24 and 20:4, below, where we see these folks again. Simmons views these folks as the OT martyrs, citing Mat. 23:35,

**"so that upon you, yourselves, can** (or: should) **come all [the] just** (equitable; rightwised) **blood being continuously poured out** (or: spilled) **upon the Land – from the blood of rightwised** (just; fair; in-right-relationship) **Abel, until the blood of Zechariah, the son of Barachiah** (or: Baruch), **whom you people murdered between the Temple and the altar."**

We see reference to the NT martyrs in 12:11, below,

**"And they at once overcame** (or: at some point overcome; conquer) **him because of the blood of the little Lamb, and** (or: even) **because of the word** (or: message; Word; Logos) **of their witness** (evidence; testimony) **– and they love not** (or: did not love) **their soul** (soul-life; inner self; personhood) **even to** (or: until) **death."**

Metaphorical statements such as in Mat. 10:38, "**he who is not habitually taking his cross** (execution-stake; hanging-pole) **and then constantly following after** (behind) **Me, is not suitable for Me** (worthy of Me)," and the likely situations described in Rom. 8:35, "**pressure** (squeezing; affliction; tribulation; oppression), **or confinement in a narrow, tight place** (distress; difficulty; trouble), **or pursuit** (the chase of persecution), **or famine** (or: hunger; deprivation of food), **or nakedness** (lack of sufficient clothing; deprivation of necessities), **or danger** (peril; risk), **or sword** (or: large butcher knife; or: curved weapon for close combat)," apply for all Christ's followers, in every generation. And Rom. 8:36, quoting Ps. 44:22, certainly fits our context here:

**"Accordingly as it has been written,**

**'On Your account** (For Your sake; By reason of You) **we are progressively being put to death the whole day! We are logically considered** (accounted) **as sheep which belong to slaughter** (are associated with slaughter)."



But Paul's unveiling in Rom. 8:37 cinches the connection with the Unveiling given to John:

**"But rather (or: On the contrary), within all these things we are habitually over-conquering (we are remaining completely victorious; we continue more than overcoming) through the One loving, urging toward reunion with, and giving Himself to, us."**

Amidst a later vision, in 14:13, below, an echo of our verse here is heard:

**"Write: 'From the present moment (from this time; from now; henceforth) the dead ones [are] blessed (happy) folks – those continuously dying within the Lord!' 'Yes, indeed,' the Spirit continues saying, 'to the end that they may rest themselves from out of their wearisome labor (travail; toilsome exhaustion), for their works (actions; deeds) are continually following together with them.'"**

10. **And they uttered a cry with a great (or: by a loud) voice, repeatedly saying, "Until when (How long), O Absolute Owner (Sovereign Lord; Master), the Set-apart (Holy) and True One, are You not deciding (separating, evaluating and judging) and maintaining right for (operating out of the way pointed out for; or: avenging) our blood, out of those habitually having an abode (dwelling) upon the Land (earth)?"**

The cry which they uttered here was a cry from their souls. "How long?" "Till when?" Chilton observes, **"How long?"** is a standard phrase throughout Scripture for invoking divine justice for the oppressed (*cf* Ps. 6:3; 13:1-2; 35:17; 74:10; 79:5; 80:4; 89:46; 90:13; 94:3-4; Hab. 1:2; 2:6). The particular background for its use here, however, is again in the prophecy of Zechariah (1:12): After the Four Horsemen have patrolled through the earth the angel [lit.: agent] asks, 'O Lord of Hosts, how long wilt Thou have no compassion for Jerusalem?' (ibid p 194; brackets added).

He makes another insightful comment:

"If the martyrs' blood is flowing around the base of the altar, it must be the priests of Jerusalem who have spilled it" (ibid).

The two witnesses in 11:3-12, below, were slain, and then,

**"their fallen dead body will be upon [other MSS: And their fall will be into] the broad place (street; square; plaza) of The Great City – whatever, spiritually, is normally being called (or: named) "Sodom" and "Egypt" – where also their Lord was crucified (or: where their Lord, also, was hung on a pole: suspended and executed on a torture stake)" (vs. 8).**

And, of course, the City where Christ was crucified was Jerusalem.

And so, what are these martyrs crying for? The separating, the judging, and the maintaining right – operating out of the way pointed out – for their blood, their lives, their souls; and this, out of the ones who live their lives in the earth realm, the carnal. Do not we also cry out for His judgements to come in the land? "For [only] when Your judgments are in the earth [will] the inhabitants of the world learn righteousness" (Isa. 26:9, AOT). Our hearts cry out for this for our world, and for ourselves. And what is the Righteousness that is learned?

**"Now you folks are, and continuously exist being, forth from out of the midst of Him – within and in union with Christ Jesus, Who came to be (or: is birthed) wisdom in and among us (or: to us; for us), from God: both a rightwising, eschatological deliverance into righted, covenantal existence in fair relationships of equity in the Way pointed out (or: likewise a just Act from God) and a being set-apart to be different, even a redemptive liberation" (1 Cor. 1:30)**

Yes, when His judgements come, the inhabitants of the world will learn Christ. We too, as He sits to refine us, to burn out of us that part of us which is still dwelling upon the earth – instead of in the heavenlies – we also "come to know Him by experience" as we are formed together (constructed) by His death (Phil. 3:10, above). Another aspect of the cry is given by D'Aragon:

“This cry does not express a desire for vengeance, which would not be in accord with the teaching of Christ (Lu. 6:27f). The martyrs call for the securing of justice” (ibid p 477).  
Domination systems always remove justice from the areas of their influence and control.

11. **And a brilliant white robe was given to each of them, and it was declared to them that they may, and should, rest themselves** (permit themselves to cease from any movement or labor in order to recover strength; [other MSS: will continue resting up]) **a little time longer** (yet a short time) **while** (or; until) **also [the number of] their fellow-slaves, even their brothers – those continually being about to be killed, even as they [were] – would be fulfilled** (made full; other MSS: can fill or fulfill [it; all]).

What is the significance of the white robes given to each of them? This is one of the rewards of the overcomer in 3:5, above, and in 7:9, below, we read,

**“After these things I saw** (or: perceived), **and consider! A vast crowd** (great multitude), **which no one was able to number, from out of every ethnic group** (or: nation) **– even of tribes and of peoples and of tongues** (languages) **– standing before** (in the sight of) **the throne, and before** (in the sight of) **the little Lamb, having been clothed with bright white robes** (or: equipment; uniforms), **and palm trees** (or: branches) **[are] in their hands.”**

It would seem that overcomers, slain followers, and this vast crowd are all clothed in white robes. In 7:14, below, it is explained about the great multitude:

**“These are the ones continuously coming forth from out of the midst of great pressure** (squeezing; ordeal; tribulation), **and they washed their robes** (uniforms; equipment) **and made them bright and white within the little Lamb’s blood.”**

Note the differences: in 6:11, here, the white robe was given to them; in 7:14, they washed their robes in the Lamb’s blood. In 3:18, above, they are advised to “buy” white garments. In 19:14 we see **“the armies in the atmosphere** (or: heaven) **– ones having been clothed with** (invested with; entered within) **clean** (or: pure) **bright, white fine cotton.”** In Mat. 17:2, Jesus’ garments become white. In mat. 28:2-3, the agent wore a white garment. Although it is not called “white,” the garment description in 19:8, below, has traditionally been correlated to these references of “white garments”:

**“it was** (or: is) **granted** (or: given) **to her to the end that she may clothe herself with bright and clean fine cotton** (or: she may cast bright, pure, fine linen around her) **– for the fine cotton** (or: linen) **represents the effects of right relationship and equity in the life of the Way pointed out**

(or: the results of being rightwised; the actualizations of justice; consequences of justice rendered from being turned in the right direction; the effects of having been eschatologically delivered and placed in the Path pointed out; or: the just awards) **of the set-apart folks** (pertaining to the saints; from the sacred people).”

D’Aragon (ibid) understands a white robe to mean “the victory of the martyrs,” and cites 7:13-17, below, as an extended explanation of what this means. It might be a sort of badge or uniform which shows that they have completed the course.

Note that these have entered into rest, for they are to **rest** themselves a little time longer. This rest is something that we, too, should be endeavoring to enter into (Heb. 4:11; 11:39-40). This short time of resting is while their fellow-slaves and brothers are being fulfilled, or made full, or, as Vincent says, “shall have fulfilled their course.” The phrase **“[the number of]”** is supplied as a potential meaning which would make sense with the final clause, **“would be fulfilled** (or: made full).” The alternate MS reading has the verb of that clause in the active voice. Thus, the last half of the verse could read, **“while, or until, also their fellow slaves can fill [it], or fulfill [it; all].”** With this reading I have supplied **“[it]”** with the rendering “fill,” and **“[it; all]”** with the rendering “fulfill,” for the potential meanings, since there is no expressed object of this active verb. Other suggestions, rather than “the number of,” is that the filling or

fulfilling refers to their sufferings or to their destinies, or that Vincent's suggestion, above, is correct. All things must be done according to His plan and purpose. There is "**the Father's previously set** [time or situation]" (Gal. 4:2) for all things. All appointments must run their courses, "to know experientially the love of the Christ which surpasses experiential knowledge in order that you may be filled up to the measure of all the fullness of God" (Eph. 3:19, Wuest).

Why the waiting, the time delay? It is referred to as, "**a little time longer** (yet a short time) **while**," so, historically, it probably referred to the 1<sup>st</sup> century, or possibly even until the end of the Jewish rebellion in AD 70. We can only assume that, "**their brothers – those continually being about to be killed**" might be a reference either to the War, or to other persecutions that were "**about to**" happen.

12. **Next I saw when He opened the sixth seal, and there came to be a great shaking. And the sun became black as sackcloth made of hair. And the whole moon became as blood.**

When the 6th seal is opened God brings a great shaking. This calls to mind Heb. 12:26,

**"Still once [more; or: for all] I am shaking not only the land (or: earth), but also the heaven (or: atmosphere; sky)." [Hag. 2:6; cf Heb. 12:19; Ex. 19:18; Joel 3:16-17]**

He explains this in the next verse (27b): **"to the end that the things not being repeatedly (or: continuously) shaken may remain"** [cf 2 Cor. 3:7-13]. Heb. 12 continues:

28. **Therefore (or: Because of which), continuously taking to our sides (or: progressively receiving alongside) an unshaken Reign (or: Kingdom; Sovereign influence), we are constantly holding (or: progressively having; [other MSS: can be now having]) grace and joyous favor, through which we are [other MSS: can be] continually serving, well-pleasingly, in God (or: for God; by God; to God), with modesty (an unseen behavior and manner) in taking hold easily of goodness and well-being, as well as discretion and awe as to what is proper, [cf Jn. 1:17]**

29. **for you see, "even our God [is] a continuously all-consuming Fire (or: our God [is] also a progressively fully-devouring fire)." [cf Deut. 4:24; 9:3; Isa. 33:14]**

Shakings, in the physical manifested as earthquakes, are a "move" of God upon His creation. A shaking can be a sifting to remove the chaff. It can be a destruction to remove a structure or a kingdom. It definitely changes the status quo. It interrupts our routine and gets our attention.

Next we see signs in the heavenly realm, or sky, and on the earth. In verses 12 - 14 we have:

- 1) the sun became black as sackcloth made of hair
- 2) the whole moon became as blood
- 3) the stars of the heaven fell into the earth, as fruit falls from a tree in a storm
- 4) the heaven was parted away, as a scroll being rolled up
- 5) every mountain (or, hill) and island was moved out of its place.

Chilton comments on this whole section, from vss. 12-14:

"The Lamb reveals the next great aspect of His covenantal judgments, in a symbol often used in Biblical prophecy: *de-creation*. Just as the salvation of God's people is spoken of in terms of creation (cf 2 Cor. 4:6, 5:17; Eph. 2:10; 4:24; Col. 3:10), so God's judgments... are spoken of in terms of de-creation, the collapse of the universe – God ripping apart and dissolving the fabric of creation.... First, destabilization: **a giant earthquake** [shaking, in my rendering, above] (cf Ex. 19:18; Ps. 18:7, 15; 60:2; Isa. 13:13-14; 24:19-20; Nah. 1:5). Second, the eclipse and mourning of Israel: **the sun became black as sackcloth made of hair** (Ex. 10:21-23; Job. 9:7; Isa. 5:30; 24:23; Ezk. 32:7; Joel 2:10, 31; 3:15; Amos 8:9; Mic. 3:6). Third, the continued image of an eclipse, with the idea of *defilement* added: **the whole moon became like blood** (Job 25:5; Isa. 13:10; 24:23; Ezk. 32:7; Joel 2:10, 31). The fourth judgment affects the stars, which are images of government (Gen. 1:16); they are also clocks (Gen. 1:14), and their fall shows that *Israel's time has run out*: **the stars fell to the earth, as a fig tree casts its unripe figs when shaken by a great wind** (Job 9:7; Eccl. 12:2; Isa. 13:10; 34:4; Ezk. 32:8; Dan. 8:10; Joel 2:10; 3:15); the **great wind**, of course, was brought by the Four Horsemen, who in Zechariah's original imagery were the Four Winds (Zech. 6:5), and who will be reintroduced to St. John in that form in 7:1; and the **fig tree** is Israel herself (Mat. 21:19; 24:32-34; Lu. 21:29-32). Fifth, Israel now simply disappears: **the heaven vanished like a scroll when it is rolled up** (Isa. 34:4; 51:6; Ps. 102:25-26; on the symbolism of Israel as 'heaven,' see Isa. 51:15-16; Jer. 4:23-31; cf Heb. 12:26-27). Sixth, the Gentile powers are shaken as well: **every mountain and island was moved out of its place** (Job. 9:5-6; 14:18-19; 28:9-11; Isa. 41:5, 15-16; Ezk. 38:20; Nah. 1:4-8; Zeph. 2:11). God's 'old creation,' Israel, is thus to be de-created, as the Kingdom is transferred to the Church, the New Creation (cf 2 Pet. 3:7-14)" (ibid p 196-7; emphasis original; brackets added).

This is a classic synopsis of the Preterist interpretation of what the Unveiling presents in its visions. When Rome destroyed Jerusalem in AD 70, the world of Judea came to an end – economically, politically, and in its temple-centered religion. The last fragments of Israel, as a nation, lost their identity. But beyond this historical interpretation, those of Christ's followers could look beyond the end of the old age of the Law and apply the lessons and covenant faithfulness that can be discerned here. We should always keep in mind the warnings and admonitions given to the seven churches in chapters 2-3, above, and both the provisional warning to individual Gentiles, in Rom. 11:19-24, as well as the promise to individual Israelites that Paul includes:

19. **You will say then, "Branches are broken off (i.e., out of [the tree]) to the end that I may be grafted in."**

20. **Beautifully [put]! In lack of faith or trust (or: By unbelief; Because of lack of allegiance) they are broken off, yet you yourself stand in trust and with confidence. Stop being haughty, but to the contrary, [have] an attitude and mindset of respectful awe!**

21. **For you see, since God spares not the natural branches, neither will He continue sparing you!**

22. **Observe, perceive and consider, then, God's useful kindness and abruptness (sheer cutting-off; rigorous severity) – on the one hand upon those falling: abruptness (sheer cutting-off); on the other hand upon you: God's useful kindness, provided you should persistently remain in (or: with; by) the useful kindness (or: = continue to be kind and useful). Otherwise you, also, will proceed in being cut out!**

23. **Now they also, if they should not persistently remain in the lack of faith and trust (or: unbelief), they will proceed in being grafted in, for God is able to graft them back in again!**

24. **For since you yourself were cut out of the olive tree [which is] wild by nature, and then to the side of nature (or: contrary to, nature) you are grafted in – into a fine olive tree – to how much greater an extent will these, the ones in accord with nature, proceed in being engrafted into their own olive tree!**

These are OT images, so let's look more closely at some of these, beginning with Joel 2:28-32. The context preceding these verses says the God will "repay you for the years which the locust devoured, the grub and the beetle and the larva, MY GREAT ARMY which I sent among you.... and you shall praise the name of Yahweh.... you shall know that within Israel am I.... and My people shall not be ashamed for the eon" (vss. 25-27, CVOT). So here we see a time of God's people, having gone through one of His periods of judgment, and now entering a period of His blessing ("He will bring down ... the former rain and the latter rain as at first," vs. 23) and also promising an age with no shame (vss. 26-27). Then the passage continues in vss. 28-32:

"And it comes to be afterward, I shall pour out My Spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy .... in those days shall I pour out My Spirit. And I will give signs in the heavens above and signs on the earth: blood, and fire, and pillars of smoke, the sun shall be turned to darkness, and the moon to blood, before the coming of the great and manifest (clearly viewable, LXX) day of Yahweh. And it comes to be that everyone who shall call on the Name of Yahweh shall be delivered (saved), **for in mount Zion and in Jerusalem, deliverance shall come to be**, just as Yahweh says; and among the survivors are those whom Yahweh is calling."

Now keep in mind Heb. 12:22ff, "**you folks have approached so that you are now at Mount Zion – even in a City of a continuously living God; in 'Jerusalem upon heaven'.**"

In this context it would seem that the signs, though ominous, are associated with blessings, the outpouring of the Spirit, deliverance and calling upon God. This all follows the period of devastation which He had sent among His people. The figures of blood, fire and the pillars of smoke are echoes of the Tabernacle in the wilderness: the sacrifices and the presence of God, along with how He led Israel during that time.

We read in Joel 2:10-11 (LXX),

"Before them the earth shall be confounded and the heaven shall be shaken: the sun and the moon shall be darkened, and the stars shall withdraw their light, and the Lord shall utter His voice before His powerful ones, for His camp is very great, because the deeds of His words are strong (mighty); in as much as the day of the Lord is great; exceedingly illustrious! And which one shall be fit for it?"

Here we have the stars mentioned as part of the signs in the heavenlies, and it is in association with the actions of God's army (i.e., a conquering nation that He is using, most likely Babylon) and the workings of His words.

Now in Isa. 13 we see a pronouncement against Babylon where we find the same heavenly signs associated with God's passion, anger and judgment:

"Behold and consider! A day of Yahweh [or: from {the} LORD] comes, fierce with wrath [rushing emotion] and heat of [passion and] anger, to make the Land [habitable region] become a desolation. Yes, its sinning ones He destroys from it. For the stars of the heavens and their constellations shall cause their light not to shine. The sun has been darkened in its going out and the moon is not brightening with its light, and I will visit [a bad situation on] and check [or: impart a directive for] all inhabitants for its evil and worthlessness... and I eradicate the pomp of the arrogant, and the pride of the terrifiers (or: tyrants) am I abasing" (vss. 9-11; Young, CVOT, Rotherham; brackets: LXX readings).

The prophet Zephaniah gave this description of such a time as we find in the Unveiling:

"Near is the great day of Yahweh! Near, and exceedingly swift! The sound of the day of Yahweh [will be] bitter! There the master shall raise the battlecry! A day of rage [will be] that day, a day of distress and constraint, a day of thunderstorm and ruination, a day of darkness and gloominess, a day of cloud and murkiness, a day of trumpet and shout against the fortified cities" (1:14-15, CVOT).

So we should see the visions of the Unveiling as standing in the prophetic traditions of Israel, and thus be historically applied to Jerusalem, in the days of the 1<sup>st</sup> century called-out, covenant communities of Christ. Simmons shares,

"With the breaking of the sixth seal, that day was come. The blackening of the sun may refer to the dust and thick smoke of siege, funeral pyres, and burning of towns and villages by the legions of Rome. The same smoke that blackens the sun by day causes the moon to be red by night. Both are tokens of the coming destruction" (ibid p 153).

Concerning the figure of sackcloth, in Matt. 11:21 Jesus used it of repenting, changing their minds. In Jonah 3:5 the people of Nineveh used it for the same reason. In this context I suggest that it is a figure of a time of grief, mourning or despair, which may then lead to a change of thinking and to believing the Word of the Lord. It is a day of humility and situations that are the extreme opposite of glory.

**13. And the stars of the sky (or: heaven) fell into the Land (or: earth), as a fig tree is casting her winter (i.e., unseasonable) figs, while being continuously shaken by a great wind.**

**14. And then the sky (or: atmosphere; heaven) was parted away (severed off and caused to recede, so as to disappear) as a little scroll being progressively rolled up, and every mountain (or: hill) and [every] island were moved out of their places.**

The prediction of this time and situation, made by Jesus in Mat. 24, is a good place to start, here:

28. **"Wherever the carcass (corpse) may be, the vultures (or: eagles) will be progressively led together and gathered.**
29. **"Now immediately after the pressure (constriction; tribulation) of those [particular] days, 'the sun will be progressively made dark and the moon will not continue giving its diffused radiance,' [Isa. 13:10; Ezk. 32:7; Joel 2:10] and then the stars will, one after another, be falling from the sky (or: heaven) – 'and so, the powers and abilities of the heavens will be progressively shaken (made to rock so as to be ready to fall).'**' [Isa. 34:4; Hag. 2:6, 21]
30. **"And at that time, the 'sign' which is the Son of the Man (or: = the expected Messianic figure) will be made progressively visible (be brought to light), in union with heaven (or: within [the] atmosphere), and at that point 'all the tribes of the land (or: earth) will continue beating themselves (= a figure of striking one's breast in grief and remorse; or: as when grain is being threshed; or: give themselves to wearisome toil; or: cut themselves off, as when harvesting grain),' [Zech. 12:10, 14] and they will proceed in seeing for themselves 'the Son of the Man progressively coming upon the clouds of the atmosphere (or: sky),' [Dan. 7:13-14] with power and ability, as well as much glory (= many manifestations which call forth praise).**
34. **"It is true (Count on it), I now say to you folks, that this generation can by no means pass by until all these things can happen (should occur; may be come to be).**
35. **"The heaven and the earth (or: The atmosphere and sky, as well as the land,) will pass on by, yet My thoughts and words (or: ideas and messages) can by no means pass on by.**

This, of course, was in the context of the destruction of the Temple (24:2ff), and Lu. 21:20 adds His words, **"Now later, when you folks see Jerusalem being continuously surrounded by encamped armies, at that time realize and know from that experience that her desolation has drawn near and is now present."**

Simmons notes: "In prophecy, stars are symbolic of rulers (Nu. 24:17; Isa. 14:12; Dan. 8:10)" (ibid p 153). Isa. 14:12 had a literal reference to the king of Babylon, "How are you fallen from heaven, O day star...?" The "male goat" of Dan. 8:5ff "grew as high as the hosts of heaven. It threw down to the earth some of the host and some of the stars, and trampled on them" (8:10). In vs. 15 a man appeared to Daniel and in vs. 17 told him that the vision was "for the time of the end," then in 20-21 explained that the ram (vs. 3ff) represented "the kings of Media and Persia," while the male goat was "the king of Greece." So we see that Daniel's vision had historical significance for the times of those three empires. In Joseph's dream (Gen.37:9ff) the stars represented his brothers, who would become the leaders of the twelve tribes of Israel. Cf Mk. 13:25.

In reference to the imagery of the fig tree being shaken, Nah. 3:12 spoke of Nineveh:

"All your fortresses [are] fig trees with firstfruits: if they are swayed to and fro (or: shaken), then they will fall into the mouth of the eater" (CVOT).

Isa. 34:4 uses the figure of a scroll being rolled up, "Then shall be dissolved all the hosts of the heavens, and the heavens shall roll up as a scroll – yea all their hosts shall fade [decay] – like the fading and falling of a leaf from a vine, and like what fades and falls [or: like a decaying leaf] from a fig tree" (Rotherham; brackets: CVOT). This is in a context of a word of strong emotion and indignation to all the nations and races (vs. 1-3) – the promise of judgment soon coming to them. The use of the term "heavens" is clearly figurative, in this context – as Chilton pointed out, above. The LXX of the first clause of Isa. 34:4 reads, "all the powers of the heavens shall progressively melt, and the sky will coil up like a scroll." In regard to a figurative interpretation of these verses, Beale observes the following OT examples:

"the defeat of Babylon (Isa. 13:10-13), Edom (Isa. 34:4), Egypt (Ezk. 32:6-8), Israel's enemies (Hab. 3:6-11), Israel itself (Joel 2:10, 30-31...)" (ibid p 379 n 79).

He concludes, "as in the OT, these cosmic descriptions are metaphors for God's judgment..." (ibid p 398).

So what did these figures and pictures mean to the 1<sup>st</sup> century Christians? Did the sun and the moon and the stars speak to them of their fathers, mothers and brothers – as they did to Joseph and his family (Gen. 37:9, 10)? Or did these folks see their worlds falling apart or their families dying? Or, did it simply mean that a change in the order of their world was coming – that there was coming a fall of that which had ruled their society? The preterist view would see this as prophetic of the fall of Jerusalem in AD 70. Some see this as pointing to everything changing in the realm of spirit. Are there new seasons coming with nothing to give direction (provided in that day by the celestial bodies in the sky, or by the traditions of their societies)? Now there is only faith, hope and love (1 Cor. 13:13), along with His Spirit and His Word, as an anchor to the soul. Kingdoms were to be disrupted (mountains moved). Private worlds (islands) were to be moved into a new place by the hand of God.

In Heb. 1 we have a quote of Ps. 102 that may shed some light on the end of the old and the beginning of the new:

10. **And further,**

**"O Lord [= Yahweh], down from beginnings** (or: in accord with ruling [principle]s; corresponding to controlling [pattern]s), **You founded** (or: laid the foundations of) **the earth** (or: land), **and the works of Your hands are the heavens** (or: atmospheres).

11. **"They shall progressively destroy themselves** (or: ruin, or lose, themselves) – **but You continue remaining throughout.**

12. **"And all people, as a garment, shall progressively be made** (or: grow) **old. Then like that which is thrown around [as a cloak], You will roll or wrap them up as a garment, and so they** (or: the same people) **will progressively be made another** (be altered; be changed; be transformed), **yet You are the same, and Your years will not fail."** [Ps. 102:25-28]

We will quote from the author's commentary on the book of Hebrews, since there we consider points that apply to vss. 13-14, above, and our passage, in general:

"These verses are quoted from the LXX (Greek OT). By citing this psalm, the author uses verse 10 to access the creation story, recalling for the readers that the story of the Messiah in this letter had its roots in the very creation itself, and in Yahweh (in the Heb. version), the Creator. In vs. 19 of this psalm, just before this quote, it is stated that Yahweh will look from the heavens,

'To hear the groaning of the prisoner, to unloose the sons of death, [so] that the Name of Yahweh [would be] recounted in Zion, and His praise in Jerusalem, when the peoples are convened together and the kingdoms come to serve Yahweh' (vs. 20-22, CVOT).

The recipients of this letter must have had a considerable length of time being Christians, for the author calls them to consider the former times,

**'days in which, being enlightened** (illuminated), **you at one point remained under** (patiently endured while giving support in) **a great conflict** (contest or athletic combat) **of the effects of sense-experiences** (results of emotions, passions, sufferings and things that happened to you)' (Heb. 10:32).

I bring this up again to point out that these folks would most likely have been quite familiar with the immediate context in Ps. 102 (vs. 19-22) which led up to vss. 25-28, quoted here. It was the context of the mission of the Messiah. Verses 23-24 can be viewed as a foreshadowing of the cross.

"In vs. 11, above, can be seen first a contrast between the impermanence observed in creation, and the fact that He **'continue[s] remaining throughout.'** He can be depended upon, and looks from the heavens with the intent to send a Deliverer. Verse 12 is a restatement of vs. 11, except that the subject has changed from **'the earth'** (or: 'Land') – which throughout the OT was a



symbol for the people of Israel (cf Walter Brueggemann, *The Land, Place as Gift, Promise, and Challenge in Biblical Faith*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed., Fortress Press, 2002) – to ‘**all people**’ (*pantes*: masculine, plural, nominative). ALL people! ‘**He will roll** (or: wrap) **them up as a garment, and so they** (or: the same people) **will progressively be made another** (be altered; be changed; be transformed)!’ This was more than the psalmist could see. It is God’s new thing. This is humanity’s destiny, because He is ‘**the same**’ – cf Heb. 13:8.

“Dan Kaplan (in a phone conversation) pointed me to some OT passages about Yahweh’s dealings with Israel that shed light on verses 11 and 12, above:

Isa. ch. 24 speaks of His judgments upon the Land (= people) of Israel, in these vss.:

1. Behold Yahweh making the Land void and evacuating it...
3. That Land shall be voided, yes voided...
4. The Land is mournful, it decays; the habitation is wasted away, it decays;
12. There remains for the City, desolation, and the gate shall be pounded to decimation.
18. And the foundations of the earth (Land) shall quake,
19. The earth (Land) will be smashed, yes smashed...
21. And for many days they shall be called to account.
23. For Yahweh of host will reign in Mt. Zion and in Jerusalem, and in front of His elders will He be glorified.

This is an example of apocalyptic descriptions of the use of the word ‘land (earth)’ as a figure for people, and in this case God’s judgment upon His people. Dan points us to another example of symbolic language in Isa. 34 that echoes the language of vs. 12, above:

4. And the vales shall be putrefied; all the host of the heavens shall decay, and the heavens will be rolled up like a scroll. All their host shall decay as a leaf decays from the vine...
5. When My sword has been satiated in the heavens, behold, on Edom it shall descend...

“This is all history and judgments of people surrounding Israel in OT times. Jamieson Fausset and Brown refer to this as ‘judgment on Idumea.’ Of vs. 4 they say, ‘Violent convulsions of nature are in Scripture made the *images* of great changes in the human world...’ (*Commentary on the Whole Bible*, Zondervan Publishing House, 1961, p 550, emphasis original). Next Dan leads us to places where “garments” are used symbolically of people. Isa. 50:9b speaks of the rebellious (vs. 5) and that,

‘... all of them shall wear out like a cloak; the moth shall devour them.’

And then there is Job 13:28,

‘A man, like a rotten thing, he is disintegrating like a cloak when a moth has eaten it.’

Garments are also used metaphorically in the following verses to which Dan leads us:

Isa. 59:17b ‘He shall put on garments of vengeance for clothing and shall muffle Himself with jealousy as a robe.’ (note: all OT quotes from the CVOT)

1 Pet. 2:16 ‘**continually holding** (or: having) **the freedom as a covering** (or: a veil) **of worthlessness** (bad quality; evil; poorness of situation)...’

1 Thes. 2:5 ‘**For neither did we at any time come to be flattering in word, according as you saw and are aware, neither within pretense** (a held-forward specious cloak) **from greed: God is witness!**’

John 15:22 ‘**But now** (at this time) **they continue holding nothing which like a specious and deceptive cloak appears in front around their sin**

(or: they are not continuing to hold that which is put forward to hide the situation concerning their failure; they are not habitually having an excuse or pretense about their deviation, error and miss of the target).’

"Jesus was wrapped up in the Law (His grave clothes, the wrapping, were the preparation for burial which was according to their custom – or, law). It was the Law that killed Him. But when He was raised from the dead, those grave clothes (figure of the Law) remained in the tomb, buried. After His resurrection, the stone (figure of the tablets of the Law and the stony heart of the old covenant) was rolled away' – paraphrase of Dan Kaplan.

"In considering the clause, above, '**shall be made** (or: grow) **old,**' Heb. 8:13, comes to mind, in regard to the old covenant and the Law which bound folks up,

**'In thus to be saying "new," He has made the first** (or: former) **"old," and that [which is] progressively growing old and obsolete** (failing of age), **[is] near its disappearing** (vanishing away).'

It was the old relationships, the old way of living and thinking, the old heart and the old 'dead' existence under the Law that was wrapped about humanity in the body of Jesus, and was then buried with Him to rise no more. The grave clothes remained behind. It was a new humanity, a new creation that,

**'He jointly roused and raised** (or: suddenly awakens and raises) **up, and caused [us] to sit** (or: seats [us]) **together within the things situated upon** [thus, above] **the heavens** (or: in union with the full, perfected heavenlies; or, although neuter: among those comprising the complete and perfected heavenlies; among the ones [residing] upon the atmospheres; in union with the celestials) **within and in union with Christ Jesus'** (Eph. 2:6)." (*John, Judah, Paul & ?*, Harper Brown, 2013, p 98-99)

Simmons explains the general significance of the term "heaven(s)" in prophetic or apocalyptic imagery:

"'Heaven' is the abode of ruling powers.... When a nation comes to an end, its heaven departs as a scroll; there is a complete cessation and dissolution of all governmental powers and function. Mountains are symbolic of landed nations; hence, Zion stands for Judea, the hill of Samaria for Israel, etc. (1 Ki. 16:24).... Islands represents the Gentile nations inhabiting the isles of the Mediterranean Sea. Ezekiel describes the fall of Tyre, saying 'the isles shall shake at the sound of thy fall (Ezk. 26:15; cf 27:35)" (ibid p 153). Cf Isa. 41:15.

He also cites Lam. 2:1 as another example:

"How in His anger Yahweh has covered the daughter of Zion with a thick cloud! He flung from the heavens to the earth the beauty of Israel; He did not remember His footstool in the day of His anger" (CVOT) – note that Zion is called His "footstool."

All these apocalyptic symbols could be used for personal applications of what God is doing to prepare us for the destiny He has recorded for us which has been written within the tiny scroll, but first the seals must be broken. That which we looked at in Joel 2, Peter quoted in Acts. 2:17-21 and applied to the move of God upon the called-out at that time. Perhaps the Spirit is here speaking through John to the 1<sup>st</sup> century communities in the same way – to remind them that what they were then experiencing (and us, of what we may be now) is the work of the same Spirit. Jesus spoke in similar terms in Matt. 24:29 in prophesying about what was to come in AD 70. But if these signs speak of judgment, let us again recall Isa. 26:9, "For when Your judgments are wrought on earth, the inhabitants of the world learn righteousness" (Tanakh). Furthermore, remember:

"For a little while I forsook you, but with vast love I will bring you back. In slight anger, for a moment, I hid My face from you; but with kindness everlasting I will take you back in love.... for the mountains may move and the hills be shaken, but My loyalty shall never move from you, nor My covenant of friendship be shaken – said the LORD, Who takes you back in love" (Isa. 54:7-8,10, Tanakh).

Tradition has viewed this passage as speaking of “the final judgment” (and nowhere in Scripture does it speak of a “final” judgment) or of “the end of the world (planet earth).” But if you consider all the links to the OT that we have observed, it becomes apparent that this is another judgment on Israel – it has all the markings of those other judgments that happened in Israel’s history. It was the Jewish world of 1<sup>st</sup> century Palestine that came to an end. And it opened a new age – called in 2 Cor. 5:17 “a new creation.” We find a similar clause about “heaven and earth” in 20:11, below,

**“Next I saw a great bright, white throne, and the One continuously sitting upon it from Whose face the Land (or: ground; earth) and the atmosphere (or: sky; heaven) flee (or: at once fled). And a place is not found for them (or: And then no position was discovered by them or found in them or for them).”**

If we read this verse as speaking of the Land of Israel, and its atmosphere, we can see that the judgments in the Unveiling had the effect upon Jerusalem and Judea that, “no position was discovered by them or found in them or for them.” That nation, and its economy, came to an end. Heaven, in the context of Israel, was God’s dwelling place: the temple; and thus also was a reference to the priesthood and Jerusalem’s leadership. The Land was, by comparison, a reference to the common people.

**15. And the kings of the Land (or: earth), and the great ones, and the commanders of thousands, and the wealthy (rich) folks, and the strong ones, and every slave, and every free one, [all] hid themselves into the caves and into the midst of the rocks of the mountains,**

These kings and all the others are those of the Roman Empire, and specifically, Palestine. Here we see human reactions to what has happened in vs. 12-14. No matter one's status in life, during times of pressure the flesh can want to hide or even seek self-destruction. The paradox of "swelling emotion" or "wrath" from a little Lamb (in the next verse) cannot be faced: they **hid themselves**. Here He is more like what we saw in the first chapter of this book. Who is able to stand? Job felt this way and even cursed his very existence – even though recognizing it being the hand of God as the source of his miseries.

"Judgment is God's strange work. He uses it as a tool in His redemptive and restorative processes. Men make it the end. But judgment is always a MEANS to an end – never THE END!.... All judgments are limited – confined to a day, or to the limitations of prescribed ages. 'Because He hath appointed A DAY, in the which He will judge the world in righteousness by that Man whom He hath ordained' (Acts 17:31). 'And the smoke of their torment [literally: hard times and testing] doth go up to AGES of AGES [or: indefinite time periods pertaining to the ages]; and they have no rest DAY and NIGHT [time periods, here on earth], who are bowing before the beast and its image...' (Rev. 14:11, Young's Literal; brackets added).... God's great goal lies BEYOND THE AGES.... the wrath of the LAMB [Who takes away the sin of the World].... is that stern and tender hand of God which makes the Lion and the Lamb dwell together in the saints" ("Looking for His Appearing: Part 37 – Coming in Judgment," J Preston Eby; brackets added).

It is interesting to observe the symbolic number 7 (for completeness) that is embedded in this verse: the list contains seven classes of humanity.

The last part of this verse has an allusion to Isa. 2:10, 19,

“Enter into the rock, and bury yourself in the soil from the face of the awe [inspiring] Yahweh, and from the effulgence of His augustness, when He rises to terrify the earth (or: Land).... People will enter into caves of the rocks and into tunnels of the soil...” (CVOT).

The context of Isa. 2 is Judah and Jerusalem; the house of Jacob and the house of Yahweh, on Zion. Now note in vs. 6b that “they are full of divinations from the East, and of consulting clouds like the Philistines.” Verse 7 speaks of horses and chariots, and vs. 16 speaks of the ships of Tarshish. The

setting was primarily for the time of Isaiah. During Elijah's days even those who were faithful to Yahweh are remembered in Heb. 11:38,

**“of whom the System** (the ordered arrangement; the world or culture, secular society, religions and government) **was not worthy** (was not of equal value) – **being continually deceived** (led astray; caused to wander) **in deserts and mountains and caves and the holes of the earth** (or: ground).”

But the prophecy was about “the last days” (vs. 2) of Jerusalem and Judea, which finally came upon that area in the 1<sup>st</sup> century. This was the time that Isa. 2:2-4 began to happen, and thus, also, why vss. 10 and 19 are echoed here, in vs. 15. In Isa. 2:2 we read that, “The Mount of the House of Yahweh shall be established on the summit of the mountains... and all the nations will stream into it.” This happened when Christ became King of kings, and we see the picture of spiritual Zion and the heavenly Jerusalem in Heb. 12:22ff. Paul spoke of the nations streaming into it, in Rom. 11:17ff (the grafting into the olive tree), and in Eph. 2:11-22 we read where the Gentiles and the Jews are joined to be **one new humanity** that are built into God's dwelling place through the Spirit. It is now that the law of love goes forth from out of this spiritual Zion (Isa. 2:3) and in the Unveiling, here, we see Him “judging between the nations and arbitrating for many peoples” (Isa.2:4). Cf Josephus, *Wars of the Jews*, VI, 7.3.

16. **repeatedly saying to the mountains and to the rocks,**

**"Fall upon us and hide us** [Hos. 10:8] **from the Face of the One continuously sitting upon the throne, and from the inherent fervor** (natural impulse and propensity; internal swelling and teeming passion of desire; or: anger, wrath and indignation) **of the little Lamb."**

Barclay observes, “In the Garden of Eden Adam and Eve sought to hide themselves (Gen. 3:8)... But the wrath of God is the wrath of love, which is not out to destroy but even in anger is out to save...” (ibid p 17). We have an almost identical phrase, for trying to escape God's corrective measures, in Hos. 10:8,

“And they will say to the mountains, ‘Cover us!’ And to the hills, ‘Fall on us!’”

Jesus quoted this verse in Lu. 23:30, when He was referring to what would soon happen to Jerusalem.

17. **Because the great Day of their** [other MSS: His] **inherent fervor** (internal swelling emotion, teeming and passionate desire; impulse; or: anger, wrath and indignation; or: natural bent) **comes** (or: came), **and who** (which one) **is continuously able** (or: continues having power) **to be made to stand** (or: to be established)?

Here is an allusion to Nah. 1:6, “who can stand before His indignation? And who shall rise in the heat of His anger? His fury is poured forth like fire, and the rocks are thrown down by Him.” Another allusion is to Mal. 3:2-3,

“Yet who will endure the day of His coming? And who will stand when He appears? For He is like a refiner's fire and a cleanser of silver. And He will cleanse the sons of Levi, and refine them like gold and like silver [in His lake, or basin, of Fire].”

You see, this is all about cleansing and purification – in and by God, Himself.

In Ps. 76:7b we read: “Who can stand before You when once your anger is aroused?” But in 76:10 we find, “Surely the wrath of humanity shall praise You; the remainder of wrath You will restrain (or: bind around You).”

Terry, speaking of all the OT allusions in this passage describing the sixth seal, says,

“[It] shows how freely our author appropriates the older scriptures to suit the purpose of his own book of prophecy.... as the language of the older scriptures referred to impending judgments of Jehovah on wicked men and nations, so these verses 12-17 are to be understood as a like description of fearful judgment impending at the time when this book was written.... The first four

[seals] find fulfillment in the war which began about AD 66, swept over Galilee and Samaria, laid waste all the cities and villages of Palestine... [to a] final overthrow of Jerusalem by the Romans.... These are all apocalyptic disclosures of things which were to 'come to pass quickly'" (ibid pp 332-3).

This 1<sup>st</sup> century time of judgment may have what Judah had in mind in Jude 6. Cf *John, Judah, Paul & ?*, (ibid).

Here, Chilton makes the conclusion: "This passage is not speaking of the End of the World, but of *the End of Israel* in AD 70" (ibid p 198; emphasis original). D'Aragon comments, "It would be a mistake to interpret these images literally; they stand rather for social upheavals" (ibid). The picture described in vss. 13-14, above, has often been seen as connected to 2 Pet. 3:12, so let us examine that verse, together with my commentary on it:

12. – **while constantly being receptive toward** (or: continuing with expectation with regard to) **and eagerly speeding along** (or: progressively hastening after) **the presence of God's Day** (or: the presence, which is God's day; or: the presence of the day which has the quality and character of God and which is God), **through which skies and atmospheres** (or: heavens) – **being continuously on fire – will continue being loosed** (or: untied)! **And so [the body of] elements** (rudimentary principles and assumptions; component parts of the system), **now being continuously intensely hot and burning, [are] presently being progressively melted down** (or: liquefied).

"Their lives should be instruments that **eagerly speed God's presence** (that is within them and among them, since they are God's temple) to those around them. As Paul spoke of running a race (Phil. 3:14) they should "progressively hasten after" the presence of **God's Day** – a day "which has the quality and character of God, and which is God." They were "children of the Day" (1 Thes. 5:5) – even though "**the days** (= present times) **are of a bad quality** (or: a gush of misery; unsound; harmful; or: in a sorry plight; or: toilsome)" – Eph. 5:16.

"The apocalyptic picture of **skies and atmospheres being continuously on fire** and rudimentary assumptions, component parts of the religious and political arrangements being **progressively melted down**, is describing the Jewish world (as they presently knew it) coming to an end. This description is an expansion of the picture given in 2 Pet. 3:10" (*Peter's Encore & Later Paul, comments on Second Peter & Ephesians*, Harper Brown, 2016 p 56).

The social upheavals of the Jewish rebellion brought the end of the old on the social and political level, but the cross and resurrection brought the end of the old covenant that was with a single people-group. Christ's coming ushered in the new – an atmosphere (heaven) and a reign (heaven's; God's) with sovereign activities that are "new in kind and quality," that are making people (the land) "new in kind and quality (2 Pet. 3:13)."