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Revelation

Overcoming with the Lamb

A scroll with text on it, featuring a central rectangular area with a light beige background and a dark red border. The scroll is unrolled, showing the text in the center. The scroll is held by two red cylindrical supports on the left and right sides.

“These shall war against the Lamb,
and the Lamb shall overcome them,
for he is Lord of lords, and King of kings;
and they also shall overcome
that are with him,
called and chosen and faithful.”

Revelation 17:14

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Chapter 1 Overview

The NT church at the end of the first century was severely persecuted by Rome. These persecuted Christians needed reassurance and confidence. God (1:8) and Jesus (1:5-6) reassured these persecuted Christians by reminding them that they are in control. Revelation 1 introduces a triumphant, majestic, glorified, and radiant Christ (1:12-18) to a persecuted church. Jesus provided assurance (1:17-18) to his suffering saints.

Chapter 1 Overview

Christ the Triumphant Ruler (Revelation 1)

1. Christ communicates with his church (1:1-3)
2. Christ cares for his church (1:4-8)
3. Christ comforts his church (1:9-20)

Introduction

- **Style:** “*The revelation of Jesus Christ*” (1:1). This book, like Ezekiel, Daniel, and Zechariah, is apocalyptic in nature (Gr. *apokalupsis* = uncover, unveil, reveal). It was delivered or “signified” (ASV; see 12:1,3; 15:1) in signs, symbols, figures, and visions which John “saw” (1:1,2,11,19; etc.). Apocalyptic literature encourages and comforts the afflicted.

Introduction

- Recipients: “*His servants*” (1:1,4,11; 22:6,16,21). NT Christians were experiencing severe persecution at the end of the first century (some were even killed, martyred) and they needed a message of comfort, consolation, and courage (1:9; 2:9-10,13; 3:10; 6:9-11; 7:14; 11:7-10; 12:13-17; 13:7, 15; 15:2; 16:6; 17:6, 14; 18:24; 20:4).

Introduction

- Author: “*His servant John*” (1:1,4,9; 22:8-9). John, the apostle, was the author. His message is from God (1:2), a prophecy (1:3; 22:7,10,18), revealed in the Spirit (1:10; 2:7; 4:2).

Introduction

- Time: “*Things which must shortly come to pass*” (1:1; 22:6,7,10,12,20). John also wrote, “*the time is at hand*” (1:3; 22:10). See also “a little time” in 6:11. From John’s perspective, the book deals with (1:19): the present events of persecuted Christians, c. A.D. 95-96 (Rev. 1-3), the future events of God’s judgment upon Rome (Rev. 4-20), and the end-time events of all mankind (Rev. 21-22).

Introduction

- Purpose: *“Blessed is he that reads ... they that hear ...and keep the things”* (1:3; 22:7,14). This revelation was meant to be a practical admonition to comfort persecuted Christians and encourage them to remain faithful in their obedience to Christ. It was not meant to be a book of hidden meanings or a book of strange and curious events in the far-distant future.

Introduction

- Theme: Overcoming with the Lamb (2:7,11,etc; 5:5; 12:11; 15:2; **17:14**; 20:5-6; 21:7).

Revelation At-A-Glance

Revelation 1-5 Reminders	Revelation 6-20 Retributions	Revelation 21-22 Rewards
<p>Who God is (Rev. 1, 4)</p> <p>Who Jesus is (Rev. 1-3, 5)</p> <p>Who the church is (Rev. 2-3)</p>	<p><u>Avenging</u> the blood of the saints (Rev. 6:10; 11:18; 19:2)</p> <p><u>Judging</u> Rome for her persecutions (Rev. 14:7; 16:7; 17:1; 18:8, 10, 20; 19:2, 11; 20:4)</p> <p><u>Wrath</u> of God (Rev. 6:16-17; 11:18; 14:10; etc.)</p>	<p>Heaven described (Rev. 21:1; 22:1)</p>

Revelation Outlined

Introduction: Opening greeting and vision (Rev. 1)

SEVEN Churches (Rev. 2-3)

Intermediate Visions: Throne in Heaven (Rev. 4-5)

SEVEN Seals (Rev. 6-8)

SEVEN Trumpets (Rev. 8-11)

Intermediate Visions: Christ vs. Satan (Rev. 12-14)

SEVEN Bowls of Wrath (Rev. 15-20)

Final Outcome: Saints in Heaven (Rev. 21-22)

Closing: Closing admonitions (Rev. 22)

Revelation Theme

Christ and His Church Victorious

- The Church's **Life** in Christ (1-3)
- The Church's Security through Christ (4-8)
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Christ in the Book of Revelation

- Christ the **Triumphant Ruler** (1)

The “7s” of Revelation

- The seven **stars** deliver
- The seven **letters** instruct
- The seven **churches** exemplify
- The seven **Spirits** illuminate
- The seven seals reveal
- The seven angels act
- The seven trumpets warn
- The seven thunders announce
- The seven heads rule
- The seven bowls complete

Symbolic Numbers in Revelation

1 – unity

2 – strength, confirmation

3 – complete and ordered whole

$3^{1/2}$ – incomplete period (half of 7, 42 months, 1260 days)

4 – comprehensive, all-encompassing world

6 – human imperfection (see also “666”)

7 – divine perfection

10 – human completeness, full (see also “1000”)

12 – Israel or the church (see also “144,000”)

Signs & Symbols

1:4 the seven spirits – the H.S.

1:4 throne – power, authority, rule

1:6 kingdom and priests – under law and religious service

1:7 with the clouds – judgment (**Dan. 7:13**)

1:8 the Alpha and Omega – the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet; God is the beginning and end; the source of all things

Signs & Symbols

1:10 in the Spirit – inspired by the H.S.

1:10 as of a trumpet – loud and clear call

1:12 seven golden candlesticks (lampstands)
– spiritual light; the seven churches (**1:20**)

1:13 son of man – Jesus (**Dan. 7:13**)

1:13 clothed ... golden – honorable

1:14 white as wool – wise and pure

1:14 as a flame of fire – penetrating; discern

Signs & Symbols

1:15 burnished bronze – strong, tempered

1:15 many waters – attention getting

1:16 right hand – honor, favor, authority

1:16 seven stars – angels (messengers) of the seven churches (**1:20**)

1:16 two-edged sword – execute judgment

1:16 as the sun – brilliant majesty

1:17 as one dead – without life or strength

Signs & Symbols

1:17 right hand – see v.16

1:17 first and the last – see v.8

1:18 the keys of death and Hades – power and authority over death

1:20 stars ... candlesticks – see v. 12, 16



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Revelation 2-3

Revelation At-A-Glance

Revelation 1-5 Reminders	Revelation 6-20 Retributions	Revelation 21-22 Rewards
<p>Who God is (Rev. 1, 4)</p> <p>Who Jesus is (Rev. 1-3, 5)</p> <p>Who the church is (Rev. 2-3)</p>	<p><u>Avenging</u> the blood of the saints (Rev. 6:10; 11:18; 19:2)</p> <p><u>Judging</u> Rome for her persecutions (Rev. 14:7; 16:7; 17:1; 18:8, 10, 20; 19:2, 11; 20:4)</p> <p><u>Wrath</u> of God (Rev. 6:16-17; 11:18; 14:10; etc.)</p>	<p>Heaven described (Rev. 21:1; 22:1)</p>

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- Christ the **Triumphant Ruler** (1)
- Christ the **All-Knowing Judge** (2-3)

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Chapter 2-3 Overview

Because of systematic and widespread persecution from Rome, some Christians were forgetting their life in Christ and becoming like the world around them. These Christians were threatened with cold-heartedness, compromise, corruption, and complacency. They needed a reminder that Christ is the spiritual life of the local church; he is in their midst; he knows all (1:13,20; 2:1,23).

Chapter 2-3 Overview

Before Jesus judges the sinful world (Revelation 6-20; see 19:15), he will first judge his own sinful people (Revelation 2-3; see 1:16; 2:5,12,16,22-23; 3:3). In each of the seven letters, Jesus reminded the local churches of three things: 1) the position HE holds (salutation, identification), 2) the place THEY have (commendation, condemnation, counsel), and 3) the prize BOTH share (call to hear, promise, reward).

Chapter 2-3 Overview

Christ the All-Knowing Judge (Revelation 2 and 3)

1. “I know” ... Ephesus: the lost love church (2:1-7)
2. “I know” ... Smyrna: the poor rich church (2:8-11)
3. “I know” ... Pergamum: the courageous compromising church (2:12-17)
4. “I know” ... Thyatira: the grossly tolerant church (2:18-29)
5. “I know” ... Sardis: the living dead church (3:1-6)
6. “I know” ... Philadelphia: the open door church (3:7-13)
7. “I know” ... Laodicea: the rich poor church (3:14-22)



Structure of the Seven Letters

- **Salutation:** “To the angel of the church...”
- **Identification:** “These things says he...”
- **Commendation:** “I know your...”¹
- **Condemnation:** “But I have this against...”²
- **Exhortation:** “Repent...”
- **Salvation:** “To him that overcomes...”
- **Invitation:** “He that has ears to hear...”³

¹ Not found in the letter to Laodicea

² Not found in the letters to Smyrna and Philadelphia

³ This precedes salvation in the first three letters

Letters to the Seven Letters

Structure	Ephesus	Smyrna	Perga.	Thyatira	Sardis	Phil.	Laodicea
Salutation	2:1	2:8	2:12	2:18	3:1	3:7	3:14
Identification	2:1	2:8	2:12	2:18	3:1	3:7	3:14
Commendation	2:2-3,6	2:9-10	2:13	2:19	3:4	3:8-10	None
Condemnation	2:4	None	2:14-15	2:20-23	3:1-2	None	3:15-17
Exhortation	2:5	2:10	2:16	2:24-25	3:3	3:11	3:18-20
Salvation	2:7	2:11	2:17	2:26-28	3:5	3:12	3:21
Invitation	2:7	2:11	2:17	2:29	3:6	3:13	3:22

Distinctive Threats to the Churches

External threats

- False teachers / apostles
- Trials / tribulations (from Jews and Romans)
- Imprisonment / death

Internal threats

- Lacking love
- Tolerating error
- Failing to grow
- Lukewarm indifference and self-security

Symbolic Numbers in Revelation

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12 – Israel or the church (see also “144,000”)

Signs & Symbols

2:1 the seven stars – see 1:16,20

2:1 right hand – see 1:16

2:1 seven golden candlesticks – see 1:12,20

2:5 remove your lampstand – the church will no longer be in fellowship with Christ

2:7 tree of life ... Paradise of God – fellowship with God will be restored (Gen. 2:9; 3:22)

2:8 you are rich – rich in faith and works

Signs & Symbols

2:10 ten days – short time of trial for man

2:10 crown of life – reward of heaven

2:11 second death – hell (20:6, 14; 21:8)

2:12 two-edged sword – see 1:16

2:13 Satan's throne – Satanic center of power and influence; anti-God environment

2:16 I will make war – Jesus will come in judgment against these erring Christians



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Revelation 4-5

Revelation At-A-Glance

Revelation 1-5 Reminders	Revelation 6-20 Retributions	Revelation 21-22 Rewards
<p>Who God is (Rev. 1, 4)</p> <p>Who Jesus is (Rev. 1-3, 5)</p> <p>Who the church is (Rev. 2-3)</p>	<p><u>Avenging</u> the blood of the saints (Rev. 6:10; 11:18; 19:2)</p> <p><u>Judging</u> Rome for her persecutions (Rev. 14:7; 16:7; 17:1; 18:8, 10, 20; 19:2, 11; 20:4)</p> <p><u>Wrath</u> of God (Rev. 6:16-17; 11:18; 14:10; etc.)</p>	<p>Heaven described (Rev. 21:1; 22:1)</p>

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- Christ the **Triumphant Ruler** (1)
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- Christ the **Worthy Lamb** (4-5)

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Chapter 4-5 Overview

The Roman vengeance and persecution upon NT Christians, at this point, would cause Christians to doubt God's plan. Is God in control? Has God lost to Domitian? These persecuted Christians needed to know if they were safe and secure. They were safe and secure because the Almighty God (4:8,11) and the Saving Jesus (5:5,12,13; see 6:1) are in control. Jesus, not Caesar, is Lord!

Chapter 4-5 Overview

Revelation 4:1 - 8:5 introduces a worthy Christ to a persecuted church. He will judge the world of sinners (6:1, 3, 5, 7, 9, 12, 16-17; 8:1) and he will secure his saints. First, there is security in heaven because God is sovereign (Revelation 4 - 5). Second, there is security on earth because Christians are sealed (Revelation 6:1 - 8:5).

Chapter 4-5 Overview

Christ the Worthy Lamb - Security in Heaven
(4-5)

1. Because a reigning God is on his throne and in control (4:1-11; note that praise increases)

2. Because a redeeming Lamb is beside the throne and in control (5:1-14; praise increases)



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Revelation 6

Revelation At-A-Glance

Revelation 1-5 Reminders	Revelation 6-20 Retributions	Revelation 21-22 Rewards
<p>Who God is (Rev. 1, 4)</p> <p>Who Jesus is (Rev. 1-3, 5)</p> <p>Who the church is (Rev. 2-3)</p>	<p><u>Avenging</u> the blood of the saints (Rev. 6:10; 11:18; 19:2)</p> <p><u>Judging</u> Rome for her persecutions (Rev. 14:7; 16:7; 17:1; 18:8, 10, 20; 19:2, 11; 20:4)</p> <p><u>Wrath</u> of God (Rev. 6:16-17; 11:18; 14:10; etc.)</p>	<p>Heaven described (Rev. 21:1; 22:1)</p>

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- Christ the **All-Knowing Judge** (2-3)
- Christ the **Worthy Lamb** (4-5)
- Christ the **Wrathful Lamb** (6-7; 8:1-5)

The “7s” of Revelation

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Chapter 6 Overview

Revelation 4:1 - 8:5 introduces a worthy Christ to a persecuted church. He will judge the world of sinners (6:1, 3, 5, 7, 9, 12, 16-17; 8:1) and he will secure his saints. First, there is security in heaven because God is sovereign (Revelation 4 - 5). Second, there is security on earth because Christians are sealed (Revelation 6:1 - 8:5).

Chapter 6 Overview

Christ the **Wrathful Lamb** - Security on Earth
(6-7; 8:1-5)

1. Because the sinners are judged
(6:1-17; 8:1-5)

2. Because the saints are sealed (7) – an interlude between the sixth and seventh seal

Revelation Interpreted

The Preterist View

- The events of Revelation have been fulfilled in the past (in John's day) and have little value for Christians today
- The problem with this view is that it does not take seriously the clear picture of future events in Rev. 20:11 – 22:5

Revelation Interpreted

The Philosophy of History View

- The events of Revelation did not occur in history but are purely symbolic of forces good (God) and bad (Satan) at work
- The problem with this view is that it does not take seriously the clear historical references in Rev. 1-3 and language there that is used in the rest of the book

Revelation Interpreted

The Continuous-Historical View

- The events of Revelation are symbolic of the history of the church, the apostasy (Roman Catholic Church), and the Reformation
- The problem with this view is it 1) would not have helped the Christians of John's day, and 2) was not held prior to the formation of the Catholic Church

Revelation Interpreted

The Futurist View

- The events of Revelation (chap. 4-19) will be fulfilled literally just before the second coming of Jesus Christ; followed by a millennial reign on earth (20:1-10) and the judgment (20:11-15)
- The problem with this view is that it literalizes symbolic language, it ignores the immediate time element (Rev. 1:1-3), and it does not help the Christians of John's day

Revelation Interpreted

The Historical-Background View

- Revelation was written to encourage NT Christians with the events being fulfilled at that time and shortly after; the events of Rev. 20:11 – 22:5 are clearly future
- The advantage of this view is that it keeps the book in its original context (just like the study of any other NT book)

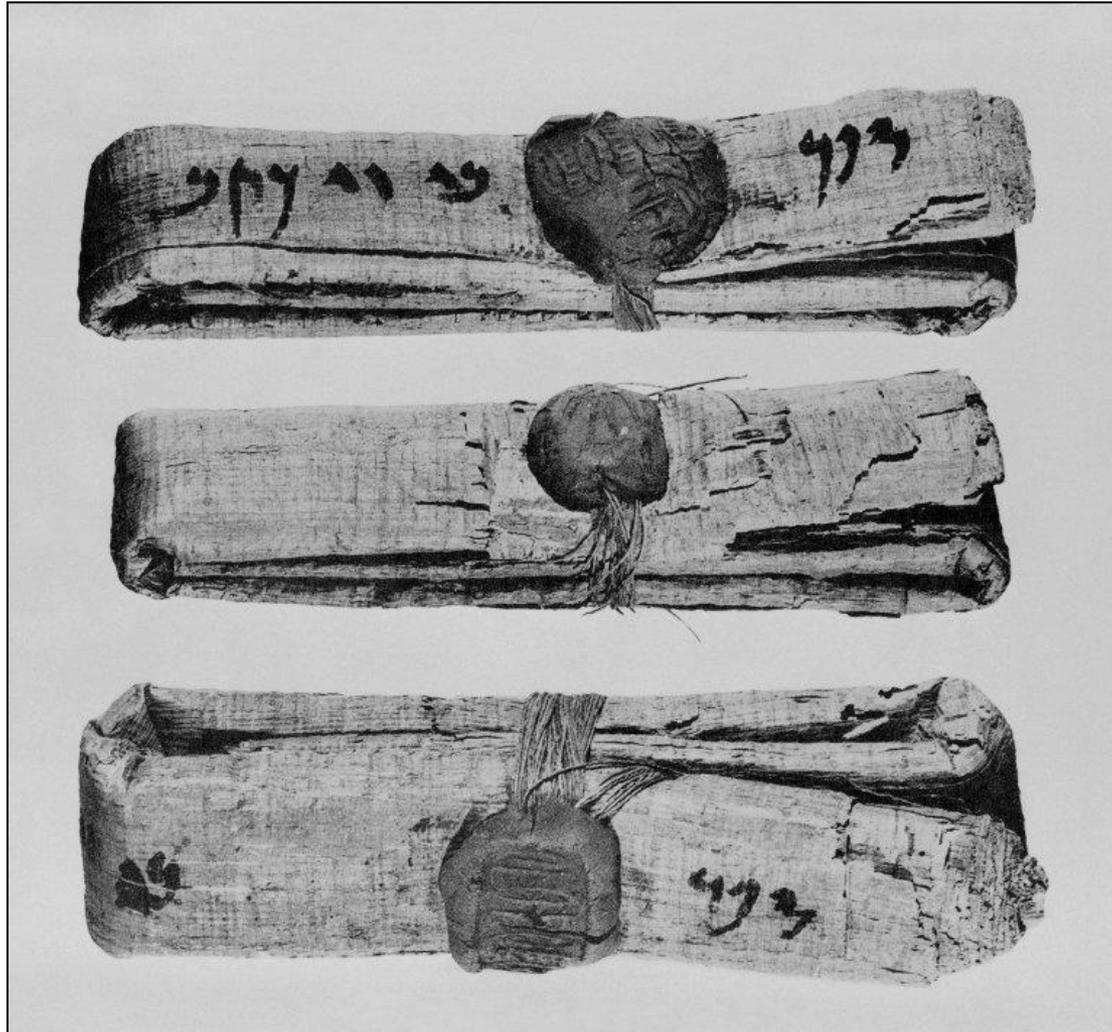
The Seven Seals



Then I saw in the right hand of him who was seated on the throne a scroll written within and on the back, sealed with seven seals.

Rev. 5:1 (ESV)

The Seven Seals



The Seven Seals

- **1st seal opened** – powerful military conquest (6:1-2)
- **2nd opened** – painful persecution and bloodshed (6:3-4)
- **3rd opened** – severe economic hardship and poverty (6:5-6)
- **4th seal opened** – punishment through death, famine, and wild beasts (6:7-8)
- **5th seal opened** – souls of faithful martyrs cry out (6:9-11; see 20:4-5)
- **6th seal opened** – cosmic disturbances point to partial destruction and wrath upon sinners (6:12-17)
- **7th seal opened** – silence for ½ hour, seven angels with trumpets, and a divine response to prayers (8:1-5)

Signs & Symbols

6:1 seven seals – see 5:1

6:1 four living creatures – see 4:6-8

6:2 white horse, bow, crown – military power, conquest, victory (Zech. 1:8-11; 6:1-9)

6:4 red horse, slay, sword – bloodshed, suffering, persecution (Zech. 1:8-11; 6:1:9)

6:5 black horse, measure, denarius – economic hardship, inflation, poverty, sorrow (Zech. 1:8-11; 6:1-9; Ezek. 45:10-11)

Signs & Symbols

6:7 pale horse, death, Hades – death by war, famine, and wild beasts (Zech. 6:3)

6:9 underneath the alter – place of sacrifice (Ex. 29:12; Lev. 4:7)

6:9 souls – Christian martyrs (see 20:4)

6:11 white robe – reward for living a pure, righteous, and faithful life

Signs & Symbols

6:12-14 earthquake, black sun, blood moon, stars fell, heaven removed, mountains and islands moved – cosmic upheaval pointing to divine overthrow of a civil government or political order (Isa. 2:12-17; 13:10-13; 24:21; 29:6; 34:2-4; 50:3; Ezek. 26:15-18; Hos. 10:1-8; Joel 2:10, 18ff ; Mt. 24:29; Lk. 23:28-31)

6:16 fall on us, hide us – fear and dread of God's judgment

Key Questions in the Book of Revelation

- Who is worthy to open the book? (5:2)
Answer: Jesus (5:5)
- How long? (6:10) Answer: A little time
(6:11)
- Who is able to stand? (6:17) Answer: The
144,000 sealed (7:1-4)
- Who are they? (7:13) Answer: They that
come out of the great tribulation (7:14-17)



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Revelation 7

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Chapter 7 Overview

Because the saints are sealed (7) – an interlude between the sixth and seventh seal:

a) The saints safe and sealed on earth (7:1-8; see 6:17; 9:4; 14:1)

b) The saints saved and serving in heaven (7:9-17; see 22:3-4)

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Signs & Symbols

7:1 four corners – four is the number of the world or creation (see 20:8)

7:1 wind – coming judgment (Jer. 25:32; 49:36; 51:1ff; Dan. 7:2ff; Zech. 6:3ff)

7:3-4 seal – used for protection against tampering (Mt. 17:66; Rev. 5:1; 6:1; etc.), identity / ownership (S.S. 8:6; Ezek. 9:1-8; 2 Tim. 2:19; etc.), and to certify genuineness (Esther 3:12; 1 Cor. 9:2) (see Rev. 9:4; 22:4)

Signs & Symbols

7:4 foreheads – place of identification (see 9:4; 13:16; 14:1, 9; 17:5; 20:4; 22:4)

7:4 144,000 – 12 is the number of God's people and 10 is the number of humanity; symbolically, the full number of the church; God's suffering servants protected on earth

7:4 Israel – the church (Gal. 6:16)

Signs & Symbols

7:9 great multitude – symbolically, the full number of the church; God's suffering servants triumphant in heaven

7:9 white robes, palms – purity (see 3:4,5,18; 6:11; 14:13-14) and joy (Lev. 23:40; Mt. 21:8)

7:15 temple, tabernacle – heavenly place of worship, fellowship, and protection

Signs & Symbols

7:17 Lamb, shepherd – Jesus is both our sacrifice and our guide

7:17 waters of life – continual spiritual sustenance (see 21:6; 22:1, 17)

Identifying the 144,000

- The J.W.s say that 144,000 (7:4) is a literal number; the only ones in the true church who go to heaven; the great multitude (7:9) are in Paradise on earth
- Note that “Israel” is listed. Is this literal? Are Jews only in heaven?
- Note that Dan is missing from the list and Manasseh takes his place (with Joseph)

Identifying the 144,000

- Note that in 7:4, John heard the number (144,000), and in 7:9, John saw a great multitude
- Note that the “great multitude” are “before the throne” in heaven (see 14:3)
- Note that the 144,000 are “purchased”, the same as those in 5:9

Identifying the 144,000

- Note that the 144,000 are (symbolically) virgin men (see 14:4)
- Who are they? Simply, “the servants of our God” (see 1:1; 2:20; 6:11; 7:3; 10:7; 11:18; 19:2, 5; 22:3, 6)

Identifying the 144,000

1. The great multitude is of every nation (7:9)
2. Every nation is purchased (5:9)
3. The 144,000 are purchased (14:3-4)
4. Therefore, the great multitude (7:9) are the same as the 144,000 (7:4)