CHAPTER 1

Orientation

1. TITLE:
Any study of the Apocalypse of John must be conducted and understood from a theocentric position, for the book begins with God and constantly and finally returns to God. Evil and its allies stand directly opposed to God for He is holy and will have no fellowship with them. Through the Christ-event, God has dealt with evil. The reason for the limiting of this paper to Revelation 17:1 to 19:10 is due to its description of God’s final eradication of evil, leading to His intended continual fellowship with the redeemed man.

2. PROBLEM STATEMENT:
As one looks around the world presently, it will be found that God’s rule seems not to be actively enforced. It will be evidenced that evil is reaching new proportions. Also, it seems that there is nothing so vulgar left in life’s experience for which one cannot transport some professor from somewhere to justify evil (Zacharias 1994:xiii). Zacharias points out that history has shown that “crimes of logic” can be more catastrophic for humanity than “crimes of passion.” The latter can be readily recognized and countered, but if the very judgement to which an act is subjected is impaired or malevolent, the jeopardy is doubled (Zacharias 1994:11).

In this South African, pluralistic and humanistic context, Christians are frowned upon by many as intolerant. When Bible-believing Christians challenge moral issues, they are viewed as people who want to impose their beliefs on others. The moral fabric of
society is decaying rapidly, not just in South Africa, but in the world at large. God and
godly values are being shunned under the banner of ‘Human Rights’ – which are
pushed to extremes. The present culture craves freedom from any restraint.
Zacharias gives a reminder that,

“... the grasping after this sort of unbridled liberty and absolute individual
autonomy could be fraught with opposition, and the best hope for securing
such release is to undermine the convictions and philosophies that have
hitherto held sway and to counter with claims of greater knowledge, newer
truths, and superior insight into the issues that divide the past from the

With the rapidly decaying society and Christian standards being continually
condemned, the tendency could be for the believer to become despondent and lose
faith, which would result in the blending into this decaying culture. Also, in the light of
the magnitude of evil, the believer’s view of God as the Sovereign, omnipotent,
omniscient and the omnipresent God could diminish and it could be misunderstood
that God is not involved, or is not caring towards what happens to His creation. This
results in the attribute of His immanence being challenged.

3. PURPOSE OF RESEARCH:
In response to the above-mentioned problem of evil and its influence that is prevalent
in this world, it is important for the believer to gain a Biblical understanding of the
Sovereignty of God (to which the Apocalypse provides an excellent understanding
of). All other aspects of what happens to/in creation rests on the fundamental
principle of God’s Sovereignty. Therefore, issues concerning: God, man, sin,
judgement, eternity and rewards will be dealt with as we try to gain an insight into
God’s design for His creation as contained in Scripture, focussing primarily on the Apocalypse.

In the light of God’s sovereignty, we will argue that the apparent blossoming of evil is but only necessary for its final self-destruction – which is God’s design (Wall 1991:203). This will lead to the truth of God’s involvement and presence in every decision that involves His creation – no matter how trivial that decision may seem. Also, it will become necessary to discuss other attributes of God (egs. omniscience, omnipresence, love, justice, etc.). As we discuss God’s sovereignty and attributes, we will begin to see that God’s rule is evidenced in the natural universe and in His Church [Col. 1:17-18] (Du Rand 1994:283). It will be witnessed that even though the worldly systems and powers try to exterminate the idea of God and godly values from society, Zacharias reminds us that God always “… rises up to outlive His pallbearers” (Zacharias 1994:xv). The Apocalypse reminds the reader of this certainty.

We will look into the book of Revelation for its description of God’s complete rule over all creation, which will ultimately be evidenced as He destroys every trace of evil when Christ returns in power - the final step in His exaltation. This will posit a look into the overcomer’s hope – total separation from evil, the intimate fellowship with God, and the eternal worship of the Creator (McIlraith 1999:520). And in order for this to materialize, the challenge is for the believer to be separated from evil and to be faithful in the face of opposition, persecution and even physical death. The reward for the overcomer is an eternity of secured blessings with God; whilst the disregard for God by those who engage in evil is eternal separation from God.
4. APPROACH TO THE PROBLEM:

In order for the problems of despondency and backsliding in the face of opposition to be addressed, the believer needs to consider the following:

4.1. Outside Pressures and Influences:

The discussion of other events surrounding the pericope chosen will also help believer’s focus on the prize ahead, in spite of opposition from the worldly systems (CHAPTER 2).

Firstly, the historical framework, or outside influences that John experienced in his day, will be examined to understand what circumstances John and the believers of his day experienced, and were surrounded by, as Scripture was given to him. This will enable the reader in any generation to understand the historical perspective. Further, it will be evidenced that history has a way of constantly repeating itself – and how similar challenges can be faced in light of the governing principle that is constantly outlined: that God is Sovereign and in control.

Secondly, the context, or Scriptures surrounding the pericope chosen will be looked at as the big picture of God’s entire plan is viewed. It is important to conduct this exercise to let Scripture interpret Scripture and understand God’s complete plan of redemption for creation.
4.2. Evil Self-destructs; Good Triumphs:

An exegetical analysis of the pericope chosen will prove the ultimate triumph of God in the destruction of evil, and will also describe the eternality of the believer's position (CHAPTER 3).

Revelation 17 and 18 presents to the reader the prostitute of pluralism and secularism respectively. The former may be defined as “… the existence and availability of a number of world-views, each vying for the allegiance of individuals, with no single world-view dominant” (Zacharias 1997:71). This evil prostitute has the sole purpose of seducing people away from the truth of God as revealed in the Bible, to an acceptance of many world-views. This is clearly evidenced in the present culture as Hinduism is widely embraced for its tolerance of different world-views. In Scripture, the metaphorical use of ‘prostitution’ to describe the decision of following after other gods is constantly used – and Revelation 17 is no exception. John reminds his readers that this world-view will self-destruct.

The latter may be defined as the focus on this world – denying the supernatural. Zacharias believes that the mood that secularism asserts – i.e. that public life is to be conducted without reference to religion or to any notion of transcendence, may seem innocent and attractive, yet it becomes the first step on the road to unmanageable evil (Zacharias 1997:23-4). This is evidenced in chapter 18 where man runs after the gods of economic and commercial prosperity - with no consideration of God. John reminds the reader that this world-view is headed for eternal destruction.
4.3. The Worship of God:

A correct understanding of the worship of God is necessary, therefore the theology and content of worship teachings and practices (as witnessed in the songs of Revelation) will be discussed in Chapter 4.

Revelation teaches that worship is God-centered and all else revolves around Him. Worship is directed to God and Him alone. The worship of God, is the declaring of His worth. The English word “worship” is derived from the Anglo-Saxon “weorthscipe” – “worth” and “ship” – meaning one worthy of reverence and honour (Segler 1967:5). The Hebrew Old Testament word shachar and its Greek equivalent in the New Testament proskuneo, both carry the similar meaning for worship – i.e. ‘to prostrate oneself before God to pay honour and reverence.’

Augustine provides a reminder of man’s basic need for worship when he wrote, “Thou hast made us for thyself, O God, and our souls are restless until they find their rest in thee” (Segler 1967:84). Man has a God-instilled hunger for the Supreme. Wherever one finds man, there is some type of ritual or worship of a god or a greater Being.

The Biblical understanding of worship is that God took the initiative by creating man in His image to love and enjoy fellowship with. God is both Creator and Sustainer to His creation. This triune, transcendent God is to man as one worthy of worship; and in His immanence, He is the One that enables man to worship Him. God is the Creator, the Eternal and the Infinite God. He is the ultimate Being. In all His attributes, God is higher and perfect. Therefore, man needs to understand that God is
not his equal. Man, when confronted with God, is awed by this Omnipotent Being. Yet man’s goal is to become like Christ who personifies every quality of God and is the perfect image of God (Rom. 8:28-29; Col. 1:15). Therefore the second commandment “You shall not make for yourself an image in the form of anything…” (Ex. 20:4) was given, for God had ordained that believers should carry His image as a testimony to the lost. When non-believers see the godly qualities of a believer, they will understand who God is by the believer’s lifestyle. This will mean that all of life becomes acts of worship unto God, leading to worship not being confined to a time and a space (John 4:19-24).

Bauckham further emphasizes the need for man to stand in awe of God, when he makes the following comment:

“…Jewish monotheism could not tolerate a mere spectrum between God and humanity; somewhere a firm line had to be drawn between God and creatures, and in religious practice it was worship which signaled the distinction between God and every creature, however exalted. God must be worshipped; no creature must be worshipped” (Bauckham 1993:118).

As man on earth responds in worship, God allows him to experience new manifestations of His goodness and His love (Segler 1967:58-59). In worship man experiences a feeling of dependence upon God. Without this awe, adoration and dependence upon the sovereign God, man’s efforts at worship are empty and meaningless.

John Piper writes in his opening chapter that missions is not the ultimate goal of the church, but worship is. The goal of missions is to bring people into worship. Evangelism and Missions are a temporary necessity but worship endures for all eternity. When God ushers in the new heaven and new earth, missions will cease;
but worship will abide forever (Piper 1993:1). For many people in generations past (and maybe still today), the most important part of being a Christian was to witness to others about the Christian faith. We do understand for mission work to be an exceedingly important aspect of the church as are teaching, fellowship, etc. But, missions is fueled by worship as we experience God’s love and respond to Him.

It will become evident that in worship (focussing on singing), the believer responds to God through His revelation of Himself. As the believer encounters God’s attributes, these should lead him/her to make a change in the light of that revelation.

4.4. Understanding God’s Design:
A correct understanding of God, and His role as Creator and Sustainer of creation, will be dealt with under the broad headings of GOD, MAN, SIN/JUDGEMENT, COSMOS (CHAPTER 5).

God’s sovereignty is a major theme in the book of Revelation. All of life’s events must be understood from God’s perspective. In the Apocalypse, the world may seem chaotic as evil is rampant, and one might lose sight of the fact that God’s design stands. Yet, His plan will be fulfilled. He uses whatever means necessary to accomplish His plan – even sin and human or satanic error to accomplish His good purposes. In the light of God’s Sovereignty and omnipotence, the believer need not be worried about the seemingly chaotic world, for God is in control.
Chapter 2

Chapters 17:1 – 19:10 in Historical and Literary Context

2.1. **Historical Context:**

2.1.1 Geographical and Historical Context:

The following six kingdoms up until the New Testament dominated history: Egyptian, Assyrian, Babylonian, Persian, Greek and Roman.

The Jews experienced four different reigns from Malachi to New Testament times:

- Persian period (ca. 450-330BC).
- Hellenistic period (ca. 330-166BC).
- Hasmonean period (ca. 166-63 BC).
- Roman period (ca. 63BC-…).

The Seven Churches:

John names seven churches that the Apocalypse was primarily addressed to (Rev. 1:11; 2:1-3:22). We shall now briefly examine some historical facts surrounding those areas to establish the situation that those churches found themselves in.

The city of ancient **Ephesus** stood on a broad inlet at the mouth of the river Cayster, its natural harbour was protected by the Aegean Sea by a range of hills to the west (Caird 1984:28-29). It had a population of approximately 250 000 people. Around 550 B.C. the city was captured by Croesus of Lydia who helped in the rebuilding of the city. He also helped establish the temple of Artemis - which became one of the seven wonders of the ancient world. Under the Syrian leader Antiochus III (197 B.C.),
city became the capital of the region. In 133 B.C. the city came under Roman control and was later granted the right of self-government.

The city of **Smyrna** (modern Izmir) was situated about 35 miles north of Ephesus on the east shore of the Aegean Sea. In 290 B.C. the city was rebuilt by Lysimachus and Antigonus after its destruction some three to four hundred years before by Alyattes, king of Lydia. The city boasted a famous stadium, library and public theater - which was the largest in Asia (Mounce 1998:73). During the New Testament times, the population of the city may have been about 200,000.

The city of **Pergamum** lay approximately sixty-five miles to the north of Smyrna and fifteen miles from the Aegean Sea and was located at an elevation of about one thousand feet. It is modern day Bergama - which in the English means “parchment” (Kistemaker 2001:126). The name illustrates the industry of ancient Pergamum, which was the preparation of “animal skins for writing purposes” (Kistemaker 2001:126). The people had to use animal skins because they were unable to buy the Egyptian papyri due to a trade embargo.

The city of **Thyatira** seemed to have been the least important of the seven cities, which was situated on the Lycus River 40 miles southeast of Pergamum on the road to Sardis. Seleucus I founded the city in the 3rd century B.C. as a military outpost. Pergamum gained control of this city in 262 B.C., and Rome in 190 B.C. The city was militarily strategic and so was often unsettled due to local politics. Several mixed nationalities comprised the population. Little else is known about the city due to the
modern town of Akhisar being situated on the site and therefore little excavation being done.

The city of Sardis was situated 30-40 miles southeast of Thyatira. It was founded probably about 1200 BC, making it one of the most ancient cities (Osborne 2002:171). Situated in the Hermus basin on one of the alluvial hills between the plain and Mount Tmolus, it became the capital of the wealthy and powerful Lydian kingdom. Due to its being situated partly on top of a hill, with a 1500-foot precipice on three sides and a steep approach on the south side that connected it to the mountain, it was an almost impregnable military stronghold (Osborne 2002:171).

The city of Philadelphia was situated approximately 30 miles to the south-east of Sardis and about sixty miles east of Smyrna. It is modern day Alasehir. The city was founded in 140 B.C. by Attalus II whose surname was Philadelphus (Kistemaker 2001:156). It was strategically located along a busy highway that linked the east (Asia) with the west (Europe) and was called “the gateway to the east” (Osborne 2002:184). The church of Philadelphia was situated in a rich agricultural area. An earthquake in A.D. 17 left the city devastated. With Roman assistance, it was rebuilt and the people showed their appreciation for the emperor by calling their city “Neocaesarea” (Koester 2001:65). Later they adopted the family name of the emperor Vespasian, calling their city “Philadelphia Flavia” (Koester 2001:65).

The city of Laodicea was situated some 43 miles to the south-east of Philadelphia, 11 miles west of Colosse and 6 miles south of Hierapolis in the Lycus valley. Until the middle of the 3rd century B.C., it was known as Diospolis (the city of Zeus) and Rhoas
Around 250 B.C. Antiochus II conquered the city and renamed it Laodicea in honour of his wife, Laodice.

2.1.2. Economic Context:

Through Ephesus passed a large part of the trade and travel between east and west. The city enjoyed major construction projects and a thriving commercial life. The city functioned as an important export centre for Asia as three great trade routes converged at the city – i.e. from the Euphrates by the way of Colossae, from Galatia through Sardis, and from the Meander valley to the south and east (Mounce 1998:67).

The port city, Smyrna, had an excellent harbour, which was also sufficiently narrow at the mouth that it could be closed for protection in time of war. The city was also known for its natural beauty (Michaels 1997:72).

The city of Pergamum was known for the marketing of the animal skins that were used for writing purposes. These skins also resulted in them opening up a library that eventually housed some two hundred thousand scrolls (Kistemaker 2001:126). It became a learning centre for the accumulation of knowledge, its application and also its dissemination abroad.

The city of Thyatira was situated on trade routes. The city was well known for its large number of trade guilds (e.g. shoemakers, markers, sellers of dyed cloth, bronze smiths, etc.). Osborne provides the following insights into the guilds:
“Most cities in the Greco-Roman world centered on the guilds, but in Thyatira they were especially prominent … this was so because throughout its history the trades provided an auxiliary function for the military in Thyatira, a garrison town. Each craftsperson (merchants, tanners, potters, bakers, wool and linen workers, sellers of cloth, various metalworkers, etc.) was part of a ‘guild,’ and though they were not obligatory, few workers failed to belong, for the guilds were centers of social life as well as commerce. In fact, both physically and sociologically, the guilds were at the heart of civic life.” (Osborne 2002:151).

The city of Sardis attained great wealth through commerce and trade. Legend stated that “Midas left his gold in the springs of Pactolus that ran through the city, and that legend may have come from the presence of gold dust in the springs that added to their wealth…. Sardis was the first to mint gold and silver coins” (Osborne 2002:171).

The city of Philadelphia, with its strategic position, encouraged trade and commerce. This resulted in the Greek language and culture spreading from Greece and Macedonia to Asia Minor and Syria (Kistemaker 2001:156).

The Romans built a road system from east to west and north to south. At the crossroads was the city of Laodicea, which was made a judicial and administrative centre (Kistemaker 2001:166-7). The city expanded in size and became a leading commercial centre, gaining much wealth and influence. It had a flourishing wool industry from which also common and costly garments were manufactured. A flourishing medical school, specializing in ear and eye care led to the invention of an effective eye ointment. This invention made the school world famous. In A.D. 60 a devastating earthquake leveled the city, but they rebuilt it without any help from the Roman government. In fact, they rebuilt the city even more beautiful than it previously was – i.e. with “a gymnasium, a stadium with a semicircular track nine hundred feet long, a triple gate and towers, and several beautiful buildings” (Osborne 2002:207).
2.1.3. Political Context and Religious Context:
The Roman Empire’s religion and politics were married together, hence Emperor worship was often “a policy pursued for the sake of political expediency” (Voorwinde 1998:6). They knew nothing of the modern practice of the separation of church and state.

2.1.3.1. Emperor Worship and the Persecution of Christians:
Throughout the book of Revelation, one of the major themes is the persecution that God’s people have to endure, which mostly results from the emperor worship practices (Beale 1999:12). John, himself, experienced hardship by being banished to the island of Patmos “because of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus” (Rev. 1:9).

The Christian teaching that the only “Lord” to be worshipped is Jesus Christ conflicted with the Roman’s declaration “Caesar is Lord.” For the Christian, emperor worship may have seemed politically correct, but was ultimately demonic, for it was rendering to Caesar what properly belonged to God (Voorwinde 1998:4). The Christians refusal to bow down to the emperor was considered by the Romans as a sign of insubordination to the emperor and state, which was declared treason and punishable by execution or exile (Kistemaker 2001:35). Christians had to endure persecution at the hands of Roman officials who were appointed to enforce the state religion in every city and town.
2.1.3.2. The Development of Emperor Worship in the Roman Empire:

Beale argues that the internal evidence of the book of Revelation points toward “a situation of relative peace and selective persecution, with an imminent expectation of intensifying persecution on a widening and programmatic scale” (Beale 1999:12). This could be possible, for emperor worship did not emerge in full bloom with the dawn of the empire, but developed gradually (Voorwinde 1998:5). Polytheism, ancestor worship, and the subsequent deification of legendary heroes aided the concept of emperor worship. Voorwinde notes that there are significant individual differences between the emperors in their attitude to the worship of themselves – i.e. from mere tolerance, through to open encouragement, and ultimately to an official enforcement (Voorwinde 1998:6).

The Roman imperial cult developed prominently in the province of Asia, being firmly established there during Augustus’ reign (27 B.C. – A.D. 14). All of the cities (except Thyatira) mentioned in Rev. 2-3, had imperial temples which were sanctioned by Augustus (Harrington 1993:10). Following his death in August 14 A.D., he was worshipped widely in Asia and the western provinces (Mounce 1998:17).

Augustus’ successor Tiberius (A.D. 14-37) discouraged the worship of himself, but was unsuccessful. He was not deified at his death (Voorwinde 1998:7).

Tiberius’ successor Gaius (A.D. 37-41) considered himself a god. His hatred for the Jews led him to erect a gigantic statue of himself in the Jerusalem Temple. However, due to the intervention of Herod Agrippa I, disaster was averted (Voorwinde 1998:7).

**Claudius** (A.D. 41-54) did not seek divine honours, but the efficiency of his governing made his subjects eager to deify him during his lifetime – which they did after his death.

By the time of **Nero’s** reign (A.D. 54-68), the imperial cult was firmly established as a religious system. Nero associated himself with Hercules and Apollo as god, and was greatly content to be honoured as divine (Du Rand 1994:232). Coins were made referring to him as “Saviour of the World” (Voorwinde 1998:8). He blamed the great fire of Rome (A.D. 64, July) upon the Christians for the reason that he needed to blame someone – and not due to the emperor’s claim to deity. In A.D. 64, the first outbreak of persecution by the Roman government began (Mounce 1998:18).

Father and son **Vespasian** (A.D. 69-79) and **Titus** (A.D. 79-81) did not seek divine honours but were accorded them at death (Voorwinde 1998:8).

It was Titus’ younger brother, **Domitian** (A.D. 81-96), who instituted the rule that failure to honour the emperor as god made one liable to being punished. This was seen as a political offense. Under Domitian’s rule, active persecution broke out, as he desired to eradicate those he thought to be politically dangerous. Kistemaker quotes Eusebius who wrote that Domitian had become “the successor to Nero’s campaign of hostility to God” (Kistemaker 2001:35). He had his cousin Flavius Clemens executed.
and his niece Domitilla, (who is thought from inscriptions in the Cemetery of Domitilla to have been a Christian), banished to the island of Pontia on the charge of ‘atheism’ (Mounce 1998:18). Domitian insisted on greater divine titles than earlier emperors did, for he wanted to increase his tyrannical hold on the reigns of government.

During Trajan’s reign (A.D. 98-117), Christians were summoned before Pliny of Pontus, who around A.D. 112, was sent to Bithynia to reorganize the affairs of that province. He forced them to worship the Roman gods and the emperor, and curse Christ (Du Rand 1994:232). When the Christians refused, he sent a letter to Trajan. Voorwinde provides the following excerpts from the letter:

“It is my custom, lord emperor, to refer to you all questions whereof I am in doubt. … Meantime this is the course I have taken with those who were accused before me as Christians. I asked them whether they were Christians, and if they confessed I asked them a second and a third time with threats of punishment. If they kept to it, I ordered them for execution … As for those who said that they neither were nor ever had been Christians, I thought it right to let them go, since they recited a prayer to the gods at my dictation, made supplication with incense and wine to your statue, which I had ordered to be brought into court for the purpose together with the images of the gods, and moreover cursed Christ – things which (so it is said) those who are really Christians cannot be made to do. Others … both worshipped your statue and the images of the gods, and cursed Christ” (Voorwinde 1998:10).

Trajan replies with the following procedure for the prosecution of Christians:

“ They are not to be sought out; but if they are accused and convicted, they must be punished – yet on this condition, that whoso denies himself to be a Christian, and makes the fact plain by his action, that is, by worshipping our gods, shall obtain pardon on his repentance, however suspicious his past conduct may be” (Voorwinde 1998:11).

The principle had been established that persistence in Christianity after legal challenge was punishable by death. Emperor worship had become a state policy and failure to comply, landed people (especially Christians) into trouble. Trajan was also deified at death.
2.1.3.3. The Development of Emperor Worship in Asia Minor:

Roman rule was extended to Asia, which welcomed the imperial cult right from its inception. The veneration of Augustus Caesar as a deity was practiced in the cities of Asia (and continued even thereafter to be practiced), even though no emperor visited Asia Minor till the 2nd century.

Evidence suggests that the worship of emperors was well established in all seven cities of Asia mentioned in Rev. 2-3. But the three prominent centres of emperor worship were Ephesus, Smyrna and Pergamum where rivalry between each other persisted for prominence (Voorwinde 1998:12).

The city of Ephesus was best known for its temple to Diana (Acts 19:27). Shrines were dedicated to the imperial cult, where as early as 29 B.C., two small temples were built to honour Julius and the goddess Roma. Also temples or statues were built in honour of the deified emperors Hadrian, Trajan and Domitian in Ephesus.

The city of Smyrna, even before the creation of the province of Asia, became the first city in the region to erect a temple to the goddess Roma (195 B.C.) (Voorwinde 1998:13). The people of Smyrna erected a statue to Tiberius after Smyrna was given the title of “temple-warden” (Voorwinde 1998:14). The most famous martyr of the early church fathers was the elderly Polycarp, the twelfth martyr in Smyrna, who refused to acknowledge Caesar as Lord, and was placed upon a pyre and burned (Mounce 1998:74).
The people of Pergamum built a temple to Dionysius and a marble altar to Zeus. A temple to Augustus was also built and archaeological findings of the sculptured heads of Trajan and Hadrian point to evidence of emperor worship in Pergamum. It is described as a place “where Satan is enthroned” (2:13), pointing to the city being the seat of satanic power, [with τοῦ= Satana= being a subjective genitive rather than a possessive (i.e. Satan’s throne)], through the practices of emperor worship (Osborne 2002:141).

Rome conferred each of these three cities (probably under Domitian’s reign) with the title νεωκωρο$ “temple-wardens,” for they contained temples founded for the worship of the emperors. Voorwinde notes that, if the Book of Revelation was written under Domitian’s reign, then the backdrop of emperor worship was a probable reason for the writing, for John’s readers lived in cities where these kinds of worshipping scaled new heights (Voorwinde 1998:16). Therefore also the continuous call to separate from evil and worship God. The other cities mentioned in Rev. 2-3 were less prominent in emperor worship, compared to the above three.

Thyatira was famous for its trade guilds – especially prosperous was the guild of dyers (cf. Acts 16:14) (Voorwinde 1998:16).

In Sardis, a temple to Augustus was built before 5 B.C. but was destroyed by the devastating earthquake of A.D. 17. Tiberius responded to the city with aid, resulting in its people honouring him with statues. In 1982, an unknown temple was excavated in Sardis, “possibly a provincial temple to the emperor Vespasian” (Voorwinde 1998:16).
Little is known about the imperial cult in Philadelphia as the site remains unexcavated due to it lying beneath a modern city.

Similarly, Laodicea has never been extensively excavated. An inscription on a gate and its towers indicates a link between Zeus and Domitian, showing how emperor worship was integrated with the Laodicean’s chief deity.

As the above evidence shows, the worship of Roman emperors was well established in Asia Minor in the 1st century A.D. It was a powerful force in the everyday lives of the ordinary people due to its widespread influence.

2.1.3.4. The Persecution of Christians:

As stated above, most of the persecutions that Christians suffered resulted from the emperor worship practices. The ethos of the book of Revelation stems from an expectation of an imminent widespread persecution among the churches of Asia Minor. John may have seen the outbreak of persecution in Rome as the first step of expanding persecutions elsewhere in the Empire (Beale 1999:12). John had already tasted the sting of persecution, for he was in exile on Patmos “because of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus” (1:9). Mention is also made of Antipas (2:13) who was martyred in Pergamum.

Emperor worship was linked to “civic loyalty and patriotism,” therefore, the Christians’ refusal to participate branded them as “godless,” “subversive,” “atheists,” and accused of “hatred of the human race,” because they refused to show loyalty to the
emperor and thus to the Roman people (Osborne 2002:139). Also Domitian’s demand that emperors be worshipped made it easy for the persecution of the Christians.

Out of the believers’ persecutions comes a call for perseverance in the midst of suffering; and also a call to holiness. Osborne writes, “One of the chief characteristics of apocalyptic literature is its exhortation that the people of God remain faithful to Him” (Osborne 2002:42). This includes the encouraging of the believer, and a challenging of the unbeliever followed by a warning. Believers are not to sway even under oppression and persecution, but are encouraged to keep the faith.

2.1.3.5. The Condition of the Churches in Asia Minor:
A brief summary of the political situation in Asia Minor and its influences on religion has been sketched out. It becomes necessary at this point to investigate the state of the church in Asia Minor to gain an understanding of how they dealt with - or gave in to these pressures.

For the churches, there were messages of commendation and also messages of condemnation. These churches in Asia Minor had strengths and weaknesses that Christ brought to their attention. The pointing out of especially the weaknesses were intended by Christ for their benefit – i.e. they needed to work on their weaknesses.

The messages to the churches in Asia Minor show the blending in with their society. They became part of their world, instead of citizens of heaven (Phil. 3:17-21). The picture of the churches of Ephesus, Sardis and Laodicea is one of widespread
lethargy, to the extent that they are on the verge of losing their identity as the church of Christ (Beale 1999:16).

2.1.3.5.1. The Church at Ephesus:
The Ephesian church was commended for their deeds of hard labour and perseverance in hardships that they faced for their faith. Further, they were commended for their intolerance of false apostles. They actively and critically examined people’s claims to prove them valid. They stood up for Christ and triumphed in the midst of persecution and false teachings.

They also received a rebuke from Christ for forsaking their love they had at first (i.e. shortly after their conversion). This probably was the second generation of believers in Ephesus, who in comparison to the first generation had lost their zeal. Osborne writes, “They had lost the first flush of enthusiasm and excitement in their Christian life and had settled into cold orthodoxy with more surface strength than depth” (Osborne 2002:115). It could be deduced that the Ephesian Christians’ love for truth and orthodoxy superceded their love for God and man. In other words, in their commitment to maintaining the truth that they had been taught, they became intolerant resulting in neglect of their relationship with God and their fellow people.

2.1.3.5.2. The Church at Smyrna:
Smyrna (together with Philadelphia) has no message/s of condemnation. They are reassured that Christ is aware of the “afflictions,” “poverty” and “slander” that they
Although the three-fold “problem” may seem negative, they were actually the church’s strengths, for suffering is considered a participation in Christ (Phil. 3:10) at a deeper level, thus enjoying God’s favour (Osborne 2002:129). Osborne records some of the likely causes for the believers’ state of poverty, stemming from their persecution:

“… mobs (both Jewish and pagan, stirred up by Jewish hatred) destroying their property, the fact that Christians were often among the poorer classes to begin with, the liberality of Christian giving in times of pressure (cf. 2 Cor. 8:2-5), the loss of jobs in a pagan atmosphere. The simple fact of Jewish opposition meant that Christians would no longer enjoy the protection and tolerance the Romans often granted Jewish people, for the Romans stopped giving the Christians the right to worship their God (an exception granted only to the Jewish people and for a while given to Christians as a Jewish sect). Poverty has often been the lot of God’s followers, because the people of this world hate the children of light and often seek to do them harm…. ” (Osborne 2002:129-130).

Whenever “poor” is mentioned in Revelation, it is contrasted in some way with “rich.” Here, the church of Smyrna is literally poor, yet spiritually rich. The persecution, resulting in poverty, actually brought the church at Smyrna closer to God. The contrast is drawn between Smyrna and Laodicea, where, Smyrna is poor economically and rich spiritually; and Laodicea is rich economically and poor spiritually (Osborne 2002:130). The slander that the people faced could refer to a group of Jews who instigated legal action in the Roman courts against the Smyrna Christians (Osborne 2002:131). The church was also warned of testing with more persecution. They needed to faithfully endure.

2.1.3.5.3. The Church at Pergamum:

The Pergamum church was commended for their faithfulness to Christ in spite of them living in Satan’s territory. The place was known as a religious centre. It
contained temples for Zeus Soter (the Greek word Soter applied to both Zeus and Asclepius means ‘saviour’), Athena Nicephorus, Dionysos Cathegemon and Asclepius Soter (god of healing, whose symbol was the snake and is still currently placed upon medical emblems). Also Emperor worship was central to the city. Through all this, the church was commended for their firmness in the faith through the persecution that they endured.

At the same time, Christ condemns the church for its permissive spirit of idolatrous and immoral compromise. While some of them remained faithful, there were also others who caused a heretical movement (of Balaam) to flourish in their midst, which endangered the entire church to reject Christ. The imagery of Balaam points to the practice of the heretics who apparently were teaching that there was nothing wrong with participating in the imperial cult (through idolatry and immorality), since even most Romans did it out of civic duty rather than actual worship (Osborne 2002:144).

2.1.3.5.4. The Church at Thyatira:

The church at Thyatira was commended for their works of love, faith, service and endurance. They loved (with the verb a)ga/ph speaking of divine love) God and others – and therefore became a loving church. Their faith speaks about their trust in God and faithful perseverance through difficult times. They were also a caring and helpful people. The term “endurance” speaks of the church’s “active perseverance in the midst of pressure and hard times” (Osborne 2002:155).
Christ’s displeasure for the church results from their tolerance of Jezebel as a prophetess. The people supported and tolerated this woman and her teaching, and were unwilling to actively stand against her (Osborne 2002:155). This first century woman, due to her seductive teachings associated with sexual immorality and idolatry, is compared to Ahab’s wicked wife (1 Kings 16:29ff.; 2 Kings 9:30 ff.) (Mounce 1998:86). This prominent woman promoted this wickedness by claiming the gift of divine prophecy. She promoted the pagan feasts, which often led to sexual promiscuity in the church. This is the only place in Revelation where Christians are deceived; elsewhere it is always unbelievers. [The verb plural means to “seduce” a person into sin by leading that one into error. Elsewhere it is used of Satan (12:9; 20:3, 8, 10), the false prophet (13:14; 19:20), and the prostitute (18:23) who deceived the world into idolatry and immorality (Osborne 2002:157)]. This woman is a Satanic force within the church, and Christ has already pronounced judgement on her unrepentance.

2.1.3.5.5. The Church at Sardis:

For this church, their strength is at the same time their weakness. Their past deeds earned them a reputation and gave them a name for being alive in Christ; but their present deeds show a different picture of ‘dead-ness.’ The church is commanded to awake from their spiritual death and be watchful, strengthen what survives, and remember past taught truths by putting them into practice. Only a small minority is given encouragement. The others are encouraged to become over-comers like this minority, for then only will they share eternity with God. Perseverance and obedient living is what spiritual vigilance contains.
2.1.3.5.6. The Church at Philadelphia:

Philadelphia's religion was similar to its surrounding cities – a syncretistic blend “of Anatolian and Hellenistic practices” (Osborne 2002:185). The city’s patron deity was Dionysus, the god of wine.

As with the church at Smyrna, there is only approval here. The church was obedient to Christ in the midst of persecution and suffering (3:8). In the light of the believers' faithfulness to Christ, they have Christ's assurance that He had opened the way into the presence of God for them – which is “an open door that no one can shut” (3:8). This open door to Gentile converts contrasts their exclusion by their Jewish contemporaries who excluded Gentiles from fellowship in the Christian church (Kistemaker 2001:159). In the eyes of those around them, they seemed insignificant, yet they mattered to Christ – and He commends them. However, instead of being exempted from trials, they are offered protection in Christ.

Morris points out the similarities between Philadelphia and Smyrna:

“Both receive no blame, only praise. Both suffered from those who called themselves Jews but were not, both were persecuted it would seem by the Romans, both are assured that the opposition is satanic, and both are promised a crown.” (Morris 1984:78).

2.1.3.5.7. The Church at Laodicea:

The positive aspects of the church are filled with irony. Their works were “lukewarm” meaning that their works were useless and the Lord was unsatisfied with them, just like the condition of their drinking water, which was piped from the hot springs and reached them still warm (Osborne 2002:205-6). The church should have been known
for their spiritual healing, refreshing and life-giving ministry. Yet they were shallow – i.e. they were outwardly beautiful, and inwardly sickening! Their material wealth led to self-sufficiency and complacency. There was no real trust and dependence on God, which made them blind to the truth. Osborne describes their spiritual plight:

"With no external pressure from pagan (like Sardis) or Jewish (like Smyrna or Philadelphia) persecution, with no internal threat from heretical movements (like Ephesus, Pergamum, or Thyatira), they had succumbed to their own affluent lifestyle, and they did not even know it!" (Osborne 2002:207).

In fact their plight was so severe, that Christ actually stood outside the church wanting to be let into their worship and lives. It is as if the church continued its ministry not aware that Christ was excluded from His church at Laodicea. The picture presented is the owner of the church locked out, and knocking at the door - waiting for someone to open, so that fellowship between Christ and the Laodicean people could be enjoyed.

Borrowing from Osborne’s last quote, we have witnessed above the external pressures and persecutions, internal threat from heretical movements and self-sufficiency that the seven churches faced. These outside influences were not unique to the churches in Asia Minor – and can be applied to Christ’s Church through the ages. In Chapter 3, we will witness the roles that the Beast and Prostitute play (Rev. 17-18), and how they influence the above-mentioned pressures faced by the Church and the world at large. We will continue to explore how the Church of Christ can combat all these influences that distract us and remove us from God.

However, before we survey Rev. 17:1 –19:10 exegetically, we need to briefly establish the context of this pericope in the light of the rest of Scripture (especially the
eschatological teachings that are contained in the Gospels and letters). We need to compare if Jesus', John's, and Paul's Apocalyptic teachings are consistent.

2.2. **Literary Context:**

We will now proceed to view how the Old Testament's eschatological teachings contribute and tie-in with the Apocalypse's teachings, and also establish Jesus' and Paul's eschatological teachings.

2.2.1. **Old Testament Influence:**

Prior to the 1980s, the use of the Old Testament in the Book of Revelation received less attention than the use of the Old Testament elsewhere in the New Testament which adds up to merely two books and six significant articles (Beale 1999:76). Recently, however, books and articles on the subject have been written. There is a general consensus amongst commentators that the Book of Revelation contains more Old Testament references than any other New Testament book.

The Old Testament in general plays a major role in the book of Revelation so that much of our understanding of the book needs to be understood from the Old Testament perspective. Buchanan notes that the “Hebrew Scripture allusions are so prevalent in the Book of Revelation that it might properly be called midrashic redemption literature” (Buchanan 1993:22). Jon Paulien believes that even though Revelation was written in Greek, its language was profoundly influenced by the
2.2.2. John's Use of the Old Testament:

Scholars differ in their opinions as to whether John was faithful to the Old Testament contexts, or if he disregarded their original meanings. Osborne argues that John does not absolutely disregard the Old Testament context, but that he demonstrates a more creative use, many times offering a double meaning (Osborne 2002:25). Beale understands the Old Testament to be both a servant and a guide to understanding the Apocalypse. He explains…

"… for John the Christ event is the key to understanding the OT, and yet reflection on the OT context leads the way to further comprehension of this event and provides the redemptive-historical background against which the apocalyptic visions are better understood; the New Testament interprets the Old and the Old interprets the New."(Beale 1999:97).

Further, John’s use of Daniel (especially Dan. 7) seems to be the most influential out of all the books of the Old Testament. Next, the book of Ezekiel seems to rank as the second most used Old Testament book, although in terms of actual number of allusions, Isaiah is first (Beale 1999:77).

2.2.3. New Testament Influence:

It becomes necessary at this point to discuss John’s eschatological teachings in the light of Jesus’ teachings as recorded in the Gospels; and also to discuss Paul’s eschatological teachings since he had a great influence on the churches in Asia Minor since their inception. The outcome enables the reader to better understand the
unified message of Revelation with the rest of Scripture (viz. the Gospels and the Pauline letters). 

2.2.3.1. **Jesus’ Eschatological Teachings:**

It is important to note that Jesus saw His ministry as a fulfillment of the Old Testament promise in history [cf. Luke 4:21 (Isaiah 61:1-2); Matt. 11:2-6 (Isaiah 35:5-6)]. Jesus spoke of His *kingdom* as a present reality (Luke 10:9; 17:21); yet at the same time, there was a future expectation as He taught His disciples to pray for the Kingdom of God to come (Matt. 6:10). Ladd explains that the meaning of the word *basileía* lies behind the idea of the “eschaton” – or the final eschatological order (Ladd 1993:60). The argument that the eschaton must be both present and future is derived from its Hebrew meaning – which is the idea of reign, rule, or dominion (more than one meaning). God is now King, and His rule must be realized on earth; but He must also *become* King (Ladd 1993:61). Ladd provides a final summary that the word *basileía* could “designate the eschatological act of God when God acts in kingly power to destroy his enemies and save his people. It can also designate the future realm of salvation into which God’s people will be gathered to enjoy the blessings of his reign” (Ladd 1993:68). We will now proceed to explain different components of Christ’s eschatological teachings and how they affect the believer and non-believer.

2.2.3.1.1. **Life After Death:**

In proclaiming the Kingdom, Christ provides for the believer hope beyond the grave (cf. Matt. 22:30; Mark 12:24-27; Luke 16:19-31; 20:27-38; 23:43; Jn. 14:2-3). The
attaining of eternal life is found in the Father drawing sinners to Himself (Jn. 6:44), and the ‘belief in’ (6:47) and the acceptance of Jesus as the bread of life (6:48-51). In other words, salvation includes God’s choice of the believer and the believer’s choice of God. This salvation involves: eternal life (Jn. 3:16), a deliverance from mortality (Luke 20:36), and also a perfected fellowship with God (Matt. 22:1-14; 25:1-12; Luke 14:16-24) which is likened to a wedding feast and a banquet. Jesus’ mission was to invite sinners to the Great Banquet of the Kingdom.

For Jesus, eternal life also comprises of a present aspect as well as a future aspect. The Gospel of John emphasizes the “present experience of this future life” (Ladd 1993:293) which is found in Christ. John 10:10 points to Jesus’ mission bringing to the believer a present experience of the future life. For the Jews, the resurrection was viewed as the last days event (which is indicative in Martha’s response to Jesus in John 11:24). But Jesus’ response and actions that follow in raising Lazarus is striking: “I am the Resurrection and the life…” (Jn. 11:25), pointing to the fact that this resurrection life, both future and present, is only found in Christ.

2.2.3.1.2. Christ’s Parousia:

Luke records in Acts 1:9-11 Christ’s ascension into heaven and also the angels’ reminder to them that He will come back the same way they had seen Him go. Christ also taught about His “second-coming.” From the questions asked by the disciples in Matthew 24:3, Jesus’ answer in the rest of the chapter points to the fact that His parousia will mark the close of this age (Matt. 24:30-31 “At that time the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and all the nations of the earth will mourn. They
will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky, with power and great glory. And he will send His angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of the heavens to the other”) (Ladd 1993:44). Various other passages in the Gospels speak directly of, or allude to Christ’s parousia (Matt. 16:27-28; 19:28; 24:27, 37, 39, 44; 26:64; 25:31; Mark 8:38; 9:1; 13:26; 14:62; Luke 9:26; 12:40; 17:24-26, 30; 18:8; 21:27, 36; 22:69).

2.2.3.1.3. Christ’s Teaching on Judgement:

To reject the offer of God’s Kingdom must result in judgement (Matt. 23:13, 33; 25:41, 46; Mark 3:29). Jesus claimed to be the judge (Mark 14:62) and also alluded to a ‘day of judgement’ (Matt. 10:15; 11:22-24; 12:36, 41, 43; 23:33), leading to a final separation of believers and non-believers (Matt. 13:41, 49). The key to the understanding of the Matthew (25:31-46) judgement passage is in the use of the phrase “brothers of mine” (Ladd 1993:206). For some, this passage re-iterates the ‘salvation through good works’ theology; whilst for others it alludes to the salvation of the Jews (i.e. the Dispensationalists). Jesus said in Matt. 12:50, “For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother,” which implies Jesus’ disciples. So, the destiny of individuals will be determined by the way they treat Jesus’ representatives and their response to the message that these representatives carry.
2.2.3.1.4. The Total Destruction of Evil and its Forces:

Jesus taught that the coming of His kingdom will mean the final and total destruction of the devil and his angels (Matt. 25:41 “Then he will say to those on his left, ‘Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels’”). This will lead to a formation of a pure people who are untainted by evil (Matt. 13:36-43), and the perfected fellowship with God at the great Messianic feast (Luke 13:28-29) (Ladd 1993:62).

2.2.3.1.4.1. Satan:

Christ claimed that He saw Satan being cast out of heaven (Luke 10:18), firstly claiming that He had no beginning; secondly, Satan has been removed and denied access into heaven. [It would seem that following the devil being cast down to earth, the Job account of him also presenting himself with the angels before God, can not be repeated (cf. Rev. 12:10-11)]. Christ also demonstrated the kingly power of God as He attacked the dominion of Satan in His ministry, delivering people from the power of evil. In Matthew 12:29, Jesus hinted to His invasion of Satan's kingdom by binding the strong man – i.e. Satan himself (Ladd 1993:63). After his being confined to earth, Satan is also bound presently– pointing to Christ's invasion of Satan’s kingdom. Matthew 25:41 points to Satan's final eternal destruction which has been prepared for him and his angels.
2.2.3.1.4.2. The Anti-christ:
The Anti-christ is the powerful adversary of the Messiah who opposes or replaces the Messiah. In Matthew 24:24, Christ states: “For false Christs … will appear and perform great signs and miracles to deceive even the elect – if that were possible.”

2.2.3.1.4.3. The Signs that will Precede the End:
The record of the Last Things in the Gospels given in Matthew 24, Mark 13 and Luke 21 contain the signs that Jesus described that will usher in the end. These passages have often been called “the Little Apocalypse” (Beckwith 1919:143). As Jesus foretold the events that will occur on the earth, it is clear that He is everywhere pointing to a consummation, an end.

The signs that Jesus lists correspond with John’s list in the Apocalypse. Jesus lists the following: the presence of false-christs, false prophets, wars, famines, earthquakes, persecution, apostasy, increase in evil, the preaching of the gospel to the whole world, deception through false miracles, disturbances with the sun, moon and stars. Jesus then warns them that His second coming will be a visible and a noisy event, witnessed by all on the earth (Matt. 24:27, 30-31).

2.2.3.2. Paul’s Eschatological Understanding:
Paul may be known as the great doctor of the infant church, for his influence was widespread, being felt directly or indirectly (Beckwith 1919:83). Paul’s emphasis is on
the tension between the “already” and the “not-yet” aspects in his eschatological outlook (Pereira 2002:356).

2.2.3.2.1. Paul’s Involvement in Asia Minor:

Christian churches had been established in Asia Minor by Paul and his co-workers, resulting in a tradition of Pauline Christianity, which extended into John’s time of ministry within the areas (Boring 1989:8). The Ephesian church (Rev. 1:11; 2:1-7; cf. Acts 19) and the Laodicean church (Rev. 1:11; 3:14-22; cf. Col. 4:16) are examples of Paul’s influence in the churches of Asia. Therefore, Paul’s understanding of issues (covered hereunder) is important if we want to gain an understanding into the context into which John was writing since these churches seem to be greatly influenced by Paul.

2.2.3.2.2. Paul’s Jewish Heritage:

Saul of Tarsus, was trained in the pharisaic tradition and was acquainted with apocalyptic writings. He also shared the Jewish hope (through the Old Testament prophets) of the coming Messiah to destroy His enemies, redeem Israel, and establish the Kingdom of God. As a Christian, renamed Paul, his hope takes on a similar structure (Ladd 1993:402).
2.2.3.2.3. Jesus’ Influence on Paul’s Eschatology:

Paul’s eschatology points to the believer being “in Christ” and at the same time “is with Christ” (Pereira 2002:48). For Paul, Christ’s kingdom is a present reality (Col. 1:12-14) and at the same time is a continuity. In other words Christ’s Messianic reign began at His death, resurrection and exaltation, and these redemptive events have already taken place and “their essential character is eschatological in the sense that, in the present age they belong to the age to come. The resurrection of Jesus was an eschatological event, which, as an end-time category, has already begun” (Pereira 2002:49). Paul applies Jesus’ concept of the ‘already’ (this age) and ‘not yet’ (the coming age) in his own theology (Eph. 1:19-21).

Beckwith provides a sequence of Christ’s coming, which is attained from the Pauline writings:

“The Lord will come forth suddenly attended by the heavenly hosts, at the call of the archangel and the sound of the trump the dead will rise (1 Thess. 4:16; 3:13; 2 Thess. 1:7; 1 Cor. 15:22), the universal judgment will be held (Rom. 2:6, 16; 14:10-12), the redemption to which believers have been sealed (Eph. 4:30) will be accomplished, they will be joined with Christ in his glory (Col. 3:4) and the kingdom of God will be established forever (1 Cor. 15:24-28).”(Beckwith 1919:87).

These happenings are further discussed hereunder:

2.2.3.2.3.1. Paul’s Understanding of Life After Death:

According to Paul in 1 Corinthians 15:12ff., Christ’s resurrection from the dead forms the basis for the believer’s resurrection, for “if Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless and so is your faith” (v.14). Death is viewed as an enemy, which will be destroyed last (v.26) – resulting in eternal life.
The nature of the new body, compared to the believer's earthly and decaying body, is described as being raised “imperishable”, “in glory”, “in power” and is “raised a spiritual body” (1 Cor. 15:42-43). The same is true of those who are still alive at Christ’s return (1 Cor. 15:51-55), for they will also be changed into an imperishable body “in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet” (cf. 1 Thess. 4:16; Rev. 8:2; 11:15-19).

The resurrection of the unbeliever is nowhere distinctly declared in the Pauline writings (Beckwith 1919:93), which has lead some to believe that Paul did not believe in their resurrection. However, Paul’s reference to a universal judgement (Rom. 14:10-12; 2 Cor. 5:10), points to the common Christian belief in the resurrection of all. In 2 Thess. 1:9, Paul speaks about the unbeliever’s eternal punishment.

2.2.3.2.3.2. Paul’s Understanding of Christ’s Parousia:

Christ’s coming, which is mentioned directly or is implied throughout his teachings, is an important theme in Paul’s writings. For him, Christ’s coming presents two aspects: firstly hope, and the next, warning (Beckwith 1919:86). Paul had in mind a visible return of Christ, which is found in his so-called ‘apocalypses’: 1 Thess. 4:14-17; 2 Thess. 1:7-12; 2:1-10 (Beckwith 1919:86).

Paul believes that due to the fact that Jesus died, arose and ascended to the Father (1 Cor. 15:3-4; 1 Thess. 4:14), He “will come down from heaven, with a loud command” (1 Thess. 4:16) at a time when people least expect His return (5:1-3). Accompanying Christ will be “the voice of the archangel” and “the trumpet call of
Thereafter, “the dead in Christ will rise first” (v.16), followed by those “who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air” (v.17). This will be the believer’s eternal and everlasting state (v.17b). A point worth noting is the fact that Christ’s coming will be a ‘loud’ and ‘visible’ happening. Paul shows no evidence of a ‘secret rapture.’

2.2.3.2.3. Paul’s Understanding of Judgement:

Paul always associates the judgement with Christ’s parousia where both the living and the dead receive their reward. The actual judging is done at times by God; and at other times by Christ (Rom. 2:16; 14:10-12; 2 Cor. 5:10). Judgment includes both believers and non-believers (1 Cor. 3:12-15).

2.2.3.2.3.4. Paul’s Understanding of Evil and its Forces:

Paul envisages a time when Christ will destroy evil, and will usher in a perfect, sinless existence for the believer.

2.2.3.2.3.4.1. Satan:

In Romans 8:20, “The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet,” Paul applies Genesis 3:15 to describe Satan’s ultimate end (cf. Rev. 20:10). The Genesis account hints at God’s plan of salvation through the cross; whilst Paul uses the same imagery to foretell Satan’s ultimate destruction.
2.2.3.2.3.4.2. Antichrist:

In 2 Thess. 2, Paul speaks about a single antichrist or “man of lawlessness” (cf. 1 Jn. 2:18; Rev. 13:1; 17). This man of lawlessness will be empowered by Satan to give evidence of his authority with power and signs and false wonders. Many people will be deceived and they will be judged for believing in the lies. After a brief reign on earth, Jesus, who is Lord, will defeat the man of lawlessness. The antichrist will be defeated with “the breath of his (i.e. Christ’s) mouth and … by the splendor of his coming” [2 Thess. 2:8; cf. Rev. 19:11-21 (italics added)].

2.2.3.2.3.4.3. Evil

In 1 Cor. 15:24, Paul writes, “Then the end will come, when he hands over the kingdom to God the Father after he has destroyed all dominion, authority and power” (italics added). Presumably, this refers to similar evil forces that Paul mentions elsewhere (cf. Rom. 8:38-39; Eph. 6:12; Phil. 2:10; Col. 2:15) who are spiritual beings and powers over which Christ will assert His Lordship when He returns for He is Great.

2.2.3.2.3.4.4. Paul’s Understanding of the Signs that will Precede the End:

For Paul, the end of time began when God became man, and from his perspective, time was short (1 Cor. 7:31b, “For this world in its present form is passing away”) because Jesus represented the goal and destination of history.
Paul warns the believers at Thessalonica concerning the false reports that were going around concerning Christ’s parousia which they supposedly claimed had already happened (2 Thess. 2:1ff.). He goes on to inform them that Christ’s coming is still future (v.3), and will only materialize after “the rebellion occurs and the man of lawlessness is revealed … whom the Lord Jesus will overthrow with the breath of his mouth and destroy by the splendor of his coming” (vv.3, 8). In 2 Timothy 3:1ff., Paul further explains the sinful condition of people in the last days.

2.2.3.3. **John’s Eschatological Understanding (as contained in his Gospel and Letters):**

We will at this point cover the principal eschatological ideas that appear in the Gospel of John and the Letters that bear his name. The critical question regarding authorship of these writings must now be considered.

2.2.3.3.1. **Authorship of the Apocalypse:**

It becomes necessary at this point to discuss the authorship of the Apocalypse, in order to establish whether Jesus influenced the author’s eschatological understanding. Due to John identifying himself as “slave” (1:1), “prophet” (1:3; 22:9), and one among his “brothers the prophets” (22:9); and not “apostle,” has led many scholars to discuss various identifications to the authorship of the book. Several suggestions are put forward by scholars:¹ John the apostle; the elder John; John

¹ Due to the scope of this thesis, we will not enter into a lengthy discussion on authorship issues. Reference can be made to: Du Rand (1994:221-227); Kistemaker (2001:18-26); Mounce (1998:8-15); Morris (1984:25-34).
Mark; John the Baptist; another John; Cerinthus; and someone using the name of John the apostle as a pseudonym (Osborne 2002:2).

2.2.3.3.1.1. Internal Evidence:
The following evidence is gathered from within the Apocalypse:

- The author of the book identifies himself as “John” (1:1, 4, 9; 22:8).
- The option of a pseudonymous John is least possible, for if an unknown author was attempting to identify himself with a well-know Christian figure like the apostle John, he would provide more details of himself (Beale 1999:34). At the same time, some are inclined to the apostolic authorship for the same reason that John is a well-known, authoritative figure amongst the churches and his title does not need clarification.
- A major argument against apostolic authorship of the Apocalypse results from the differences in writing style (grammar, vocabulary, etc.) in comparison to the Johannine Gospel and the Letters, yet at the same time, there are many similarities (Morris 1984:31).
- In Christ’s sacrificial role, the Johannine Gospel and the Apocalypse are exclusive in the entire New Testament in their use of the title “Lamb.”
- The author is known to the congregations of Asia Minor (for he uses his first name ‘John’), and at the same time he knows the situation of every congregation – thus suggesting that he is in an authoritative position (Du Rand 1994:222).
- It was Dionysius of Alexandria who argued against apostolic authorship on the ground of difference in style (Morris 1984:27-8). The differences in style and theology (between the Apocalypse, the Gospel and the Letters) can be explained.
by the difference in purpose of the Apocalypse, which Du Rand describes as: “a Christian prophetic-apocalyptic writing” in its theological presentation and content, and a “dramatic narrative within a letter framework” in its style (Du Rand 1994:213).

2.2.3.3.1.2. External Evidence:
The following external evidence points to the authorship of the Apocalypse:

- Irenaeus (born A.D. 130) is probably the first writer who ascribed the authorship of Revelation and the Gospel to John the Apostle.
- Justin the Martyr who lived in Ephesus for some time (ca. A.D. 135) was adamant in his Dialogue with Trypho that Revelation was written by the Apostle John (Du Rand 1994:221).
- Also Clement of Alexandria and Tertullian support apostolic authorship (Morris 1984:26).

2.2.3.3.1.3. Concluding Remarks:
There happens to be ample evidence that leans towards; and at the same time, evidence that disproves apostolic authorship of the Apocalypse. We do believe that the debate on authorship does not remove the authenticity of the Apocalypse. We would lean more towards apostolic authorship for some of the reasons stated above and also for the reason of the uniqueness - that the book was not John's, but Jesus' revelation to His servant John. This is constantly emphasized in the use of the first person, singular (“I saw”) which functionally is used to convey to the reader the
“narrator’s role as an indispensible link between the divine realm and the human one, so what we have in the Book of Revelation is a divinely directed plot made visible or readable to us by John’s mediation” (Bovon 2000:695-6).

2.2.3.3.2. Jesus’ Influence on John’s Eschatology:
John emphasizes the realized or the “already” (Pereira 2002:356) aspect of eschatology in his Gospel; whilst in the Apocalypse, he applies a future use. In the Gospel, John stresses on Jesus as the one who is “from above” (Jn. 1:51; 3:13, 31); whilst in the Apocalypse, He is pictured in the heavenlies - yet is often described by His incarnational work and roles (Lamb, Shepherd, Bridegroom).

2.2.3.3.2.1. John’s Understanding of Life After Death:
Although John emphasizes the realized aspect (e.g. Jn. 5:24 “I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life”) of eschatology in his Gospel, the future (e.g. 5:28-29 “… for a time is coming when all who are in their graves will hear his voice and come out – those who have done good will rise to live, and those who have done evil will rise to be condemned”) eschatological hope is not entirely eliminated.

In Jn 11:23-24, John acknowledges, through Martha’s belief, a future resurrection of the saints. By Jesus’ response, He draws the resurrection into the present as well by declaring to Martha, “I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will
live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die” (vv.25-26), thus pointing to the tension between the aspects of present and future which Jesus presents - yet at the same time, holding all this together (Pereira 2002:250). Therefore, for the believer, death has ‘ceased to exist’ for through his spiritual resurrection he has entered into eternal life which is independent of physical death (Beckwith 1919:105). When John speaks about the eschatological resurrection (cf. Jn. 5:28-29; 6:39-40, 44, 54), he makes no reference to a ‘spiritual body’ as found in the Pauline letters.

However, John states in 1 John 3 that when Christ appears, “we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is” (v.2b). According to this verse in its context, John conveys his belief that when Christ frees believers from their natural bodies and transforms them to their heavenly bodies, they will be completely free from sin. So the life to be lived after death will be sinless.

2.2.3.2.2. John’s Understanding of Christ’s Parousia:

The coming of Jesus is far more complex here than in the Synoptics, for Jesus speaks of his departure and return after His resurrection (Jn. 16:16), giving the idea of a “coming and going” (Ladd 1993:339).

Christ’s reference to His coming in the Paraclete (Jn. 14:18) has led some scholars to wrongly interpret the Spirit’s coming as the Parousia (Ladd 1993:339). Jesus’ statement in John 14:3 makes it clear that He, Himself, will come again: “And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you
also may be where I am.” Christ’s presence in the Paraclete, and His eschatological coming, here again, reflect the tension between realized and futuristic eschatology (Ladd 1993:340).

2.2.3.2.3. John’s Understanding of Judgement:

In his discussion on judgement, John once again sees both a future separation at the last day and also a present spiritual separation between human beings based on their relationship to Christ. In John 12:48 (cf. Matt. 7:22), future judgement is affirmed when John writes, “There is a judge for the one who rejects me and does not accept my words; that very word which I spoke will condemn him at the last day.” Also, 1 John 4:17 points to John’s belief in a future judgement.

Ladd discusses (from John 3:18-19) the impact of the future judgement upon the present by stating that:

“This future judgment has reached back into the present in the person of Christ; and the future eschatological judgment will essentially be the execution of the sentence of condemnation that has in effect been determined on the basis of people’s response to the people of Christ here and now.” (Ladd 1993:343).

For John, the eschatological judgement will be a final manifestation of God’s judgement that is taking place here and now, according to the nature of the human response to God’s call - which is given in Christ.
2.2.3.2.4. John’s Understanding of Evil and its Forces:

2.2.3.2.4.1. Satan

John sees the world in the grip of an evil supernatural power called the devil (Jn. 8:44; 13:2) or Satan (Jn. 13:27). Satan, meaning ‘to oppose or obstruct,’ is described in language very similar to that of Paul as the “ruler of this world” (Jn. 12:31; 14:30; 16:11). John’s idea is that Satan rules the entire cosmos.

Satan’s sole purpose is to frustrate the work of God. He is portrayed as a thief whose intent is to “steal, kill and destroy,” whilst Jesus’ mission is to bring to people abundant life (Jn. 10:10). His work is visible in Judas (Jn. 13:27) and his Jewish followers who have naively followed his lies, for he is the father of lies (Jn.8:39 ff.). Satan tries to overcome Jesus (Jn. 14:30), but he is no match – for Jesus is to emerge the Victor through the cross (Jn. 12:31).

2.2.3.2.4.2. Antichrist:

John’s thought about the antichrists is similar to Matthew’s record (Matt. 24:24). John records that they are false prophets who deny that Jesus is the Messiah (1 John 2:22; 2 John v.7), who also separate themselves from the church (2:19) and try to lead astray all who listen to them (Ladd 1993:662). In the Apocalypse (Rev. 13), John speaks about a single evil future antichrist who opposes the worship of Christ and sets himself up as the object of worship.
2.2.3.4. The Eschatology of Revelation

We will now discuss certain eschatological issues from the Apocalypse [more issues are covered in chapter 5].

2.2.3.4.1. Life After Death

In between judgement scenes, the Apocalypse portrays believers to be in heaven and involved in worship (e.g. 7:9-17; 15:2-4; 19:6-9). They are explained to John as “… they who have come out\(^2\) of the great tribulation; they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb” (7:14b). Yet at the same time, the martyred souls are said to be “under the altar” (6:9; 16:7).\(^3\) This would seem like a contradiction, but it is not, for in the book of Revelation, the altar usually represents being near to God (8:3, 5). And although these martyrs are part of that multitude in heaven (6:11 “each of them was given a white robe”, similar to the saints of 7:9b), their cry to God for judgement and vengeance prepares the reader for the final judgement on earth on the wicked and wickedness.

The Apocalypse also makes mention of the “second death” (Rev. 20:14; 21:8). Evildoers will receive eternal punishment in the lake of fire – which is the second death.

\(^2\) The use of the present tense in the verb suggests a continuous “coming out” action, meaning that the total number of believers on earth are not part of the multitude.
2.2.3.4.2. Christ’s Parousia

Revelation 1:7 gives an introduction of what to expect at the end of the Apocalypse. It’s almost like giving the end of a story first and thereafter starting the story at the beginning. Yet this is done purposefully which is for the reader to understand that although things may seem chaotic, Christ is coming again and He is in control.

Thereafter, in the midst of all the judgement talk, John gives another reminder that Christ is coming (16:15). And finally, the long awaited moment arrives in 19:11-21 as He arrives as a conqueror on a white horse establishing control on earth, and thereafter, ushering in the new heaven and the new earth (chapter 21ff.).

Finally, at the end, another warning is sounded out to remind the reader once again that Christ is coming again (22:12).

2.2.3.4.3. Judgement

A great portion of the Apocalypse is used to describe judgement scenes that will occur on the earth. All these judgements upon the world are preparation for the ‘Great Day.’ The seals, trumpets and bowls are pictures given to the reader to describe God’s acts of judgement. These judgements are partly natural occurrences, although miraculously intensified, such as war, murder, famine, pestilence, earthquakes, etc. Some of these judgements are supernatural such as the vast disturbances in the heavens, the corruption of the waters, the torture of the hellish locusts, etc. But all these are in God’s Sovereign plan and with special eschatological

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3 This imagery is reminiscent of the altar of sacrifice (Ex. 29:12), which stood in the temple’s outer court. That altar had a trough under it to catch the blood of sacrificed animals. Here, the victims are Christians whose lives
purpose. They are manifestations of God's wrath, and have a twofold purpose of
punishing the ungodly and of leading sinners to repentance (Beckwith 1919:158).
This culminates with the complete and eternal destruction of evil and evildoers
(chapters 17-19) and with Satan himself (20:10).

2.2.3.4.4. Evil’s Total Destruction
The final destruction of evil and its accomplices are dealt with at length in chapter 3.
Yet it is noteworthy at this point to once again emphasize the eternal destruction and
punishment of Satan (20:10), the antichrist and false prophet (19:20) and evil (chaps.
17-18) – thus ushering in once again perfection and eternal rest and fellowship
between God and the redeemed.

To conclude this chapter, we have witnessed within, an overview of Jesus’
eschatological teachings (as contained in the Gospels), Paul’s eschatological
 teachings (as contained in his letters) and John’s eschatological teachings (as
contained in the Apocalypse). It becomes evident that both Paul and John have been
greatly influenced by Jesus’ eschatological teachings. Although Paul and John focus
on different aspects in their dealing with the subject, the underlying principles of
Jesus’ teachings are vehemently held (i.e. eternal life, judgement, evil’s destruction,
end-time signs, etc.).

We will now proceed to conduct a further survey as we exegetically discuss Rev.
17:1-19:10. This exercise is important for here we will witness a more comprehensive
and detailed account of the above-mentioned aspects of eschatology that this pericope deals with.
Chapter 3

Further Exegetical Survey (Revelation 17:1 – 19:10)

3.1. Introductory Remarks:

God is good, and His original creation was good. Sin entered the world through Adam and Eve’s decision to listen to Satan. In the Genesis account of ‘The Fall,’ the original sin was not about eating a piece of fruit, but coveting godlike power (Colson & Pearcey 1999:78). Incidentally, this was also the sin of Satan, resulting in him losing his place in heaven (Isaiah 14:14 “… I will make myself like the Most High…”). Colson & Pearcey writes (concerning Adam and Eve’s sin): “They rejected their nature as created, limited, finite beings, and they tried to be what they could never be – divine. They wanted to be their own god” (Colson and Pearcey 1999:78).

The Apocalypse presents to the reader God’s plan of salvation to redeem humanity back to its state of ‘goodness.’ Colson & Pearcey emphasize the doctrine of original goodness in God’s creation by arguing:

“If we had been created with a fatal flaw, then salvation would require destroying us and starting over. But since we were created good, salvation means restoring us to what we were originally created to be. Redemption means the restoration and fulfillment of God’s original purpose” (Colson & Pearcey 1999:77).

Further, the Apocalypse teaches that God is sovereign and that He is in control of His design. The book presents hope in the midst of suffering for the believer. At the same time, another message of judgement upon the evil inhabitants of the earth, the cosmos and evil is presented. God is holy and all that He stands for is good. Evil contradicts God’s nature and has to be destroyed for good to triumph. It is for this reason that we need to survey Rev. 17:1-19:10, for here we will witness the self-
destruction of evil which is God’s design. We will also witness the triumph of good as evil is destroyed.

John describes two aspects that the prostitute uses to seduce the inhabitants of the earth away from God. Firstly, Religious Seduction (chap. 17), and secondly, Commercial Seduction (chap. 18). We will firstly look at the religious seduction and examine the prostitute’s influence over the inhabitants of the earth. Just before we go into the text to examine its message, we need to briefly clarify the scope of the prostitute’s religious influence.

Everyone has a world-view. Peoples’ choices are shaped by what they believe is real and true, right and wrong, good and beautiful (Colson & Pearcey 1999:ix). Colson & Pearcey argue that: “… a person’s worldview is intensely practical. It is simply the sum total of our beliefs about the world, the ‘big picture’ that directs our daily decisions and actions” (1999:ix). In every worldview, there is a problem with the oppression of the individual, whether it be ‘sin’ to the Muslim, ‘Christian morality and ethics’ to the atheist, or ‘the Biblical Creation account’ to the evolutionists, there is a doctrine of redemption. Colson and Pearcey argue: “Just as every worldview offers an answer to the question of how we got here (creation), and an analysis of the basic human dilemma (the Fall), so every worldview offers a way to solve that dilemma (redemption)” (Colson & Pearcey 1999:129). Many will deny that theirs is a religion (e.g. atheists), but a look into their belief system will point to the fact that a religion has been established. Although the terminology may be different in worldviews, there is a close similarity in what Colson and Pearcey call “… the spiritual sequence of sin-guilt-redemption” and “… the psychological sequence of problem-anxiety-resolution”
that the various worldviews adopt (Colson & Pearcey 1999:130). The longing for redemption from whatever a worldview may deem oppression is ultimately religious. The need for salvation has been imprinted on the human soul and every worldview offers some form of redemption (Colson & Pearcey 1999:129). We come now to Revelation 17, which deals with the prostitute’s seduction of the inhabitants of the earth into seeking redemption elsewhere, with the objective of drawing them away from true redemption through Christ’s sacrificial death and resurrection.

3.2. The Judgement of Babylon (17:1 – 19:5)

In the Old Testament, the marriage metaphor is constantly applied to man’s relationship with God. Prostitution is used figuratively for apostasy and unfaithfulness to God. John borrows similar imagery to describe people apart from Christ. Those apart from Christ are described as fornicators; whilst those in Christ are described as the faithful bride of Christ. Hendriksen notes that Babylon is never called “adulteress,” but “prostitute” - alluding to the fact that Babylon was never the Lamb’s wife (Hendriksen 1940:167).

3.2.1. The Prostitute on the Beast (17:1-6)

One of the seven angels (in chapter 16) who has one of the seven bowls invites John to witness the punishment of the great prostitute, who sits on many waters (v. 1). The punishment is already twice proclaimed in 14:8 and 16:9 but is graphically portrayed in chapters 17-18. Jeremiah’s prophecy against Babylon (Jer. 51:13) is borrowed by John and applied to his ‘Babylon’ – i.e. the entire godless world.
17:1 And came one of the seven angels of the having the seven bowls, and spoke with me, saying, Come here, I will show you the sentence of the prostitute the great, the sitting upon waters many."

The angel is identified as one of the seven who had the seven bowls, alluding to the possibility that this chapter elaborates on the sixth and seventh plagues presented in the preceding chapter [16:12-21] (Kistemaker 2001:461). The angel offers John an invitation to singularly “come” (Deu=ro) into the visionary world to witness the kri/ma “punishment” or the ‘sentence’ of the great prostitute. The decision for the punishment of the prostitute results from an investigation (Vine 1939:214).

“The great prostitute” (po/rmh$ th=$ mega/lh$) is used metaphorically to symbolize the entire organized but godless world system4 which opposes God. Harris writes concerning the identity of the prostitute: “… commentators have given various interpretations as to the identity of ‘the great city.’ Because the name ‘Babylon’ appears here (i.e. referring to 16:19), some believe that a rebuilt Babylon will become a world center for commerce and religion and will meet the fate described in chapter 18…. Others believe it is Rome which was the center of world power in John’s day…. Still others consider it to be Jerusalem, which has been identified as ‘the great city’ (11:8)” (Harris 1990:247).

The adjective mega/lh$ modifying the noun po/rmh$, describes her imperial, earthly power and position of earthly prominence. po/rmh$ is the objective genitive, meaning
John is to witness the sentence “on (instead of ‘of’) the great prostitute” (Robertson 1933:428). Later in 21:9, John is again invited to witness another sight – this time the bride of the Lamb. John sees a direct contrast between the bride of Christ (also in 19:7b-8) and the prostitute. The prostitute is described by the verb as “sitting” kaqhme/nh$ (present, middle, participle) on “many waters” (u(da/twn tw=n pollw=n), again pointing to her imperial power (Gonzalez & Gonzalez 1997:110). The present tense suggests her continued association with the beast, and the middle voice (also in 17:3 & 15) suggests her choice to seat herself on the beast.

17:2 meq' h!$ e)po/rneusan oi( basilei=$ th=$ gh=$ ka\l e)mequ/sqhsan oi( katoikou=nte$ th\n gh=n e)k tou= oi*nou th=$ porei/a$ au)th=$ “with whom committed adultery the kings of the earth, and were made drunk the dwelling on the earth from the wine of the adulteries of her.”

The angel goes on to describe the prostitute’s influence on humanity. The fact that Babylon is symbolized as a prostitute alludes to her alluring and seductive nature in attempting to draw people away from God (Hendriksen 1940:167). The scope of the prostitute’s influence is on o(i basilei=$ th=$ gh=$ “the kings of the earth” (repeated also in 1:5; 6:15; 17:18; 18:3, 9; 19:19 & 21:24). These kings represent the nations that have bought into this godless system. They are described as having e)po/rneusan “committed adultery” (aorist, indicative, active) with the prostitute. In v.8, they are further identified as those “… whose names have not been written in the book of life.”

Rowland notes the relationship between the prostitute and the nations:

“… their collaboration is so intimate that it can only be described in sexual terms … Harlotry involves selling one’s body. It is the intimate union for the

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4 Refer to our argument for the identity of Babylon in Chapter 5 (5.5.3).
5 See also 17:15 for our comments on John’s interpretation of “… the great prostitute, who sits many waters.”
financial benefit of one and the gratification of the other party which offers this metaphor of illicit collaboration rooted in self-satisfaction and loss of human dignity” (Rowland 1993:130).

Due to the kings of the earth who took the lead to engage in a relationship with the prostitute, their subjects, who are οἱ κατοικοῦντες οἰκίας τῆς γῆς “the inhabitants of the earth,” are also partakers in the evil system (Morris 1984:204). The inhabitants of the earth are described as εὗροσκήθησαν “were made drunk” (aorist, indicative, passive). The use of the aorist tense could be ingressive, meaning “‘to enter in the state of drunkenness’ or ‘get drunk’” (Rienecker 1980:503). Morris observes: “The fact that the wine is the wine of her fornication (cf. xiv. 8), shows that sexual impurity is still the basic thought” (Morris 1984:204). Beale translates the phrase as: “…all those dwelling on the earth became drunk from the wine causing [or ‘leading to’ or ‘resulting in’] intercourse with her” (Beale 1999:848). The noun πορνεία, translated “fornication,” “adulteries” or “intercourse” is taken as “genitive of cause, purpose, or result” (Beale 1999:848). The picture presented is one of the alluring, intoxicating and control by the evil system, Babylon. Beale notes the addiction to Babylon by the inhabitants of the earth, when he writes:

“…the intoxicating influence removes all desire to resist Babylon’s destructive influence, blinds one to Babylon’s own ultimate insecurity and to God as the source of real security, and numbs one against any fear of a coming judgment” (Beale 1999:849).

17:3 καὶ ἀπῆλθεν εἰς ἐν πνεύματι. Καὶ εἰς δοῦνα ἀκατήρησεν καὶ ἔλαβεν πόρνην, ἕνα ἴχνος ἀχαμύνθεις, ἔξων κεφαλὴς ἑνακοκκίνην καὶ ἔξων κεφαλὴς ἀπαξιώματα ἀχαμύνθεις, ἕνα ἴχνος ἀγγέλου ἀφελείας. “And he carried away me to a wilderness in Spirit; and I saw a woman sitting upon a beast scarlet, being full names of blasphemy, having heads seven and horns ten.”
John is ἀναφορέω “carried away” (aorist, indicative, active) by the angel. This verb is also used when Lazarus died and was carried away by angels (cf. Luke 16:22), and also in Rev. 21:10 (Robertson 1933:429). John is said to be carried εν πνευματι “in the Spirit” to actually view the prostitute that vv.1-2 introduced. De Smidt records Du Rand’s interpretation of the phrase:

“… the formula εν πνευματι was functional in the structuring of Revelation and points to the importance of contrast. This formula contrasts the earth and the heavens (1:10; 4:12); the desert (17:1, 3) and the high mountain (21:10); Christ’s deeds in the church and in the cosmos (cf. 4:1). The fall of Babylon (17:3) is contrasted with the destination of the bride (church) in 21:10, etc.)” (De Smidt 1999:32).

Mounce argues that the Greek εν πνευματι refers to John’s ecstatic state, rather than the instrumentality by which he was carried away (Mounce 1998:309). For Beale, the use of the dative shows both instrumentality and sphere, thus with the interpretation, “in and by the Spirit” (Beale 1999:850). This will mean that John was caught up by the Spirit to emphasize that his message is not his own, but God’s; and also his prophetic commission, authority and message are emphasized as he is caught up in the realm of the Spirit.

John’s destination in this vision is έν έρημόν “to a wilderness.” In Scripture the desert receives various interpretations: a place of instruction due to disobedience of the Israelites (Heb. 3:8-9; Acts 7:41ff.); a place where the fore-runner to the Messiah ministered (Matt. 3:3; Mark 1:3; Luke 3:4; John 1:23); a place inhabited by demons (Matt. 12:43); a place of temptation (Matt. 4:1); a place of security for the woman clothed with the sun (Rev. 12:6); etc. Beale makes reference to Isaiah’s prophecy against Babylon (Isa. 21) and makes a comparison to John’s Babylon (Rev. 17)
where he argues that the message of Isaiah’s prophecy of judgment against Babylon is similar to John’s (e.g. Isa. 21:9 and Rev. 18:2) (Beale 1999:851). He concludes that both these references have a negative connotation of ‘desert,’ and further argues:

“Isa. 21:1 uniquely combines the apparently disparate images of desert and sea (“the burden of wilderness of the sea”) and associates them with Babylon (see MT and the various LXX witnesses). Likewise, Rev. 17:1,3 oddly pictures Babylon in a wilderness and “sitting on many waters” (17:1-3)” (Beale 1999:851).

Caird (1984:213); Harrington (1993:171) and Boring (1989:179), view John’s position in the desert as something positive, for from there he would be able to see the prostitute for her true self; and at the same time he would also be free from Satan’s lies and the prostitute’s seductions. This interpretation seems dubious, for, firstly, this is the visionary world. The Spirit of God will not lead John to a place where he would be able to fall (James 1:13-14). The focus in Revelation is not on John, nor his weaknesses, but on God’s revelation of history. Secondly, it seems that the prostitute had already positioned herself in the desert, so it is necessary for John to go to the desert if he was to witness this sight. We would tend to agree with Beale that the vision of chapter 17 does not refer to a physical setting, but a spiritual dimension for, as 18:2b indicates, Babylon has become like a desert-like place – i.e. where only demonic spirits dwell.

There, in the desert, John saw gunai=ka “a woman.” This woman, whom the angel previously described to John as the “great prostitute” (v.1), becomes the focus. John sees her and begins to describe her ‘greatness.’
The prostitute is described as kaq̂me/nhn e)pi\ qhri/on ko/kkinon “sitting on a scarlet beast.” Earlier (v.1), the prostitute is described as sitting on many waters, describing her imperial power. Here, she is kaq̂me/nhn “sitting” (present, middle, participle) on a scarlet beast that had earlier rose out of the sea (chap. 13). Harrington understands the scarlet beast to reflect the fiery red dragon of 12:3 (1993:171). The verb kaq̂me/nhn “sitting” signifies her unity with the beast and her representation of the beast on earth as his ambassador.

In discussing the identity of the beast, Mounce identifies it as: “… the great persecuting power that rules by brute force and is the supreme enemy of Christ and the church” (1998:310). Mounce, quoting Boer, believes that “… the harlot is a temporary manifestation of the beast as a constant reality” (1998:310). If Boer is correct, then Rotz’ reference to the reversal of the Trinity by Satan (i.e. the Satanic triumvirate) is needed (Rotz 1998:210). We are of the opinion that the false prophet should be identified with the prostitute - instead of with the second beast (chapter 13) which most commentators interpret [e.g. Beale 1999:831 & Kistemaker 2001:449]. The prostitute is portrayed as the one on earth that leads humanity away from the truth, by offering to them false-security and false-hope (17:2; 18:3,24b; 19:2b). Hence, also the call for the saints to separate themselves from her (18:4), for as false prophet, she enters the church to bring about its destruction; and as prostitute, to offer to people ungodliness instead of righteous living. This false prophet/prostitute is directly contrasted with the Holy Spirit, the Third Person of the Trinity. The Bible teaches that He is the One that is present in this world and in the believer (Jn. 14:16-18, 26) and will guide the believer into all truth (Jn. 16:13). This will also imply that
the beast is a temporary manifestation of the dragon (cf. 12:9; 13:2) and as an unholy trinity, they are cast together into the “lake of burning sulphur” (19:20; 20:10).

The beast is described as *γεμον ὄνοματών blasphmaiα* “being covered (present, active participle) with blasphemous names.” The portrayal of the beast is almost word for word that of Rev.13:1 which alludes to Dan. 7:3-7, 20 & 24. The “blasphemous names” probably refer to the beast’s false claims to sovereignty for *blasfmaiα* is taken as a genitive of description, quality or definition (Beale 1999:853).

The beast is also described as having *κεφάλας ἐπτά καὶ κεράτα δέκα* “seven heads and ten horns.” Later in verses 9-12, we will view the angel’s interpretation to John of what the seven heads and ten horns mean.

17:4 καὶ ἡ γυνὴ ἡ περιβεβλημένη πορφυρὸν καὶ κόκκινον καὶ κρύσσουσα καὶ λιθίων καὶ τιμιῶν καὶ μαργαρίταις, εξοσα ποθρίον κρύσσουσα καὶ ἔχουσα πόθον κρύσσουν εἰς τὴν χείριν αὐτήν γεμον βδέλυγμα τῶν καὶ ἄκακα τῆς πορνείας αὐτῆς.

The angel goes on to describe the prostitute’s apparel and jewelry (see also 18:16). She is described as *περιβεβλημένη πορφυρῷ καὶ κόκκινῳ* “having been clothed in purple and scarlet.” The verb *περιβεβλημένη* is in the perfect tense (middle, participle) - alluding to the prostitute’s present state resulting from a past action (Wenham
In other words, the action of the prostitute’s adornment of herself (use of the middle voice) happened in the past [probably at ‘The Fall’ (Gen. 3)], and she still is in the same present state – unchanged (also applicable to the next phrase).

This woman stands in strong contrast to the woman of chapter 12 who was clothed with the sun; and also with the heavenly bride of 19:8, who was given “fine linen, bright and clean” to wear. The dyes for the colours purple and scarlet, which were the colours of royalty and magnificence, were extremely expensive and only the wealthy could afford them (Rienecker 1980:503). She also is described as κερασωμήν Χρυσός και λιθίων τιμίων και μαργαριτῶν “having been covered (perfect, middle, participle) with gold, precious stones and pearls.” This ‘expensive’ look is indicative of outward, worldly success that she personifies in trying to seduce and lure humanity into herself, and away from God.

In the preceding phrases, the prostitute has been portrayed as a beautiful and royal woman. Her external looks are desirous. However, another side – her ugly side or her true self - is revealed when John describes the contents of the golden cup that she holds in her hand. Her golden cup also speaks of outward riches; but the contents inside of the cup speak of corruption (Kistemaker 2001:465). The cup is described as γεμόν βδελυγμάτων και ακαθήτων πορνειας “being full of abominations and of uncleaness of fornication.” The cup is in an on-going state of γεμόν “being full” (present, active participle) with detestable items. This firstly suggests by the use of the ‘active’ voice, that it is the prostitute who is doing the action of filling the cup with impurities (the present tense suggests an ongoing action). Secondly, Beale suggests that the cup is repeating the metaphor of 14:8 and 17:2, where the prostitute makes
the nations drunk with her wine, meaning that the constantly full cup reveals the ever availability of evil to mankind (1999:855).

John witnesses that the cup contains Bde lugma (literally “that which stinks,” or “that which is detestable”) (Rienecker 1980:503). This word is used in the LXX of the moral and ceremonial impurity connected with idolatrous practices (Mounce 1998:311). Kistemaker notes that the word could mean:

“... objects and practices that are acutely offensive to God. Among others, they include the worship of idols (Deut. 27:15); the wages of prostitution (Deut. 23:18); homosexual acts and sexual perversions (Lev. 18:22; 20:13); witchcraft, casting spells, and divination (Deut. 18:10, 11)” (2001:465).

John continues to describe the contents inside the cup as: kai a)ka/qarthto$ pornei/a$ “and of uncleanness of fornication.” This strengthens further the idolatrous influence of the prostitute. Beale notes that the accusative tal a)ka/qarta “the unclean things” should be genitive following bdelugma/twn “abominations”, but it may be accounted for as the object of the verb e* xousa “having” (1999:857).

17:5 kai\ e)pil\ to\ me/twpon au)th=$ o*noma gegramme/non, musth/ rion, Babul\ in\ h( mega/lh, h( mh/thr tw=n pornw=n kai\ tw=n bdelugma/twn th=$ gh=$. “and upon the forehead of her a name having been written, Mystery, Babylon the Great, the mother of the prostitutes and of the abominations of the earth.”

John now zooms in onto smaller details in his description of the prostitute, after describing the more evident details. The description includes: kai\ e)pil\ to\ me/twpon au)th==$ o*noma gegramme/non “And upon the forehead of her a name having been written.” The verb gegramme/non (perfect, passive participle) signifies that the present
title of the prostitute results from an action of writing, which is done on her by another person/being, in the past.

The Book of Revelation records the following instances of names written on foreheads: God’s servants are sealed (cf. 7:3; 9:4), the Lamb’s servants are marked (cf. 14:1; 22:4), and the beast’s followers are marked (cf. 13:16; 14:9; 20:4). Beale writes, “In the Apocalypse names written on foreheads reveal the true character of people and their ultimate relationship, whether to God…, or to Satan” (1999:857).

Babylon is described as musth/rion “mystery.” In verse 1, she is called “prostitute.” Robertson notes that musth/rion can be taken “either in apposition with onoma or as part of the inscription on her forehead” (1933:430). This could mean that John is saying that the name on the prostitute is “Mystery Babylon the Great,” or that the name “Babylon the Great” on the woman’s forehead, is a mystery (Dyer 1987:435). The latter interpretation is more fitting - i.e. the word is treated rather as a prefix. Its significance is brought out by John in v. 7.

Harris presents a brief background to the name “Babylon.” He writes:

“… the name ‘Babylon’ was once thought to have originated from the earlier Sumerian name Ka-dinga. This Sumerian name was translated by the Akkadians as Bab-ilim and by the Hebrews as Babel. The city’s earlier Akkadian name is now believed to be a secondary, popular spelling of Babil, the meaning of which is uncertain. In a later period the name appears in the plural form Bab-ilani, ‘gate of the gods.’ The Greeks then translated it Babulon, thus the modern name Babylon” (1990:253-5).

Earlier, she is called “the great prostitute (v.1);” presently, her name is revealed as “Babylon the great.” She is further described as h( mh/thr tw=ŋ pornw=ŋ kai\ tw=ŋ bdelugma/twn th=$ gh=$ “the mother (singular) of the prostitutes (plural) and of the
abominations (plural) of the earth.” Earlier (v.1), Babylon is referred to as “the great prostitute” (v.1), and she was also holding a cup filled with abominable things. Here the title “the mother of…” refers to her as the source of all kinds of ungodliness that her followers engage in, with the result that they become just like her: ungodly and evil. In other words, every sin on earth originates from her. Her followers are the adulterers that take pleasure in the “mother of prostitutes;” and at the same time they are also prostitutes, for she influences them. The phrase “the earth” enables John’s readers to view the scope of the prostitute’s influence. The striking contrast between this woman adorned with evil; and the bride (19:8) adorned with “righteous acts” is visible.

John writes: “and I saw the woman being drunk with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the witnesses of Jesus. And I wondered, having seen her, with wonder great.”

John writes: “and I saw the woman being drunk with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the witnesses of Jesus.” ‘Ihsou= “to Jesus” (objective genitive) – i.e. witnessing about Jesus, could also be translated “of Jesus” (genitive of possession) – i.e. Jesus’ witnesses (Beale 1999:860). Beale is of the opinion that both these translations are valid. He writes, “… the genitive construction may be

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6 Refer to our comments in 19:9 where reference is made to John’s use of symbolism which may be applied in two ways.
intentionally vague so that both objective and possessive notions are included” (1999:860).

The verb mequ/ousan (present, active participle) suggests the prostitute’s continued state of being drunk with the blood of the saints and witnesses of Jesus Christ. Beale suggests that John is referring to two groups of believers, but he adds: “… the kai is best taken as explanatory (‘even’)” (1999:860). John is not referring here to two separate groups of people (i.e. saints and martyrs). Rather, the clause “the blood of witnesses/martyrs of Jesus” clarifies the preceding clause “the blood of the saints,” meaning that the saints are the ones who bear testimony to Jesus (Kistemaker 2001:467). The guilt of the prostitute is also exposed, which is evidenced by the use of the term “martyrs” (or “witnesses”) of the truth - pointing to the fact that she has not been ignorant of her evil doings, which stood as witness against her and what she stood for (Morris 1984:206).

The prostitute is said to be in a continuous state of drunkenness e)k tou= ai%mato$ tw=n a(gi/wn kai
tou= ai%mato$ tw=n martu/nwν ‘Ihsou= “with the blood of the saints and witnesses of Jesus.” It is surprising for her to be drunk with the blood of believers, instead of the contents of the cup she holds in her hand (v.4b). Beale suggests that the cup, “full of the abominable things and the filth of her adulteries” include figuratively also the saint’s blood (1999:860). We believe that this is highly unlikely, since the prostitute represents evil, with all evil emanating within and from her. This will imply that the cup is not meant for her consumption – for she ‘spews out’ evil, instead of taking evil in. Therefore, another possible explanation could be that since the prostitute represents all of evil; the cup and its contents are offered to the nations
to drink from (17:2; 18:3; 19:2). The nations, in their alliance with the prostitute, were intoxicated by her ‘wine.’ They actually carry out her evil will – which includes the shedding of the blood of believers (16:6 - “… for they [referring to the inhabitants of the earth] have shed the blood of your saints and prophets, and you have given them blood to drink as they deserve”).\(^8\) Therefore God blames her for the death of His people, for she is ultimately responsible (18:20b, 23d-24; 19:2).

John describes his feeling of qau=ma me/ga “great amazement” upon i)dwln “having seen” the prostitute. John is not interested or amazed at the beast on which the prostitute sits, for he had earlier described this beast (13:1-10). Morris notes that John’s response is ‘amazement’ and not ‘admiration’ which reinforces the verb i)dwln “having seen,” and stresses the greatness of John’s amazement (1984:207-8). Morris writes, “This may be because of the contrast between what he saw and what he expected” (1984:208). In other words, John was invited to witness the judgement of the prostitute; instead he sees her magnificently arrayed. John’s use of the active voice in the verb e)qau/masa (aorist, indicative, active, 1st person, singular), points to the fact that he is responsible for his state of “amazement.” This would mean that the commentators who argue that the purpose for John being carried into the desert (v.3a) was for his benefit - i.e. so that the prostitute would not seduce him (e.g. Morris 1984:205) cannot stand – for if this was the case, John would have instead used the passive voice if the prostitute were seducing him.

3.2.2. The Meaning of the prostitute and the beast (17:7-14)

\(^7\) See our argument in Chapter 5 (5.5.3.) for the identity of the martyrs.
\(^8\) See also, 18:23d “By your magic spell all the nations were led astray.”
The angel gives to John an explanation to clarify the significance of the symbolism of the prostitute and the beast.

17:7 Kai\ ei@pe/n moi o( a*ggelo$, Dia\ ti\ e)qau/masa$; e)gw\ e)rw= soi to\ musth/ rion th=)$ gunaiko$ kai\ tou= qhri/ou tou= basta/zonto$ au)th\n tou= e*xonto$ ta\$ e(pta\ kefalai$ kai\ ta\ de/ka ke/rata.

“and said to me the angel, Because why did you wonder? I will tell you the mystery of the woman, and of the beast the carrying her, the having the seven heads and the ten horns.”

O( a*ggelo$ “the angel” speaks for the first time, after carrying John into the desert (v. 3a). The angel ei@pe/n “said” to John: Dia\ ti\ e)qau/masa$, “Why were you amazed?”

Here again, as in the previous verse, John uses the same verb e)qau/mas$, this time coming from the angel (therefore the 2\nd person, singular is used) as a question. This is a rhetorical question that the angel asks - not for information, but to stress the effect - i.e. John needed to understand exactly who the woman and beast were, and what they represented – which the angel goes on to explain.

The angel says: e)gw\ e)rw= soi to\ musth/ rion th=)$ gunaiko$ kai\ tou= qhri/ou tou= basta/zonto$ au)th\n tou= e*xonto$ ta\$ e(pta\ kefalai$ kai\ ta\ de/ka ke/rata “I will tell you the mystery of the woman, and of the beast carrying her, the having the seven heads and the ten horns.” The angel’s explanation\⁹ is of the beast and the woman, but it is musth/ rion "mystery" (singular) - suggesting that one can not be understood apart from the other. The verb basta/zonto$ “carrying” (adjectival participle) modifies the noun tou= qhri/ou “the beast.” The clause would read thus (referring to the beast): “the one who is carrying” (present, active).
The rest of chapter 17 is primarily concerned with the angel’s interpretation of the beast; whilst 18:1-19:5 explains the judgement of the prostitute and the rejoicing that follows her destruction. Kistemaker provides the following comments on the positioning of the angel’s explanations: “We would have expected the angel to say something about the woman first and then discuss the beast. But the beast is more important than the woman, even if she sits on his back. Satan, alias the dragon, gave him his power, throne, and authority (12:9; 13:2)” (2001:469).

17:8 to qhri/on o% ei@de$ h@n kai\ ou)k e*stin kai\ me/llei a)nabai/nein e)k th=$ a)bu/ssou kai\ ei)$ a)pw/leian u(pa/gei, kai\ qaumasqh/sontai o( (katoikou=nte$ e)pi\ th=$ gh=$, wth ou) ge/graptai to\ o*noma e)pi\ to\ bibli/on th=$ zwh=$ a)po\ katabolh=$ ko/$mou, blepo/ntwn to\ qhri/on o%ti h@n kai\ ou)k e*stin kai\ pare/stai “the beast which you saw was, and not is, and is about to come up out of the abyss, and into destruction goes; and shall wonder the dwelling on the earth, of whom not are written the name in the book of the life from foundation of world, seeing the beast that was, and not is, and will be present.”

The angel starts to interpret who the beast is. to qhri/on o% ei@de$ h@n kai\ ou)k e*stin kai\ me/llei a)nabai/nein e)k th=$ a)bu/ssou kai\ ei)$ a)pw/leian u(pa/gei “The beast which you saw was, and is not, and is about to come up out of the abyss, and into destruction to go.” In discussing the identity of the beast, we have already interpreted it as ‘the great persecuting power that rules by brute force’ and is the supreme enemy of God (refer to comments on 17:3). The expression “who is, and who was, and who is to come” (1:4, 8; 4:8; also 11:17; 16:5) is applied to God and Christ, which covers past, present

* See chapter 5 (5.4.1.2) on the activity of angels as revealers and communicators of God’s message.
and future, and speaks of eternity (Kistemaker 2001:468-9). Beale suggests that the three-fold formula that refers to the beast is applied as a mockery (1999:864). The beast is described using three verbs (in fact four verbs, with the 3rd and 4th verbs joined together resulting in one action):

[1]. h@n “was” (imperfect, indicative, active). The imperfect gives the idea of a continuous or repeated action in past time. For the current context, the imperfect tells the reader that the beast had a continuous existence in the past.

[2]. ou)k e*stin “is not” (present, indicative, active). In Exodus 3:14, God reveals Himself as “I am” - meaning that God is without a beginning and without an end. The use of “is not,” relating to the beast, describes a creature with a beginning (as indicated by the word h@n, and whose end is eternal death. Satan, of whom the beast is a temporary manifestation on earth (cf. 20:3, 7), can never be “I am.” The term “is not” also points to the continuing effects of the beast’s defeat by Jesus Christ at the cross and resurrection (13:3), where ‘death’ is the equivalent negative expression to ‘is not’ (Beale 1999:864). If the beast is the opposite representation of Christ, then the parallel that is drawn from the term “is not” could refer to his physical absence from the earth, yet at the same time, his presence being evidenced in the prostitute. This can be compared to Jesus’ position as being seated at the right hand of the Father (Eph. 1:20), yet His work and teachings are evidenced through the Holy Spirit (Jn. 14:26).

[3]. me/llei “is about” (present, indicative, active). a)nabai/nein e)k “to come up out” (present, infinitive, active). These two verbs are combined, where me/llei is used with
the infinitive to express the future tense (Rienecker 1980:504). The home of Satan is the a)bu/ssou “abyss” or “bottomless pit,” which is the exact opposite of heaven (Kistemaker 2001:469). Mounce’s interpretation of the beast suggests a repeated ascending out of the abyss down through history to destroy the people of God, for he reads a)nabai/nein as present and does not apply the future as Rienecker does (Mounce 1998:314). If we follow Mounce’s argument, then the many interpreters that see in the beast an allusion to the “Nero redivivus” expectancy (e.g. Robertson 1933:431), which they say, was realized in Domitian and followed by various other “antichrists” down through the ages, could be applied. However, Beale suggests that both occurrences of the verb me/llei (11:7; 17:8) point to the future. He offers the following four arguments for a future event:

“(1) me/llei (‘is about’) precedes the infinitive in 17:8a, which places it in the future. (2) The infinitive occurs in the third part of the threefold formula, which is future in all the other occurrences (so 1:4, 8; 4:8; 11:17; 16:5, though in the last two the prophetic perfect is used). (3) Both 11:7 and 17:8 are allusions to Dan. 7:3, 17 … where an imperfect with prophetic present sense and a direct future are used. (4) 11:7 and 17:8 are parallel to 20:3, 7, where it is said that the dragon will rise from the ‘abyss’ at the end of history” (Beale 1999:865).

The beast will come out of the abyss, kai\ ei)$ a)pwleian u(pa/gei “and into destruction to go.” John’s use of u(pa/gei “to go,” although in the present tense, yet still with the future idea [following Beale’s argument no. (1) above].

oi( katoikou=n(e$t (present, active, participle) e)p$ $ gh$ “the inhabitants on the earth” responds to the sight of the beast – which is described by the verb qaumasqh/sontai (future, indicative, passive) “shall wonder” or “shall be amazed.” The verb qauma/zw has an idea of admiration in a worshipful sense, as is apparent from 13:3ff., where being amazed after the beast is developed in the following verses by words for worship of the beast (Beale 1999:866). Beale points out further that “the earth-
dwellers” or “inhabitants of the earth” are technical terms in the Apocalypse for the unbelieving and idolaters (e.g. 6:10; 13:8, 14; also 17:2) (Beale 1999:866).

These inhabitants are further described as those \( \text{\omega\eta\mu\eta\upsilon\omicron\upsilon\circ\rho\partial\tau\alpha\iota\eta\kappa\omicron\alpha\nu\tau\omicron\alpha\iota\eta\nu\upsilon\upsilon\omicron\omicron\} \) \( \text{\tau\omicron\omicron\omicron\omicron\alpha\iota\nu\delta\omicron\omicron\nu\upsilon\upsilon\nu\upsilon\upsilon\omicron\omicron\} \), \( \text{\omega\nu\kappa\omicron\alpha\nu\omicron\tau\omicron\omicron\upsilon\nu\upsilon\upsilon\omicron\omicron\} \) “whose name has not been written in the book of life from foundation of world.” The verb \( \text{\gamma\gamma\rho\alpha\tau\alpha\iota\nu\partial\nu\iota\nu} \) is (perfect, passive, indicative), with the perfect describing their present state (i.e. their names are excluded presently) resulting from a past action – which took place at creation. Mounce argues that John is not teaching a form of determinism for according to 3:5, names may be blotted out of the book of life. He is rather “… emphasizing the great distinction that exists between the followers of the Lamb and those who give their allegiance to the beast” (Mounce 1998:314).

The inhabitants of the earth marvel upon \( \text{\beta\le\rho\omicron\omicron\omicron\omicron\nu\tau\omicron\omicron\nu\upsilon\upsilon\omicron\omicron\} \) \( \text{\omicron\theta\iota\iota\omicron\nu\omicron\upsilon\upsilon\nu\upsilon\upsilon\omicron\omicron\} \) \( \text{\omega\kappa\iota\omicron\nu\omicron\upsilon\upsilon\upsilon\omicron\omicron\} \) “seeing the beast that was and is not, and will be present.” Beale suggests that the participle \( \text{\beta\le\rho\omicron\omicron\omicron\omicron\nu\tau\omicron\omicron\nu\upsilon\upsilon\omicron\omicron\} \) (present, active, participle) “seeing” could be adverbial, and modify “they marveled” (Beale 1999:867). This would mean that it would be a ‘genitive absolute’ – pointing to the cause for the marveling. On the other hand, Beale suggests that:

“… the participle could modify the preceding substantival participial phrase, “those dwelling on the earth,” though in this case \( \text{\beta\le\rho\omicron\omicron\omicron\omicron\nu\tau\omicron\omicron\nu\upsilon\upsilon\omicron\omicron\} \) should be nominative but is out of concord, being genitive. In that case, the genitive form may be accounted for by attraction to the case of \( \text{\omega\nu\kappa\iota\omicron\nu\omicron\upsilon\upsilon\upsilon\omicron\omicron\} \), the antecedent of which is the phrase “those dwelling on the earth” (Beale 1999:867).

It does not matter whether the participle is taken adverbially or substantival, the causal sense still remains in relation to the verb – i.e. they marveled because they saw the beast.
The three-fold description is again given to the beast. Instead of melλeι a)nabai/nein “is about to come up,” pare/stai “will be present” is used. Here again, a contrast is brought out between Christ and the beast, which is evidenced in the reference to Christ’s parousi/a (1 Cor. 15:23; 1 Thess. 2:19; 1 Jn. 2:28), and the beast’s pare/stai.

17:9a καὶ δὲ τὸν νοῦν τῆς γυναίκας, ἡ οἵτινες ἐπὶ τῷ στήθος αὐτῆς ἔχουσιν, ἐκ τῶν ἑπτακοσίων ἐδώκανεν. “Here the mind the having wisdom, The seven heads seven mountains are, where the woman sits on them.”

καὶ δὲ τὸν νοῦν τῆς γυναίκας “here the mind the having wisdom” resemble the words of 13:18 closely. The word νοῦν “mind” is used to call the believer to vigilance and a discerning spirit, for the temptation to follow the beast starts in the mind. The applying of wisdom is not from a study of history, politics and geography to clarify which king was in power, under what circumstances, and where he ruled (Kistemaker 2001:470). A theological understanding must be applied, for John’s depiction of reality is for all times – thus including all rulers.

The number επτά “seven” is featured throughout the Book of Revelation. To limit the use of the number ‘seven’ to referring to seven literal emperors of Ancient Rome is too restricted for it limits the scope of the vision to Europe, the Roman Empire, and its Caesars (Thomas 1995:295). Also, John is here interpreting the beast – and not the prostitute, for the seven hills are associated with the beast. (Please refer to our argument in Chapter 5 (5.5.3) against the interpretation of Rome as the prostitute with particular reference to the ‘seven hills’). Robertson writes: “In 13:1ff., it is the
beast that has the seven heads, while here the woman riding the beast has seven heads…” (1933:432). This is a wrong translation of o^pou h( gunh\ ka/qhtai e)p' au)tw=n “where the woman sits on them” – i.e. the heads are located on the beast, upon which the woman sits, and not upon the prostitute. In discussing the many possible uses of the number ‘seven’, Bromiley believes that it could represent a formal number in Revelation - to the extent that “it expresses divine fullness and totality” (Bromiley 1985:251). In other words, seven is the number of completeness (Mounce 1998:317).

As noted earlier, the prostitute represents the world’s godless system (evil), and the beast represents the great persecuting power of this world that rules by brute force and is the supreme enemy of God. Bromiley’s suggestion that the number also represents ‘totality’ is fitting here. In other words, the seven hills\textsuperscript{10} refers to ‘the total kingdoms of the world,’ and the seven kings (v.10) refers to all ‘the rulers of this world’ who rule those kingdoms and are lured by the prostitute (17:2; 18:3, 9; 19:2b), and are therefore now connected to the beast. [The prostitute’s ‘task’ is to get people connected to the beast, therefore they are situated on the beast (17:9-12). The opposite is true of the Holy Spirit, who brings people to Christ (Jn. 15:26; 16:13) and these people become the bride of Christ]\textsuperscript{11}.

\textbf{17:9b-10} kai\ basilei=$ epta/ ei)sin: oi( pe/n\te e*pesan, o( ei!$ e*stin, o( a*llo$ ou*pw h@lgen, kai\ o%tan e*lqh| o)li/gon au)to\n dei= mei=nai. “and kings seven there are: the five fell, the one is, the other not yet came, and when he shall have come, a little while he must to remain.”

\textsuperscript{10} Refer to Kistemaker’s argument that the mountains may symbolize political power (e.g. Isa. 2:2; Jer. 51:25; Dan. 2:35b) (2001:471).
kai\ basilei=$ e(pta/ ei)sin: “and kings seven there are.” This phrase gives a second meaning of the seven heads and tells what the seven mountains symbolize. The kings and kingdoms make up the beast's heads due to their alliance with the prostitute, and hence their fellowship with the beast is further ‘simplified’ to reveal who these nations are. This picture can be viewed as a direct contrast to Christ and His church. He is the Head of the church - His body (Eph. 5:23). The body of Christ is commanded to operate in unity (1 Cor. 12-14). The beast reverses this picture and operates as the body with many heads (i.e. all the ungodly kingdoms) obviously causing chaos, for each head (or kingdom) does what it feels is right. No unity exists amongst the ungodly kingdoms, for they operate individually (i.e. doing their own thing under the prostitute’s influence), yet serving the purpose of the beast.

“the five fell, and the one is, the other not yet came: and when he shall have come, a little while he must remain.” Many think that we should look to contemporary Rome as the illustration for these realities, which is most prominent in John’s mind. In this case the kings are the Roman emperors. Morris comments on this interpretation:

“Most agree that we should start with Augustus, not Julius Caesar. The five are then Augustus, Tiberius, Caligula, Claudius and Nero. The identification of the sixth depends on whether we accept Galba, Otho and Vitellius as emperors. (On the death of Nero, Galba assumed power... but he was murdered on 15 January 69. Otho, who followed, was never unopposed and he committed suicide on 17 April. Vitellius followed, but Vespasian declared war against him on 1 July and he was killed on or about December. Thus none of the three was ever able really to establish himself. But each bore the title ‘emperor’). If so, he will be Galba. If not, he will be Vespasian, and Titus will be the seventh who is to have a short reign. Most accept the latter view, though without making it clear how John and his readers would agree on eliminating Galba, Otho and Vitellius” (Morris 1984:210).

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11 Refer to our argument earlier for the reversal of the Trinity by Satan (i.e. the Satanic triumvirate).
12 Refer to comments for the current phrase above (v. 9a).
Thomas argues that the alignment of emperors “… contradicts either possible dating of the Apocalypse, and simply does not satisfy the data of the text” (Thomas 1995:298). Therefore, to interpret the seven heads as Roman emperors results in many difficulties. Another possible solution to the interpretation of the “seven kings” is put forward by Thomas when he adds:

“The remaining solution sees the five which have fallen as five forms of Gentile world power which had already existed by the time John wrote this book: Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Persia, and Greece. The “one which is” is the Roman empire which was in power at the time of writing…. The “one which has not yet come” will be the future kingdom of the beast. The five kingdoms of the past are the ones who have persecuted God’s people (Egypt, Ezek. 29-30; Nineveh or Assyria, Nah. 3:1-19; Babylon, Isa. 21:9 and Jer. 50-51; Persia, Dan. 10:13 and 11:2; Greece, Dan. 11:3-4). The persecutor of God’s people during John’s lifetime was Rome. Adding to the case for identifying these as kingdoms is the appropriateness of the verb ε*pesan (epesan) to speak of a kingdom’s fall (e.g. Rev. 14:8; 18:2). So the angel’s clarifying word to John about the seven heads spans essentially the entire history of Gentile world powers” (Thomas 1995:298).

Thomas understands that the seventh king refers to the future kingdom of the beast (Thomas 1995:297). Mounce argues that Thomas’ interpretation of the Greek word basileu/$ is incorrect, for everywhere in the New Testament, it is translated “king,” and not “kingdom” (Mounce 1998:317). However, Mounce fails to take into account that before interpreting the seven heads as “seven kings” (v.10), the angel first interprets them as “seven hills” (v. 9b) - which could represent kingdoms in which the kings are ruling. However, the problem with Thomas’ interpretation is that it creates a two-thousand-year gap already, before the future seventh kingdom actually manifests itself, which leaves unanswered questions. Mounce believes that the most satisfactory solution in explaining the seven kings is that the number seven must be interpreted as symbolic. He interprets the symbolism of the seven kings to represent the “… power of the Roman Empire as a historic whole” (Mounce 1998:317). We
agree with Mounce on the symbolism aspect, but reject his actual interpretation of the seven kings for his is far too narrow an interpretation. As already argued above, we believe that the seven kings represent rulers of all time, and the ‘five fallen, one is, one will come’ symbolizes the nearness of the end by the employment of the commonly accepted use of a numerical scheme, instead of a careful tabulation of the past. This view does not leave John’s intended readers out, for this message was for them as for all subsequent readers also.

The future leader’s reign will be short according to ωτάν ἐληλύθῃ ὁ λόγος τοῦ θεοῦ ἐτελέσει· ὁ ἐκ τῶν ἑπτά εἶναι καὶ εἰσελθεῖν ἐκ τοῦ κόσμου· “when he shall have come, a little while he must to remain.” The verb ἐληλύθῃ “he shall have come” is subjunctive, aorist, active with the uncertainty or the element of indefiniteness that the meaning carries by the use of the subjunctive “whenever he comes.”

17:11 καὶ τὸ θηρίον ὃν καὶ οὐκ εἶστιν καὶ αὐτὸς ὁγδοῦς εἶστιν καὶ εἰσελθεῖν. “And the beast which was, and not is, also he an eighth king is, and of the seven is, and into destruction goes.”

This verse further develops the beast’s identity – but it seems more like a riddle. The identity of the beast gets even more difficult as the angel continues to offer an explanation about him. The formula ὃν καὶ οὐκ εἰστὶν καὶ αὐτὸς ὁγδοῦς εἰστὶν “which was, and is not and also is an eighth” is re-stated here (found twice in 17:8). The words ὁγδοῦς εἰστὶν “is an eighth” is added here. If the seven kings were specific Roman emperors, then the most likely candidate for number eight would be Domitian.
This would mean that the beast is the emperor who reigns during the time that John receives his vision. However, the text supplies three references for the beast’s absence [i.e. he “is not” (17:8a, 8b, 11)], who, as well, has not ascended from the Abyss. Once again the interpretation of Roman kings is ruled out.

The beast is an eighth king in the sense that he is distinct from the other seven (i.e. all the evil rulers of the earth). Mounce describes this eighth king as: “He is Antichrist, not simply another Roman emperor. He is not a human ruler through whom the power of evil finds expression – he is that evil power itself. He belongs to the cosmic struggle between God and Satan that lies behind the scenes of human history” (Mounce 1998:318). Yet he is “of the seven” e)k tw=n e(pta/ (genitive of relationship) (Beale 1999:876) - [and not “one of the seven”] - referring to his ungodly role, which is similar to the rulers of the earth. This picture presents a contrast between the beast’s pseudo-incarnation (i.e. he is ‘of’ the seven pointing to his relationship with man to entice him); and the incarnation of Christ (i.e. Christ was fully God and fully man). Also, chaos prevails in the imagery of the heads of the beast, which contrasts firstly, Christ’s incarnation (i.e. He was fully God and fully man), and secondly, the perfect picture of Christ as the head of His body – the church. Pereira reminds the reader that: “… when Christ is referred to as the head (Eph. 4:4), it does not speak organically but means that he is exalted Lord, superior owner and pre-eminent over all things in the church. Christ is not a part of the body, but he is the body. As Adam is the head of humanity, so Christ is the head of the Church. The people of God finds its unity in the body of Christ” (Pereira 1997:28). We find here that the beast creates a rival chaotic system against Christ, by ‘sharing’ his headship over evil with the
rulers and kingdoms of the earth. The beast’s final, eternal destination: ei)$ a)pwe$ian u(pa/gei “goes into destruction” (as in verse 8).

17:12. kai\ tα\ de/ka ke/rata a% ei@de$ de/ka basilei=$ ei)sin, oι%tine$ basilei/an ou*pw e*labon, a)llα\ e)cousi/an w($ basilei=)$ mil/an w%ran lamba/nousin meta\ tou= qhri/ou “and the ten horns which you saw ten kings are, which a kingdom not yet received, but authority as kings one hour receive with the beast.”

This vision, similar to Daniel’s (Dan.7), discusses the de/ka ke/rata “ten horns” which John previously (in v.3b) ei@de$ “saw” (aorist, indicative, active), are interpreted by the angel as “ten kings.” In 5:6, the Lamb has “seven horns” – which is figuratively used to communicate His fullness of power. Kistemaker notes that “the number ten is a figurative number that, in the Apocalypse, always relates to Satan, his servants, and his activities.” (e.g. 2:10; 12:3; 13:1; 17:3, 7, 12, 16) (Kistemaker 2001:474). Beale understands the number “ten” to be symbolic, highlighting the “multiplicity of sovereignties in confederacy that enhance the power of the beast” (Beale 1999:878). Mounce, quoting Beckwith, describes the ten kings as “… purely eschatological figures representing the totality of the powers of all nations on the earth which are to be made subservient to Antichrist” (Mounce 1998:319).

These ten kings are described as kings who have “… not yet received a kingdom” basilei/an ou*pw e*labon. The verb e*labon “received” which is (aorist, indicative, active), points to action of the verb as simply happening (i.e. the kings have not received their kingdoms) without any regard to its continuance. The next phrase a)llα\ e)cousi/an w($)
basilei=$ mi/an w%ran lamba/nousin “… but authority as kings one hour receive” (describes the kings' future state) expands on the previous phrase (which described their past state). Beale describes the verb lamba/nousin “receive” as (present, indicative, active), but with a “futuristic present” use (Beale 1999:879). The ten kings will receive e)cousi/an “authority.” Kistemaker argues from Rom.13:1 that this authority is not from the beast – but is from God (see chapter 5 (5.5.1.) for our discussion on God’s Sovereignty) (Kistemaker 2001:474). The authority is for mi/an w%ran “one hour” with the beast - pointing to the briefness of the period of their reign, since the w%ra was “the shortest period of time known to the ancients” (Beale 1999:879). Thomas notes that this phrase is “an adverbial accusative of time” – pointing to the shortness of the period. He seems to associate the “one hour” only to the “ten horns” which is incorrect (Thomas 1995:301). We agree with Morris' argument that this phrase highlights the similarity between the beast’s shortness of reign and the ten king’s shortness of reign and also their dependability on each other (Morris 1984:212).

Since the ten horns and seventh head are future, the horns must be situated on the seventh head, as opposed to being distributed over all seven heads.

17:13. ou!toi mi/an gnw/mhn e*xousin kai\ th\n du/hamin kai\ e)cousi/an au)tw=n tw=| qhri/w| dido/asin.
“these one mind have, and the power and the authority of their to the beast they give.”

The demonstrative pronoun ou!toi “these” refers to the “ten kings.” They mi/an gnw/mhn e*xousin “have one mind.” The verb e*xousin “have” is present, indicative, active – describes their continuous state of having mi/an gnw/mhn “one mind.” This one-
mindedness leads them to th\n du/namin kai\ e)cousi/an au)tw=n tw=m qhri/w\ dido/asin “give their power and authority to the beast.” The verb dido/asin “give” is present, indicative, active, pointing to their on-going allegiance to the beast. They are “willing collaborators, not men forced into an unwelcome association” (Morris 1984:212). The beast controls all of life, including: “… government, politics, law enforcement, communication, industry, business, education, legal and medical service, labor, art, sports, and entertainment” (Kistemaker 2001:475).

17:14. ou!toi meta\ tou= a)rmi/ou polemh/sousin kai\ to\ a)rmi/on nikh/sei au)tou/$, o%ti ku/rio$ kuri/wn e)st\n kai\ basileu/$ basile/wn kai\ oi( met` au)tou= klhtoi\ kai\ e)klektoi\ kai\ pistoi/ “these with the Lamb war will wage, and the Lamb will overcome them; because Lord of lords he is and King of kings; and the with him, called, and chosen, and faithful.”

The demonstrative pronoun ou!toi “these,” referring to the “ten kings,” is used again (cf. v.13). The verb polemh/sousin “will wage war” is future, indicative active. Their enemy is tou= a)rmi/ou “the Lamb.” The alliance of the ten kings is ultimately anti-God in character, which is expressed in their animosity against the Lamb (Thomas 1995:302).

The Victor in the battle will be the Lamb, for He nikh/sei “will overcome,” or “conquer” (future, indicative, active) au)tou$/" them.” The conjunction o%ti “because” prepares the reader for a reason for the preceding clause. That reason is due to the fact that the Lamb e)st\n “is” (present, indicative, active) ku/rio$ kuri/wn … kai\ basileu/$ basile/wn “Lord of lords … and King of kings” (cf. Dan. 4:37). Kistemaker notes that the qualifiers “of
lords… of kings” serve to express the superlative idea (2001:476). In Daniel 4:37, the title is used of God as the One who has “demonstrated his true divine sovereignty and has revealed Nebuchadnezzar as an empty parody of the name by judging the beastly king of ‘Babylon the Great’” (Beale 1999:881). Now the title is applied to the Lamb, demonstrating His deity by “judging the beast that carries ‘Babylon the Great’” (Beale 1999:881). The title Lord of lords signifies the Lamb’s “majesty and power,” whilst the title King of kings denotes His “sovereignty and authority” (Kistemaker 2001:476). Kistemaker provides a further reminder that every ruler, all nations, and all people are subject to him; and anyone belonging to either the angelic world or humanity who determines to fight him faces a losing battle and utter ruin, for He is, and always will be the Victor (Kistemaker 2001:476). The Lamb is the answer to the question of the boasting worshippers of the beast in 13:4 “Who can make war against him?”

With the Lamb are the believers, who are described with the adjectives: klhto\(\iota\) “called,” e\(\iota\)klekt\(\iota\) “chosen” and pisto\(\iota\) “faithful.” The preposition met\(\iota\) “with” describes the Lamb’s choosing of the believer (i.e. they are referred to as the “called” and “elect”); and also the believer’s choice of following the Lamb (i.e. they are called “faithful” – referring to the fulfillment of the human response by the believer). This two-way choosing points to the fact that salvation involves God’s choice of the believer and at the same time the believer’s choice of God. The genitive, personal pronoun au\(\iota\)tou\(\iota\) “of him” conveys the idea that the believer belongs to the Lamb. The genitive falls away, to make sensible reading in the English language [meta + genitive = “with”] (Wenham 1965:64-66). Morris describes the believers as: “His retinue, not His resources. They
represent no independent source of aid, for He needs none. Indeed, the very qualities named show that they depend on Him” (Morris 1984:212).

3.2.3. The Fall of the Prostitute (17:15-18)

Verses 15-17, which portrays the destruction of the prostitute by her own allies, runs parallel with 19:19-21. Chapter 19:20 portrays the beast and the false prophet (with the false prophet actually being the prostitute) being captured and destroyed. Chapter 17:16 describes the two members of the Satanic triumvirate turning upon themselves – i.e. the beast and the false prophet/prostitute.

17:15. καὶ λέγει μοι, Τὰ υπόδειγμά τινά εἶδες οὐ! ἡ ποτηρία καθαίρεται, λαοί καὶ οἶκοι εἰσίν καὶ ἐθνοί καὶ γλώσσαι.

“And he says to me, “The waters which you saw, where the prostitute sits, peoples and multitudes are, and nations and tongues.”

The verb λέγει “he says” (present, indicative, active) refers to the angel who speaks to John, this time explaining the symbolism of the waters on which the prostitute sat (17:1). The angel reminds John of the waters he εἶδε “saw” (aorist, indicative, active) earlier. οὐ! “where,” is a relative adverb (Robertson 1933:434), referring to the waters on which the prostitute καθαίρεται “sits” (present, middle, indicative). The waters are described as λαοί καὶ οἶκοι “peoples and multitudes” and ἐθνοί καὶ γλώσσαι “nations and tongues.” This four-fold grouping of the nouns, stress the universality of the prostitute’s influence (also 13:1, 7b) (Mounce 1998:320).
17:16. Kai\ ta\ de\ka ke\rata a% ei@de$ ka\i to\ qhri/on ou!toi mish/sousin th\n po/rhn\n ka\i h)rhwmwe/nhn  poih/sousin au)th\n ka\i gumnh\n ka\i ta$l sa/rka$ au)th=$ fa/gontai ka\i au)th\n kataka\sousin e)n puri/… and the ten horns which you saw and the beast, these shall hate the prostitute, and having been desolated shall make her and naked, and the flesh her shall eat, and her shall burn with fire.”

The ten horns and the beast which John ei@de$ “saw” (aorist, indicative, active) previously, now turn against their ally, the po/rhn “prostitute.” Mounce sees Ezekiel’s allegory of Oholibah (Ezek. 23:11-35) being borrowed here. Oholibah doted on the Assyrians (Ezek. 23:12), was defiled by the Babylonians (Ezek. 23:17), and played the prostitute in the land of Egypt (Ezek. 23:19). The five verbs used in Rev. 17:16, corresponds with Oholibah’s punishment: [“they will deal with you in hatred” (Ezek. 23:29); “will strip you of your clothes and take your fine jewelry” (Ezek. 23:26); “leave you naked and bare” (Ezek. 23:29); “cut off your noses and your ears (Ezek. 23:25); “those of you who are left will be consumed by fire” (Ezek. 23:25)] (Mounce 1998:320). ou!toi “these” is “resumptive demonstrative pronoun” (Robertson 1933:434), referring to the ten horns and the beast.

The following five verbs speak about the prostitute’s slow destruction in stages as each verb builds on the previous:

1. The first verb mish/sousin “shall hate” is (future, indicative, active). Previously, the inhabitants of the earth were indulging themselves with the prostitute, and what she had to offer. Now, she becomes the object of hatred to those she formally controlled. The angel does not give the immediate cause of the hatred. A possible
interpretation could be that the earth’s inhabitants love evil so much that they over-indulge, causing them to want more and more, thus becoming frustrated at evil to the point of hatred. The beast, also, in his frustration to gain control over the inhabitants of the earth (due to the fact that the Lamb is “King of kings and Lord of lords,” offers the prostitute to them in one final attempt to keep them in his control.\textsuperscript{13}

2. The prostitute is described as \textit{h}ἡμμωμένη “having been desolate” (perfect, passive, accusative, participle) (Robertson 1933:435). The perfect tense speaks about the prostitute’s present state of desolation resulting from a past action. The passive voice points to the “beast and the ten horns” (οὗτοι “these”- nominative) as the subjects that are responsible for action. This could be a reference to the plundering of the prostitute – i.e. the inhabitants of the earth will over-indulge in evil, which is stage 2 towards her destruction.

3. They poίησουσιν “shall make” (future, indicative, active) her γυμνή “naked” (predicate adjective), symbolizing the exposing of her corruption of the earth to public view, in their insatiable appetites when indulging in her which is stage 3 towards her destruction.

4. They faγονται “shall eat” (future, indicative, middle) her flesh. In their hunger for more of the prostitute, the inhabitants of the earth will slowly destroy her. This 4\textsuperscript{th} stage towards her destruction, is the climaxing point of the prostitute’s seduction, when the inhabitants of the earth swallow anything the prostitute has to offer.

\textsuperscript{13} See verse 11 for the beast’s relationship with the inhabitants of the earth by becoming like them - referring to his ungodly role, which is similar to the rulers of the earth.
5. They katakalousin “shall burn” (future, indicative, active) her with fire. This leads to a point where the partakers, due to their over-indulgence of evil, will gradually begin to destroy themselves on earth, thus eventually wiping out evil – the final stage (as symbolically portrayed in 19:17-21).

A contrast is drawn between the followers of the Lamb (v.14) who are the “called,” “faithful” and “chosen” and are with the Lamb; as opposed to the inhabitants of the earth who followed the prostitute, resulting in their destruction. The coalition of the ten horns and the beast form in an attempt to destroy the Lamb and His followers, and in so doing they destroy the prostitute (representing the seductive, alluring nature of evil), who is the one that lures them into partaking of herself. The self-destruction of evil takes place.

17:17. o( ga\l r qeo\$ e*dwken ei)$ ta$ kardi/a$ au)tw=n poih=sai th\n gnw/mhn au)tou= kai\ poih=sai mi/an gnw/mhn kai\ dou=nai th\n basilei/an au)tw=n tw|= qhri/w| a*xri telesqh/sontai oi( lo/goi tou= qeou=. “… for God has put to the hearts their to do the purpose his, and to do one purpose, and to give the kingdom their to the beast, until will be completed the words of God.”

The actions described in the preceding verse, is a fulfillment of 17:1 (i.e. it is God’s judgement). The noun qeο\$ “God” is in the nominative, pointing to Him as the one doing the action of the verb e*dwken “has put” (aorist, indicative, active). Beale understands the sense of the past tense in the verb to be equivalent to that of a Hebrew prophetic perfect, emphasizing the certainty of the future fulfillment (Beale
1999:887). For Thomas, the aorist is proleptic (*or anticipatory*), adopting a perspective after the predicted events take place (Thomas 1995:305). The destination of God’s working is in the kardía “hearts.” In Hebrew and Greek, the heart kardía is the seat of the mind and will (Thomas 1995:305). God’s working is in the hearts of the ten horns poíh=sai “to do” (aorist, infinitive, active) gnw/mhn au)του= “His purpose.”  

14 Robertson explains that the infinitive is epexegetic - to define what it is that God has put into the hearts of the ten horns and beast (Robertson 1933:435).

The immediate cause of the devastating friction among former allies is unknown, but the ultimate cause is known (Thomas 1995:305). We conclude from the preceding discussion of the five verbs that the immediate cause that Thomas speaks about can be known; yet at the same time admitting that this is by God’s design.

God’s purpose is also mi/an gnw/mn “one purpose.” Included in God’s Sovereign will is the ten horn’s decision déo=nai thn basileía/twn au)tw=|= qhrí/w “to give (aorist, infinitive, active) their kingdom to the beast.” The conjunction a*ξρι “until” combined with the next clause telesqh/sontai oi(lo/goi tou=qeou= “the words of God will be completed (or fulfilled or accomplished) provides a temporal clause about the future (Robertson 1933:435). The verb telesqh/sontai “will be completed / fulfilled / accomplished” is future, indicative, passive. oi(lo/goi “the words” belong to God, for they are the words tou=qeou= “of God” (genitive). God’s words points not merely to the overthrow of the prostitute, but refers to all the prophecies of the last events. God’s sovereign design will be accomplished. His Word will be fulfilled!

14 The personal pronoun is referring to God and not the beast, for qhrí/on is too far removed in the context to be the antecedent (Thomas 1995:305). Beale argues that this must be viewed as “divine causation,” rather than
The angel gives the meaning of the last symbol in this chapter to John. The verb ei@de$ from the phrase kai\ h( gunh\ h%n ei@de$ “and the woman whom you saw,” is aorist, indicative, active, with the aorist tense pointing to John’s previous vision of the prostitute (i.e. 17:3b-6). She is now described as h( po/li$ h( mega/lh “the great city.” Further, she is said to be e*xousa basilei/an e)pi\ tw=n basile/wn th=$ gh=$ “having (present, active, participle) kingship over the kings of the earth.” Through different stages in history, great cities dominated. In Daniel’s time this was Babylon. During John’s time, it was Rome. During the Middle Ages, the Roman Catholic Church. Yet, none of these ever had dominion over all the kings and kingdoms of the earth. This again points to the fact that a literal kingdom cannot be the interpretation, but this refers to the entire anti-God system that was birthed at the Fall, and which will continue until its downfall.

3.2.4. The Fall of Babylon Announced (18:1-8):

The prostitute’s destruction in 17:16 is now expanded into a full-fledged vision. The overarching theme in this section is the judgement of the prostitute for its economic seduction.
The verse begins with the phrase *Meta\ tau=ta* “after these things” which occurs ten times in the Book of Revelation. Some commentators\(^{15}\) see, in here, an introduction to another Babylon, creating a distinction between Babylon in chapters 17 and 18.\(^{16}\) The presence of *meta\ tau=ta* does not always present a chronological sequence, for it simply seems to be indicating the time sequence in which the visions were revealed to John. Dyer argues that in six instances (cf. 4:1a; 7:1; 7:9; 15:5; 18:1; 19:1) of the ten uses of *meta\ tau=ta*, which he calls the “temporal use,” John includes a verb of perception (e.g. “I saw,” “I heard”) (Dyer 1987:306-7). This inclusion indicates that “… the time sequence was in his observation of the visions and not necessarily in the unfolding of future events” (Dyer 1987:306). The opposite is also true, when John wanted to portray events as chronological (four occurrences: cf. 1:19; 4:1b; 9:12; 20:3), he did not include a verb of perception.

The following table, presented by Dyer, reiterates the argument for a single Babylon, as recorded in her destruction (Dyer 1987:308):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Object of destruction</th>
<th>Chapter 17</th>
<th>Chapter 18</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“Babylon the great … the great city” (17:5, 18)</td>
<td>“the great city, Babylon” (18:10)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instrument of destruction</td>
<td>“the ten horns which you saw, and the beast” (17:16)</td>
<td>(not given)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Means of destruction</td>
<td>“will burn her up with fire” (17:16)</td>
<td>“she will be burned up with fire” (18:8)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


\(^{16}\) Refer to Dyer (1987:305-316) for a comprehensive argument against this interpretation - which he shows to be lacking.
Thomas points out some differences in the text, which we understand, points to the angels’ focussing on different aspects of Babylon’s judgement, instead of pointing to two separate Babylons (Thomas 1995:313-4).

Meta\ tau=ta ei@don a*llon a*ggelon= “After these things I saw another angel,” with the verb ei@don “I saw” (aorist, indicative, active), referring to John as the one who sees a*llon “another” (adjective) a*ggelon “angel.” This is not the same angel as in 17:1. The angel is described as katabai/nonta e)k tou= ou)ranou “descending (present, active, participle) out of the heaven.” He is further described as e*xonta e)cousi/an mega/lhn “having (present, active, participle) great authority.” The next phrase, describing the angel: kai\ h( gh= e)fwti/sqh e)k th=$ do/ch$ au) tou “and the earth was enlightened (first aorist, indicative, passive) with his glory,” with the verb e)fwti/sqh “was enlightened” used in a causative sense (Robertson 1933:436). Beale understands this to be a Christophany (i.e. the angel is Christ) (Beale 1999:892). He argues that in the Apocalypse, every ascription of glory to a heavenly figure, refers either to God or Christ (e.g. 1:6; 4:9, 11; 5:12-13; 7:12; 11:13; 14:7; 15:8; 16:9; 19:1; 21:11, 23). However, he concludes that it still can be possible that the figure in 18:1 is a mere angel reflecting the divine glory (Beale 1999:893). Thomas, quoting Swete, writes: “… having come so recently from the heavenly presence, he reflects a broad belt of light over a darkened earth” (Thomas 1995:315). Mounce also sees a similar picture represented on Moses’ face after his being in the presence of God (Ex. 34:29-35) (Mounce 1998:325). We conclude that this cannot be a Christophany for when John makes a reference to...
Christ, he makes sure that the reader understands whom he is referring to (1:12-18; 5:6; 19:11-16; etc.) - he would not refer to Christ as just “another angel.”

18:2-3 καὶ ἐκραζέων εὐθείαν φωνῆς ἔπεσεν Ἐπεσεν Ἐπεσεν Βαβυλὼν μεγάλη καὶ γέγενεν κατοικθήριον δαιμόνων καὶ φυλάχτηρι πάντων πνευμάτων αὕτης καὶ φυλάχτηρι πάντων οἰνομαχείον αὕτης καὶ φυλάχτηρι πάντων ἔρημον αὕτης καὶ φυλάχτηρι πάντων πτηνοῦ αὕτης καὶ φυλάχτηρι πάντων ζῴου αὕτης καὶ φυλάχτηρι πάντων ξυλεῖαν αὕτης καὶ φυλάχτηρι πάντων κριτικοῦ αὕτης καὶ φυλάχτηρι πάντων πραγμάτων αὕτης καὶ φυλάχτηρι πάντων καταργόν αὕτης καὶ φυλάχτηρι πάντων πλούτων αὕτης καὶ φυλάχτηρι πάντων ξυλεῖαν αὕτης καὶ φυλάχτηρι πάντων πραγμάτων αὕτης καὶ φυλάχτηρι πάντων καταργόν αὕτης καὶ φυλάχτηρι πάντων πλούτων αὕτης καὶ φυλάχτηρι πάντων καταργόν αὕτης καὶ φυλάχτηρι πάντων πλούτων αὕτης καὶ φυλάχτηρι πάντων καταργόν αὕτης καὶ φυλάχτηρι πάντων πλούτων αὕτης καὶ φυλάχτηρι πάντων καταργόν αὕτης καὶ φυλάχτηρι πάντων πλούτων αὕτης καὶ φυλάχτηρι πάντων καταργόν αὕτης καὶ φυλάχτηρι πάντων πλούτων αὕτης καὶ φυλάχτηρι πάντων καταργόν αὕτης καὶ φυλάχτηρι πάντων πλούτων αὕτης καὶ φυλάχτηρι πάντων καταργόν αὕτης καὶ φυλάχτηρι πάντων πλούτων αὕτης καὶ φυλάχτηρι πάντων καταργόν αὕτης καὶ φυλάχτηρι πάντων πλούτων αὕτης καὶ φυλάχτηρι πάντων καταργόν αὕτης καὶ φυλάχτηρι πάντων πλούτων αὕτης καὶ φυλάχτηρι πάντων καταργόν αὕτης καὶ φυλάχτηρι πάντων πλούτων αὕτης καὶ φυλάχτηρι πάντων καταργόν αὕτης καὶ φυλάχτηρι πάντων πλούτων αὕτης καὶ φυλάχτηρι πάντων καταργόν αὕτης καὶ φυλάχτηρι πάντων πλούτων αὕτης καὶ φυλάχτηρι πάντων καταργόν αἵτως καὶ φυλάχτηρι πάντων πλούτων αὕτης καὶ φυλάχτηρι πάντων καταργόν αὕτης καὶ φυλάχτηρι πάντων πλούτων αὕτης καὶ φυλάχτηρι πάντων καταργόν αὕτης καὶ φυλάχτηρι πάντων πλούτων αὕτης καὶ φυλάχτηρι πάντων καταργόν αὕτης καὶ φυλάχτηρι πάντων πλούτων αὕτης καὶ φυλάχτηρι πάντων καταργόν αὕτης καὶ φυλάχτηρι πάντων πλούτων αὕτης καὶ φυλάχτηρι πάντων καταργόν αὕτης καὶ φυλάχτηρι πάντων πλούτων αὕτης καὶ φυλάχτηρι πάντων καταργόν αὕτης καὶ φυλάχτηρι πάντων πλούτων αὕτης καὶ φυλάχτηρι πάντων καταργόν αὕτης καὶ φυλάχτηρι πάντων πλούτων αὕτης καὶ φυλάχτηρι πάντων καταργόν α下面是小部分的文本，由于长度限制，我将提供整个段落的自然语言文本。

After describing the angel, John gives the message. The verb ἐκραζέων “he cried” (aorist, indicative, active) εὐθείαν φωνῆς “in a strong (adjective) voice” refers to the second angel (18:1). The angel’s crying out in a strong voice highlights the authority of the announcement of Babylon’s fall (Beale 1999:893). The next verb λέγων “saying” is a present, active participle. The angel’s message is: Ἐπεσεν Ἐπεσεν Βαβυλὼν μεγάλη “Fallen, fallen (aorist, indicative, active) [is] Babylon the great” (Isa. 21:9; Rev. 14:8). Mounce suggests that the Greek word ἔπεσεν is a proleptic or futuristic aorist

17 The NIV omits this phrase. Beale suggests that some mss omit phrases in this verse because a scribe’s eye inadvertently skipped from one phrase to the next phrase beginning with the same words. He suggests that there is good external support for the last omission, but the phrase should still be considered original since the same scribal error is likely here, though it occurred at an earlier stage of transmission (1999:895).
and explains that the aorist tense denotes the certainty of future fulfillment and is the prophetic way of declaring that the great purpose of God is triumphing over evil (Mounce 1998:325).

Babylon is described in the following phrases as katoikthi/rion daimoni/wn “a habitation of demons,” fulakh\ pantol\ pneu/mato$ a)kaqa/rtou “a prison of every unclean spirit,” fulakh\ pantol\ o)rne/ou a)kaqa/rtou “a prison of every unclean bird,” and fulakh\ pantol\ qhri/ou a)kaqa/rtou “a prison of every unclean beast.” According to Kistemaker, these phrases suggest that the world is “… completely devoid of God and His Word” (Kistemaker 2001:487). The verb memishme/nou “having been detested” is perfect, passive, participle, with the perfect tense implying a present state resulting from a past action (i.e. the beast is continuously unclean and detestable).

The verb e)ge/neto “became” (aorist, indicative, middle) with the aorist tense describing a past action, and the middle voice pointing to the action conducted on oneself (i.e. Babylon has become all of the phrases mentioned above, by her own doing) (Wenham 1965:92-3).

The conjunction ο%τι “because” points to the cause of the hatred – which is tou= oi*nou tou= qumou= th= pe/pwkan pa/nta ta\ e*qnh “all the nations have drunk (perfect, indicative, active) the wine of the wrath (genitive of cause, purpose or result) of her sexual immorality.” We find here the perfect tense representing a present state of being drunk (or continuing results from being drunk) stemming from a past action. Also, Beale suggests that qumo/$ has an adjectival function modifying pornei/a: ‘the wine of her passionate immorality’ and that th= pornei/a$ could modify tou= qumou= as
an adjectival genitive: "wine of immoral [or impure, licentious] passion" (Beale 1999:755). The entire expression blends two distinct ideas: firstly, the wine which the prostitute gives to intoxicate and seduce to adultery. This also points to the fact that the cup that the prostitute holds in 17:4b is for the nations and not for herself. Secondly, the cup of God’s wrath, which He gives to drink to those to whom He will punish (Beckwith 1919:656). Partaking from the cup of the prostitute results in drinking from the cup of God’s wrath.

The next phrase discusses the “leaders” of the nations mentioned in the preceding verse, and their involvement with the prostitute (also in 17:2): kai oi( basilei=$ th=$ gh=$ met’ au)th=$ e)po/meusan “and the kings of the earth did commit adultery with her.” The verb e)po/meusan "did commit adultery" (aorist, indicative, active) describes the kings’ of the earth relationship with the prostitute (as in 17:2).

The prostitute’s influence is also extended to the oi( e*mporoi “merchants” th=$ gh=$ “of the earth,” who e)plou/thsan “were enriched” (aorist, indicative, active) e)k th=$ duna/meu$ tou= strh/nou$ au)th=$ “from the power of her luxury.” The word e*mporoi comes from combining e)n ‘in’ and po/ro$ ‘journey.’ A merchant is one on a journey to conduct business. The words th=$ gh=$ with the last two groupings denotes the mass of mankind as it does so often in this book (Thomas 1995:318-9). tou= strh/nou$ “of the luxury” could be a descriptive genitive meaning: “luxurious power,” but is more likely to be a genitive of source meaning: “power arising from luxury” (Beale 1999:896).
and I heard another voice out of the heaven, saying, Come you the people my out of her, that not you may have fellowship in the sins of her, and of the plagues of her that not you may receive.

kaι h*κουσα “and I heard” (aorist, indicative, active, 1st person, singular) refers to John. John hears a*λλην ων έκ του ουρανου “another voice out of the heaven.” Beale argues that this anonymous voice could be identified with God or Christ (“my people”), or with an angel representing God (Beale 1999:898). Thomas believes that the voice has to be an angel speaking for God, due to the first person pronoun mou (v. 4), and the third person reference to ο( Θεο$ in verse 5 (Thomas 1995:320).

The voice was λε/γουσα “saying” (present, active, participle). The present participle denotes an action that takes place the same time as the action of the main verb (Wenham 1965:152). The voice was saying: εκλαλείς ο( λαο/$ μου ε)κ αυθ=$ “Come out (aorist, active, imperative) of her, my people.” The aorist imperative is used to denote a command simply to do an action without regard to its continuance or frequency (Wenham 1965:98). Thomas writes: “The vocative ο( λαο/$ … with the personal pronoun mou … indicates that the first part of the statement (vv. 4-5) addresses the faithful” (Thomas 1995:320). So, this is a command to believers which expresses an urgency – i.e. to be completely separated from evil. The reason for the separation is: ι%να μη συγκοινωνήσετε αυτή$ έκ των πληγών αυτή$ “that you may not have fellowship (aorist, active, subjunctive) in her sins, and that you may not receive (aorist, active, subjunctive) her plagues.” [The
subjonctives are used here in a negative purpose clause. The negative in an expression of apprehension is combined in classical Greek with the subjunctive if the anxiety is directed toward warding off something still dependent on the will (Rienecker 1980:506)]. The idea here is not for the believer to live in isolation from the rest of mankind; but for the believer to be a witness and influence the world with the Gospel of salvation.

18:5 o^ti e)kollh/qhsan au)th=$ ai( a(marti/ai a*xri tou= ou)ranou= kaî e)mnhmo/neusen o( qeo\$ ta\ a)dikh/mata au)th=$ “… for were joined together her the sins as far as the heaven, and remembered God the unrighteousnesses of her.”

The conjunction o^ti “for” points to the reason for the saints to be separate. The verb e)kollh/qhsan “were joined together” or “piled up” (aorist, indicative, passive) with the phrase a*xri tou= ou)ranou “as far as the heaven” points to the quantity of the prostitute’s sins. The allusion is possibly to the use of bricks in building the tower of Babel, where the first reference to Babylon is recorded. Thomas argues that the picture presented by the aorist passive deponent verb is unusual for the verb kolla/w “I glue together” is from the noun ko/l[lα “glue.” He understands the passive form to mean ‘cleave to,’ ‘to join one another in a mass,’ or ‘to grow together into a mass.’ Thomas suggests that “…the idea is not that Babylon’s sins cling to heaven, because this does injustice to the reflexive note in the word, but that they cling to each other steadily until the cumulative ‘structure’ of which they are a part has finally reached to heaven” (1995:321).
The next phrase καὶ εἰμηνόησεν ο( ὁ θεὸς τὰ ἀδικήματα αὐτῆς “and God remembered” (aorist, indicative, active) (cf. Psalm 109:14; Hosea 9:9) - or was mindful her unrighteousness (plural)” with the aorist functioning as a prophetic perfect. For the repentant sinner, God, in His graciousness, remembers his/her sins no more (Heb. 8:12; 10:17). But the unrepentant person’s sins will be held against him/her.

18:6 ἀπόδοτε αὐτής· καὶ αὐτήν ἀπέδωκεν καὶ δίπλωσεν τὰ δίπλα καὶ τὰ ἐργά ταῦτα, ἐν ποθρίῳ ἔκερας ἐν κέραστε αὐτής διπλοῦν ἦν “Give back to her as also she has given; and double you the double according to the works of her, in the cup which she mixed, mix you to her double.”

The verb ἀπόδοτε “render,” “give back” or “pay back” (aorist, active, imperative) with the dative αὐτῆς “to her” ὑπὸ διπλώσας τὰ δίπλα καὶ τὰ ἐργά “as she has also given (aorist, indicative, active)” suggests a retaliation for the prostitute’s wickedness, particularly because of her killing of the saints (18:24; 19:2) (Robertson 1933:438). The retaliation should be δίπλωσά ταῦτα διπλά “double you double” – i.e. the punishment should be the exact equivalent of the offense (as in the next phrase κατὰ τὰ ἐργά αὐτῆς “according to her works”), for the phrase is used in the same way that a person who looks exactly like someone else is called his ‘double’ (Thomas 1995:324). Her punishment must match her sin. At this point the question: “Who are the executioners that will carry out the judgement?” needs to be asked. The answer to the question is found in 17:16-17. It is the prostitute’s allies (i.e. the beast and the ten horns) that carry out her destruction, which is by God’s design.
en tw=| pothri/w| w!| e)ke/erasen kera/sate au)th=| diplou=n “in the cup which she mixed (aorist, indicative, active), mix (aorist, active, imperative) to her double.” This is the same cup mentioned in 17:4; 18:3 that the prostitute offered to the inhabitants of the earth. It is ironic that the same cup has now become the instrument of her punishment (Thomas 1995:324). The reemphasis on doubling her punishment ensures that she receives every bit of the deserved punishment for her wrongs.

18:7 o^sa e)do/casen au)th\n kai\ e)strhni/asen, tosou=ton do/te au)th=| basanismo\n kai\ pe/nqo$. o%ti e)n th=| kardi/ai au)th=$ le/gei o%ti Ka/qhmai basi/lissa kai\ xh/ra ou)k e)i/ kai\ pe/nqo$ ou) mh\ i*dw. “as much as she glorified her and lived luxuriously, so much give to her torment and mourning. Because in the heart of her she says, for I sit established a queen, and a widow not I am: and mourning no not may I see.”

o^sa “as much as” is a plural relative pronoun. The prostitute has e)do/casen “glorified” (aorist, indicative, active) herself and John describes her with the word e)strhni/asen “lived luxuriously” (aorist, indicative,active). Rienecker defines the word strhnia/w as: “to live a proud and luxurious life” (Rienecker 1980:506). Thomas understands this verb to denote: “… a luxurious lifestyle with the accompanying trappings of discourtesy, arrogance, self-indulgence, ruthless exercise of strength, and unruliness” (Thomas 1995:325). Self-glorification is sinful. Worship is directed solely to God (Ex. 20:3-5). The angel in 18:1 reflects the true glory of God in contrast to the bogus glory of Babylon (Beale 1999:902).
The verb do/te “give” (2nd aorist, active, imperative) au)th “to her” is referring to Babylon. tosou=ton “so much,” according to Robertson, is a correlative pronoun, masculine, singular, accusative, agreeing with basanismo\n, and is understood with the neuter word pe/nqo$ (Robertson 1933:438). basanismo\n kai\ pe/nqo$ “torment and mourning” also reiterates the message of verse 6. The previous verse points to judgement being handed out due to the prostitute’s evil works. Here, the call for judgement is against her godless attitude - which are behind her evil works. Her attitude is described in her own words, when le/gei “she says” (present, indicative, active), o%ti Ka/qmai basi/lissa kai\ xh/ra ou)k ei)mi/ kai\ pe/nqo$ ou) mh\ i*$dw “for I sit established (present, indicative, middle) as queen, and I am (present, indicative, active) not a widow, and I may see (aorist, active, subjunctive) in no way (or ‘not ever’) sorrow.” The middle voice describes the action of sitting (17:1, 15) as queen that Babylon herself has performed whilst the present tense shows her mindset of thinking of herself as invincible. Rienecker points out that ou) mh/ with the subjunctive means “not ever,” or “never in any wise” (Rienecker 1980:506). Wenham calls the double negative an emphatic negative future, and adds, “… the double negative ou) mh\ is used with the Aorist Subjunctive in the sense of the Future Indicative with ou), but with more emphasis” (Wenham 1965:163).

18:8 dia\ tou=to e)n mia=| h(me/ra| h%cousin ai( plhga\ au)th=\$, qa/nato$ kai\ pe/nqo$ kai\ limo$/, kai\ e)n pur\ katakauqh/setai, o%ti i$xxurol$ ku/rio$ o( qeo$ o( kri/na$ au)th/n. “on account of this in one day shall come the plagues of her, death and mourning and famine, and with fire she shall be burnt; for strong Lord the God the judging her.”
The term *dia tou=to* “on account of (conjunction) this (demonstrative pronoun)” points to the cause of Babylon’s judgement, which is, her proud and arrogant attitude that nothing and no one can destroy her. The next phrase describes her fall (vv. 2-3 “Fallen, fallen…”). *e)n mia|=| h(mera| h%çousin ai( plhga\| au)th=$ “in one day her plagues shall come (future, indicative, active)” symbolically referring to the suddenness of her judgement (Beckwith 1919:715). The terms *mia|=| h(mera| and *mia|= w%ra* (vv. 10 & 17) are used synonymously to emphasize the suddenness of the judgement (Beale 1999:904). Thomas writes: “… the locative case does not express duration of time, but is a figurative way of expressing abruptness” (Thomas 1995:326). *qa/nato$ ka\| pe/nqo$ ka\| limo/$ “death and mourning and famine” will be God’s response upon her for “her scorn of the prospect of widowhood, “sorrow”… in return for her reveling, and “famine” … in response to her abundance” (Thomas 1995:326). *ka\| e)n pur\| katakaugh/setai “and with fire she shall be burnt [or “will be completely consumed”] (future, indicative, passive)” points to her total destruction. Although the self-destruction of evil occurs (i.e. ripple effect), it is sudden, for evil and her partakers do not expect it. *o%ti i)sxuro$ ku/ri$ o( geol$ o(kri/na$ au)th/n “for strong is her judging (aorist, active, participle) Lord God” with the predicate adjective *i)sxuro$ at the head of its clause to emphasize the reason, which is: God’s strength enables Him to judge evil (Thomas 1995:326). The “strong city” (18:10) is no match to the omnipotent God.

### 3.2.5. Mourning over the fall of Babylon (18:9-20)

This section sees the ‘ripple effect’ of the destruction of evil and the powerlessness of those that were sharing in her. John names three groups that are in despair following evil’s destruction: the Kings, the Merchants and the Sailors.
3.2.5.1. The Weeping Kings (vv. 18:9-10)

18:9-10 Kai klau/sousin ka\(\) ko/yon\(\)tai e)p\(\) au)\(\)n o\(\)i( basilei=$ th=$ gh=$ o\(\)i( met' au)\(\)th=$ porneu/sante$ ka\(\) strhnia/sante$\(\), o\%\(\)tan ble/pwsin to\(\)n kapno\(\)n th=$ purw/sew$ au)\(\)th=$ a)pol\makro/qen e(sthko/te$ dia\(\) to\(\)n fo/bon tou= basanismo\(\)u= au)\(\)th=$ le/gonte$, Ou)\(\)ai\(\) ou)\(\)ai\(\), h( po\(\)li$ h( mega/\(\)h, Babul\(\)\(\)n h( po\(\)li$ h( i)sxura/, o%\(\)ti mia=| w%\(\)ra| h@lqen h( kri/si$ sou “… and shall weep for and shall mourn for her the kings of the earth, the with her having committed adultery and having lived luxuriously, when they see the smoke of the burning her from afar standing on account of the fear of the torment her, saying, Woe, woe, the city the great, Babylon, the city the strong! For one hour came the judgement of you”

Following evil’s destruction, the basilei=$ th=$ gh=$ “kings of the earth” will express their emotions. They klau/sousin [“shall weep for” or “shall cry aloud”] (future, indicative, active) and ko/yontai [“shall mourn,” “shall beat” or “shall cut”] (future, indicative, middle) over the destruction of evil. The middle voice suggests that they “shall beat upon themselves,” or “shall beat their breasts as an act of mourning,”\(^{18}\) pointing to the intensity of their bereavement, o\%\(\)tan ble/pwsin “when they see (present, active, subjunctive\(^{19}\))” to\(\)n kapno\(\)n th=$ purw/sew$ au)\(\)th=$ “the smoke of her burning.” While other plagues are mentioned (v.8), destruction by fire forms the chief feature in the prophecies of evil’s destruction, symbolizing evil’s complete destruction.

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\(^{18}\) It is necessary to point out that the angel uses the predictive future tense in this verse. In the second lament (vv. 11-14), the present tense is used; whilst in the third lament (vv.17-19), the angel uses the past tense. The reason for the changing of the tense will be discussed when these verses are exegeted.

\(^{19}\) The subjunctive is used in clauses introduced by: e.g. o\%\(\)tan, which do not refer to a definite place or time (Wenham 1965:161).
It seems appropriate that these kings who were partly responsible for evil’s destruction (17:16-17) through their indulging in her (17:16), are also mourning her destruction once they realize their actions. They stand powerless, watching her destruction, for they were sold out to the beast (17:17), who led them to this point where they witness all that he presented to them finally being destroyed. These are also the same kings (17:2; 18:3b) who are described as auth= poneu=sante$ kai$ strhnia=sante$ “having committed adultery (aorist, active, participle) with her and having lived luxuriously (aorist, active, participle).” Thomas notes that:

“In 18:3 it is the kings who commit fornication with the harlot and the merchants who are enriched by her luxury. Here the kings do both. Apparently sharing in Babylon’s luxury is a part of committing fornication with her” (Thomas 1995:328).

The kings of the earth are described as apol makroi/qen esthko/te$ “standing (perfect, active, participle) from afar.” Beale argues that the participle may be adverbial, modifying the preceding verb ble/pwsin, but is better taken as a temporal modifier of the more distant verbs klausousin kai$ ko/yontai (v.9a) (Beale 1999:906-7). It is thus parallel with the preceding temporal clause o%tan ble/pwsin to$=n kapno$=n th=$ purw/sew$ au)th=$, for both temporal clauses gives the grounds for mourning. Therefore, the kings are distressed because they fo/bon tou= basanismou “fear her torment.” tou= basanismou= is objective genitive The kings are afraid, not because they are witnessing the gruesome sight, which they are partially responsible for, but because of their loss of pleasure and luxury.

20 At this point, all the inhabitants of the earth and the beast are destroyed, for the false prophet/prostitute and the beast are captured at the same time (19:19-21).
In their despair, the kings were λέγοντες “saying” (present, active, participle), οὐαὶ “Woe! Woe!” which is an exclamation of sorrow. They continue: ἡ πόλις ἡ μεγάλη, Βαβύλων ἡ πόλις ἡ ἰσχυρὰ “the great city Babylon, the strong city.” The kings, in their sorrow, refer to Babylon using two adjectives μεγάλη “great” and ἰσχυρὰ “strong” which points to their mistaken view of her as invincible. ὅτι μιᾶς ἡμερᾶς ἡ κρίσις σου “for in one hour your judgement came (aorist, indicative, active).” The terms μιᾶς ἡμερᾶς and μιᾶς ἡμερᾶς (vv. 8, 10, 17 & 19) are used synonymously to emphasize the suddenness of the judgement.21

Strand notes: “… the Greek noun used here for ‘judgement’ differs from that used elsewhere in the later chapters of the Apocalypse when verdict of judgement is in view” (Strand 1982:55). The distinction arises between the two words κρίσις (v.10), which describes the execution of judgement taking place; and κρίμα (v.20) which is the “verdict-rendering” type of judgement (Strand 1982:59), or decision to judge that is dealt with (Kittel & Friedrich (eds.) 1985:469). The word κρίσις (doom, judgement) used in verse 10 is paralleled by the term ἡρμωμένη (made desolate, brought to ruin) in verses 17a and 19 (Strand 1982:55).

3.2.5.2. The Weeping Merchants (vv. 18:11-17a)

18:11 Καὶ οἱ εἰμποροὶ οἰκίσκων καὶ πενθοῦσιν ἡγεῖται τὸν αὐτὸν, οὐδὲν αὐτοῦ οὐκ ἀγοράζει οὐκ ἐπὶ αὐτὸν ὁ κόσμος ὁ γόραζει· “and the merchants of the earth weep and mourn for her, because the merchandise their no one buys no longer.”

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21 Refer also to 17:12 for our discussion of μιᾶς ἡμερᾶς.
John shifts his description of the kings’ weeping over the prostitute (v.9-10), to o Redistributions of this merchants of the earth.” The verbs $\text{kla\\i/ousin kai$ penqou=sin $\text{weep and mourn}“ expresses deep sadness over the destruction of the prostitute. In v.9, the verbs are used to describe the kings’ emotions and are in the future tense; whilst here, both verbs are present, indicative, active. John’s constant changing of the tense “is a temporal ambiguity intended to indicate an overall process” (Beale 1999:444).

The causal clause, introduced by $\text{o\\i/ti “because,” points to the cause of the deep sorrow of the merchants. The reason is that $\text{to\\i/n go/mon au)tw=n ou)dei$ a)gora/zei ou)ke/ti “no one buys (present, indicative, active) their merchandise any longer.” They mourn the loss of profits and customers – yet at the same time, they mourn the loss of the prostitute who represents this great treasure. This lament “centers on trade because the wealth it generates is generally associated with a sense of false security that keeps people from seeing greed, cruelty, injustice, etc. in their true light” (Thomas 1995:329-330).

$18:12-13$ go/mon xrusou= kai$ a$jugu/rou kai$ li/qou timi/ou kai$ margaritw=n kai$ bussi/nou kai$ porfu/ra$ kai$ sirkou= kai$ kokki/nou, kai$ pa=n cu/lon qu/i+n non kai$ pa=n skeu=o$ e)$lefa/ntinon kai$ pa=n skeu=o$ e)$k cu/lon timi/wta/tou kai$ xalkou= kai$ sidh/rou kai$ marma/rou, kai$ kinna/mwmon kai$ a$mwmon kai$ qumia/mata kai$ mu/ron kai$ li/banon kai$ oi@non kai$ e$laion kai$ semi/dalin kai$ si=ton kai$ kth/nh kai$ pro/bata, kai$ i$ppwn kai$ r(\text{edw}=n kai$ swma/tvn, kai$ yuxal$ a)$ngw/pwn. “… cargo of gold, and of silver, and of stones precious, and of pearls, and of fine linen, and of purple, and of silk, and of scarlet, and all the wood citrus, and every article of ivory,

22 Also in vv. 15b & 19.
and every article of wood most precious,\textsuperscript{23} and of brass, and of iron, and of marble, and cinnamon, and spice, and incense, and ointment, and frankincense, and wine, and oil, and finest flour, and wheat, and cattle,\textsuperscript{24} and sheep, and of horses, and of chariots, and of bodies, and souls of men."

The use of the singular in the noun go\textit{mon} "cargo" points to the twenty-nine listed items as stemming from the common source (i.e. the prostitute), and comes as a ‘package deal’ to the inhabitants of the earth. Now that evil has been destroyed, the merchants that indulged in her mourn over their personal losses. The range of twenty-nine items that were bought includes:

1. Precious manufactured items (gold, silver, precious stones, pearls).
2. Materials of rich attire (fine linen, purple, silk, scarlet).
3. Materials for costly furniture (citrus wood, articles of ivory, articles of precious wood, brass, iron, marble).
4. Precious spices (cinnamon, spice, incense, ointment, frankincense).
5. Foods (wine, oil, fine flour, wheat).
6. Merchandise for agricultural and domestic uses (cattle, sheep, horses, chariots).
7. Traffic in men (bodies, the souls of men). Kistemaker argues for one category in the use of these two terms. In other words, the category refers to ‘human beings,’ who are identified as ‘slaves’ (Kistemaker 2001:496).

\textsuperscript{23} The word tim\textit{w}a\textit{tou} is a superlative adjective – which signifies “very rare” (Kistemaker 2001:498).
\textsuperscript{24} The Greek word for “cattle” is a general word, referring to various domesticated animals.
The goods chosen represents luxury products, which those that were connected to the evil system over-indulged in, and enjoyed them in an extravagantly sinful and idolatrous manner.

18:14 καὶ ἥπερ τις προσευχήσεται αὐτοῖς τὸν πυθόν ὑπὸ τοῦ θυσίαν αὐτῶν, καὶ εἰπώς ἀπ' αὐτῶν, καὶ πάντα τὰ λιπαρὰ καὶ τὰ λάμπρα ἀπὸ αὐτῶν καὶ οὐκ ἔχουν αὐτά εὑρήσεις.

Verse 14 shifts from the third person to the second person, and from the present tense to the aorist tense, “signaling a change from the complaints of the merchants to a continuation of their lamentations” (Thomas 1995:336). Though the speakers are unidentified, they are probably the merchants continued from v. 11, and renamed in v.15. The verbs ἀφήλησαν “departed” (aorist, indicative, active) and ἀπωλέσαν “perished” (proleptic aorist, indicative, middle) describe the anticipation for the end of the good times of the merchants. The middle voice points to the action of the verb been conducted on oneself – i.e. the merchants ultimately bring about their own demise (refer to 17:16 for our argument on the earth’s inhabitants over-indulging in evil, thus causing her self-destruction). Also, the doubled double negative οὐκείστι αὐτοῦ ἐμαίρεται points to the finality of the end of the extravagant life of the merchants, for, that lifestyle never again εὑρήσεις “will they find” (future, indicative, active). The love and the scope of their lusting after the extravagant, materialistic life is described by the two phrases: ἡ( ο)πρωταία προσευχήσεται αὐτοῖς τὸν πυθόν ὑπὸ τοῦ θυσίαν αὐτῶν, καὶ αὐτὰς ἄκουσε ὑπὸ τοῦ θυσίαν αὐτῶν “the ripe fruits of the desire of your soul,” and, πάντα τὰ λιπαρὰ καὶ τὰ λάμπρα “all the splendid things and the bright things.”
The noun o)pw/ra appears only here in the New Testament. Its derivation is uncertain, but seems to be a combination of o)po/”sap” and w^ra “hour”, conveying the idea: ‘the time for juicy sap’ (Thomas 1995:337). Also, both of the genitives are subjective – i.e. the fruit is the object of the lust; and the lust is carried out by the soul.

18:15-16 oi( e*mporoi tou/twn oi( plouth/sante$ a)p’ au)th=$ a)po\ makro/qen sth/sontai dia\ to\n fo/bon tou= basanismou= au)th=$ kla/ionte$ kai\ penqou=nte$ le/gontes$, Ou)ai\ ou)ai\, h( po/li$ h( mega/lh, h( peribeblhme/nh bu/ssinon kai\ porfurou=n kai\ ko/kkinon kai\ kexruswme/nh [e]n] xrusi/w| kai\ li/qw| timi/w| kai\ margari/th| “… the merchants of these things, the having been enriched from her, from afar shall stand because of the fear of the torment of her, weeping and mourning, saying, Woe! Woe! The city the great, the having been clothed with fine linen and purple and scarlet, and having been covered with gold and stone precious and pearl.”

oi( e*mporoi “the merchants” are still being discussed and is a repetition of the kings’ bereavement in vv. 9-11, which underscores the devastating judgement of the prostitute and the loss it brings to those dependent on her. The genitive demonstrative pronoun tou/twn “of these things” is the antecedent of the list of vv.12-13, or the summation of that list in “the splendid and bright things” (v.14) (Thomas 1995:337-8). The verb plouth/sante$ “having been enriched” (aorist, active participle) describes their state of being wealthy, which results from their alliance with the prostitute.
These merchants sth/sontai “shall stand” (future, indicative, middle) makro/qen “afar,” just like the kings of v.10, dia\ “because of” to\n fo/bon tou= basanismou= au)th=$ “the fear of her torment.” They are also described as klai/onte$ ka\l\ penqou=nte$25 “weeping and mourning” (present, active participles).

In their despair, the kings were le/gonte$ “saying” (present, active, participle), Ou)a\l\ ou)ai “Woe! Woe!” which is an exclamation of sorrow. They continue: h( po/li$ h( mega/lh, Babulw\n h( po/li$ h( i)sxura “the great city Babylon, the strong city.” The merchants, similar to the kings in their sorrow, refer also to Babylon using the adjective mega/lh “great” pointing to their mistaken view of her as invincible.

The next two verbs peribeblhme/nh “having been clothed with” and kexruswme/nh “having been covered” (perfect, middle participles) describes the prostitute’s present state resulting from a past action (perfect tense), acted upon herself (middle voice). She is described as being clothed with bu/ssinon ka\l\ porfurou=n ka\l\ ko/kkinon “fine linen, and purple, and scarlet,” and being covered [e)n] xrusi/w| ka\l\ li/qw| timi/w| ka\l margari/th “with gold, and precious stone and pearl” - pointing to the worldly outward extravagance. This figurative description is almost similar to the prostitute’s adorning of herself in 17:4. Thomas notes that the fine linen and the gold, jewels and pearls are part of the wardrobe and adornment of the saints (19:8) and the holy city (21:10ff.); but not the purple and scarlet, for these have close associations with the beast (Thomas 1995:338).

25 See v.11 for the use of these verbs.
18:17a o%ti mia|=| w%ra| h)rhwm/qh o( tosou=to$ plou=to$ “... for in one hour was made desolate the so great wealth.” This clause concludes the lament of the merchants. The purpose clause: o%ti “for/because” gives the reason for the woes expressed in v.16. The words mia|=| w%ra| “in one hour” once again brings out the brevity of the process of the prostitute’s destruction. The verb h)rhwm/qh “was made desolate” (aorist, indicative, passive) o( tosou=to$ plou=to$ “so great (demonstrative pronoun) wealth” continues to describe the prostitute’s destruction, with the proleptic aorist anticipating the future destruction of the prostitute (Thomas 1995:339). If evil could be destroyed so quickly, so will her followers’ immanent fall occur. Therefore the merchants’ mourning is selfishly motivated.

3.2.5.3. The Weeping Sailors (vv. 18:17b-20)

18:17b-18 kai\ pa=$ kubernh/th$ kai\ pa=$ of (e)p\ to/pon ple/wn kai\ nau=tau kai\ o%soi th\n qa/llassan e)rga/zontai, a)po\ makro/qen e*sthsan kai\ e*krazon ble/ponte$ to\n kapno\n th=$ purw/sew$ au)th=$ le/gonte$, Ti/$ o(moi/a th|=| po/lei th|=| mega/lh| “… and every helmsman, and all the upon a place sailing, and sailors, and as many as work by sea, afar off stood, and cried, seeing the smoke of the burning of her, saying, What like to the city the great?”

The next group of people that are affected by the prostitute’s destruction are the sea-people. This provides for an argument against interpreting Babylon as “Rome,” for Rome had no seaports of its own (Thomas 1995:339). John uses Tyre (Ezek. 26-27) as a model to emphasize evil’s economic influence in general, and not a focus on sea commerce in particular (Beale 1999:915). The noun kubernh/th$ “helmsman” refers to the first group of people that make up the sea-people. The helmsman is the pilot of

26 Refer to our commentary on the phrase mia|=| w%ra| and mia|=| h(me/ra| in verses 17:12; 18:8.
a ship who is subordinate to the ‘supreme commander’ (Beale 1999:915). A second group called pa=$ o(e)pi\ to/pon ple/wn “everyone who sails to a place” referring to travelling sea passengers. The third group of people are called the nau=tai “sailors” who are also part of the fourth group: o%soi thln qa/lassan e)rga/zontai “as many as work [themselves] (present, indicative, middle) by sea” or those who earn their living from the sea. The fourth group will include fishermen, divers of pearls, etc.

These sea-people a)po\ makro/qen e*sthsan “stood afar off” similar to the kings (v.10) and the merchants (v.15). The only difference is the past tenses of vv.17-19 have replaced the future tenses of vv.8-9 and the present of v.11. They e*krazon “cried” (aorist, indicative, active) upon ble/ponte$ “seeing” (present, active, participle). ble/ponte$ is an adverbial participle which modifies the verb e*krazon which could be interpreted as temporal “as,” or causal “because they saw” to\ kapno\ th=$ purw/sew$ au)th=$ “the smoke of her burning.” As they watched, they were le/gonte$ “saying” (present, active, participle): Ti/$ o(moi/a th=| po/lei th=| mega/lh]; “What [city] is like the great city?” The occasion for this lament comes in the ble/ponte$ phrase that recalls the o%tan ble/pwsin clause of v.9 (Thomas 1995:340). A similar question is asked in reference to the beast, “Who is like the beast?” (13:4), for which both questions imply a negative response, for both represent evil in its ultimate form.

18:19 kai\ e*balon xou=n e)pi\ ta\$ kefalai\$ au)tw=n kai\ e*krazon klai/onte$ kai\ penqou=nte$ le/gonte$, Ou)ai\ ou)ai/, h( po/li$ h( mega/lh, e)n h=| e)plou/thsan pa/nte$ o( e*xonte$ ta\ ploi=a e)n th|= qala/ssh| e)k th=| timio/thto$ au)th=|, o%ti mia|= w%ra| h)rhmw/qh. “And they cast dust upon the
heads of them, and were crying, weeping and mourning, saying, Woe! Woe! The city
the great, in which were enriched all the having the ships in the sea because of the
treasures of her, for in one hour she was made desolate!"

These sea-people, in their mourning, εtfoot “cast” (aorist, indicative, active) ηπιχ
ταλ$ κεφαλα$ αυτων “dust upon their heads.” Throughout the Old Testament, casting
dust on one’s head is a symbol for grief. Their grief also included: εtfoot “were
[continually] crying” (imperfect, indicative, active); κλαιοντε$ “weeping” (present, active,
participle) and πενθοντε$ “mourning” (present, active, participle). Their grief is similar
to the merchants in v.15.

They uttered Οui οui “Woe! Woe!” similar to the laments of vv.10 & 16. The phrase
ηπολη$ ημεγαλη “the great city” points to the sea-peoples’ mistaken view of the city’s
invincibility, which is similar to the kings and merchants in their sorrow. The
preposition εn has an instrumental use, pointing to the city being the means by which
the sea-people επλουθησαν “were enriched” (aorist, indicative, active). They are further
described as εχοντε$ “having” (present, active, participle) τα$ πλοια εν θαλασσα| “the
ships in the sea.” The question, ‘How could they afford to have the ships in the sea?’
is answered in the next phrase: εκ θα$ τιμιοθη$ αυτης “because of her (i.e.the
prostitute’s) treasures.” The genitive preposition εκ, has a causal use – i.e. the
treasures of the prostitute is the reason the sea-people were able to become rich and
afford to have the ships.

The purpose clause οποι “for” explains for the use of the earlier double “woe” of the
sea-people – which is because ηρνωμεθη “she (i.e.the prostitute) was made desolate”
(aorist, indicative, passive). The word κρισις “judgement” used in v.10 is paralleled by
the term ἡρμω/ν (Strand 1982:55). Again the phrase μια|= ωρα| “in one hour” appears.29

**18:20** Εὐφραίνου ἐπ’ αὐ|θ|=, οὐρανό καὶ οἱ ἁγιοί καὶ οἱ ἀπόστολοι καὶ οἱ προφήται, ὁτι ἐκρίνεν οἱ θεοί τὸ κρίμα ὑμῖν ἐκ αὐ|θ=.

“Rejoice over her, O heaven, and the holy and the apostles and the prophets; for did judge God the judgement of you upon her.”

Some commentators interpret the current speaker to be John (e.g. Beckwith). However, since no break in the sequence begun at v.4 is discernable, the voice must be that of the angel who continues his words by turning John’s attention to heaven (Thomas 1995:341).

The angel gives a command to Εὐφραίνου “Rejoice” (present, imperative, middle) [the response to this command is contained in 19:1-7]. The mood of singing changes from lamentation to that of rejoicing, and the same thing that causes deep sorrow on earth, brings great jubilation in heaven (Thomas 1995:341). This rejoicing is opposite to the rejoicing of 11:10, where the same verb is used to describe the joy of the wicked over the deaths of the two witnesses. The indirect object (use of the dative) over the rejoicing is ε|π’ αὐ|θ ὑπερ|ς [i.e. the prostitute]. The vocative οὐρανό “O heaven” is the case of address. The use of heaven alongside the next three terms for Christian believers suggest that ‘heaven’ here refers, not to a place, but to those who live there (Michaels 1997:207).30 The “heaven” therefore includes all the angels, the four living creatures, the twenty-four elders and the great multitude surrounding the

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29 Refer to comments on the phrase in 17:12; 18:8, 10 & 17.
30 Also in 12:12 “Therefore rejoice, you heavens and you who dwell in them!” Similarly, “earth” can mean “the inhabitants of the earth” (as in 13:3-4 “the whole earth... followed the beast”).
throne of God. The presupposition of all John’s visions is that angels and humans together form one community dedicated to the worship of God (Michaels 1997:207).

The inhabitants of heaven include: 
\[ \text{o}i(\ \alpha\gamma\gamma\iota\omicron\ \kappa\alpha\iota\nu\ \omega\iota(\ \alpha)\pi\rho\sigma\tau\omicron\omicron\iota\kappa\alpha\iota\nu\ \omega(\ \rho\omicron\phi\omicron\hbar\tau\omicron)\ ] \text{“the holy (or saints) and the apostles and the prophets.”} \]

This phrase alludes to Jeremiah’s “heaven and earth” (Jer. 51:48). Jeremiah’s reference to the heaven is repeated, but his reference to the earth is now replaced by “saints, apostles and prophets” – who now compose the new people of God in heaven (Beale 1999:916).

The next phrase 
\[ \text{o\%ti e\*krinen o( qeo\$ to\kri\ma \omega(mw=n e)c au\)$ “for God did judge (aorist, indicative, active) the judgement of you upon her.”} \]

The Greek word \( \kri\ma \) used here, has overtones of a lawsuit or court case - meaning that God has passed sentence on Babylon which agrees with the aorist tense (Harrington 1993:182).

The entire phrase may be interpreted in various ways as Beale points out:

“(1) “God has judged her and vindicated you”; (2) “God has given judgment for [or “in favour of”] you against her” (\( u(mw=n \) taken as a genitive of advantage); (3) “in the judgment against her he has vindicated your cause”; (4) “God pronounced on her the judgment she passed on you” (\( u(mw=n \) taken as an objective genitive); (5) “God executed severe judgment for you against her”; (6) “God judged the judgment on you (which came) from her” (\( e)c \) designating the source from which the unjust judgment against Christians arose” (Beale 1999:917).

Beale argues that the best possible meaning to this ambiguous clause may be expressed in 19:2 “…for he has condemned the great prostitute and has avenged the blood of his servants from her hand” - (since it is the conclusion to ch. 18, and like 18:20b, is part of a o\%ti clause that gives a basis for rejoicing) (Beale 1999:918).
3.2.6. The Fall of Babylon Completed (18:21-24)

The angel describes the future destruction of the prostitute - which will bring an end to evil on the earth.

18:21 Kai\ h@ren ei$ a*ggelo$ i)sxuro$ li/qon w($ mu/linon me/gan kai\ e*balen ei)$ th\n qa/llassan le/gwn, Ou%tw$ o(romh/mati blhqh/setai babulw\n h( mega/lh po/lli$ kai\ ou) mh\ eu(reqh=| e*ti “And took up one angel strong a stone, as a millstone great, and cast into the sea, saying, Thus with a rush shall be cast down Babylon the great city, and not not may be found yet.”

The judgement of the prostitute is expressed symbolically with an a*ggelo$ “angel” who h@ren “took up” or “lifted up” (aorist, indicative, active) i)sxuro$ li/qon “a large stone” (to John it was similar to mu/linon me/gan “a great millstone”), and e*balen “cast” (aorist, indicative, active) it ei)$ th\n qa/llassan “into the sea.” This is the third angel to participate in the revelation of chapter 18. Caird points out that this is the third time in John’s Revelation that a heavenly messenger is called a “strong angel” (Caird 1984:231). The first angel (5:2) had to do with the large scroll concerning Jesus’ suffering in relation to the redemptive plan; and the second angel (10:1) held the scroll describing the church’s suffering as part of the redemptive plan. The third angel now completes the contents of both scrolls. Beale agrees with Caird’s suggestion, for he argues that one of the prostitute’s judgement is that “in her was found the blood of prophets and saints and of all those slain on the earth” (18:24) (Beale 1999:919).
earlier phrase Ou%tw$ o(rmh/mati “Thus, with a rush” also points to the speed of the
destruction - alluding to the the phrase mia|= w%ra which is constantly used.

As the angel was casting the stone, he was le/gwn “saying” (present, active,
participle), Ou%tw$ o(rmh/mati blhqh/setai babulw\n h( mega/lh po/i$ kai\ ou) mh\ eu(reqh=| e*ti
“Thus with violence shall Babylon the great city be cast down (future, indicative,
passive), and in no way may be found (aorist, subjunctive, passive) yet (or ‘any
longer’).” The emphatic ou) mh\ is strengthened further by e*ti pointing to the complete
and permanent disappearence of evil.

18:22-23a ka\ fwnh\ kiqarw|dw=n kai\ mousikw=n kai\ au)lhtw=n kai\ salpistw=n ou) mh\ a)kousqh=|
e)n soi\ e*ti, ka\ pa=$ texni/th\ pa/sh$ te/xnh$ ou) mh\ eu(reqh=| e)n soi\ e*ti, ka\ fwnh\ mu/lou ou) mh\a)kousqh=| e)n soi\ e*ti, ka\ fw=$ lu/xnou ou) mh\ fa/nh| e)n soi\ e*ti, ka\ fwnh\ numfi/ou kai\ nu/mfh$ ou) mh\ a)kousqh=| e)n soi\ e*ti “… and the sound of harpers and musicians and flute
players and trumpeters not not may be heard in you yet, and every craftsman of
every craft not not may be found in you yet, and sound of millstone not not may be
heard in you yet, and light of lamp not not may shine in you yet, and voice of
bridegroom and of bride not not may be heard in you yet.”

Due to the destruction of the prostitute, various items are mentioned that will never
ever again be enjoyed in her (again the emphatic ou) mh\, which is strengthened
further by e*ti, points to the complete and permanent disappearence of all enjoyment
within the prostitute). For each verb, the aorist, subjunctive is used with the emphatic
ou) mh\ to emphasize the future indicative (Wenham 1965:163). This is the one use of
the subjunctive where it appears totally to have lost its character as the mood of
doubtful assertion. The angel also turns abruptly to the 2nd person soi “you” in
addressing the prostitute, making the words even more pointed (Thomas 1995:345).

The items include:

(a) the ἰκαρίων και μουσικῶν “sound of harpers and musicians” and ἀουλίατων και
salpιστῶν “flute players and trumpeters,” which never ἀκούσῃ “may be heard.”

(b) πᾶς τεχνῖθς πα/min ζήν “every craftsman of every craft” never eu(ρήθη “may be
found.”

(c) ἰκαρίων μουλου “[the] sound of [the] millstone” never ἀκούσῃ “may be heard.”

(d) ἰκαρίων μουλου “[the] sound of [the] millstone” never ἀκούσῃ “may be heard.”

The angel paints a sombre picture of the destroyed city, symbolizing the complete
destruction of evil, which includes everything in the artistic, economic and social
realms that draws the inhabitants of the earth away from God. This picture contrasts
with the cheer, delight and fulfillment that the Bride of Christ will experience (ch. 19:1-
9) in the beautiful New Jerusalem (21:10-27).

18:23b-24 οἱ ἐμπόροι ο明らか οὔχ ἐν ἐν τεύχεσιν ἐν τοῖς χρυσοῖς οὖν ἀδικίας ὑπερθεὶσαν ἀλλὰ ἐν ἐξειρημμένοις καὶ ἐν 
πάνταις ἐν τοῖς ἱεροῖς προφιτεῖσθαι καὶ πάντης ἐν τοῖς πάννοις ἐν ἡμείς τῷ θεῷ
Three reasons are given for the utter destruction of evil:

(a) \( \text{o}i(\text{e}m\text{p}o\text{r}o\text{i} \text{“the merchants” that were connected to evil (sou “of you” referring to the prostitute), h@san “were” (imperfect, indicative, active) the megista=ne$ “rulers” or “great ones” of the earth. The change to an imperfect tense from the future thrust earlier in the verse adopts the perspective of fulfilled prophecy (Thomas 1995:346). The term “the great ones” conveys a tone of the merchants’ arrogance directed against God.} \)

(b) The prostitute deceived the nations \( e)n \text{th=| f}a\text{r}m\text{a}kei/a| \text{“with sorcery.” e)n has an instrumental use and f}a\text{r}m\text{a}kei/a| \text{is the locative case.} \)

(c) \( e)n \text{au}j=|= \text{“in her” (i.e. the prostitute) e}u(\text{re/qh “was found” (aorist, indicative, passive) the blood of the profhtw=n “prophets,” a(gi/wn “saints” and pa/ntwn tw=n e)sfagme/nwn e)p\text{\hspace{1pt}}l \text{th=|$ gh=$ “of all the slain of the earth.”} \)

3.3. Rejoicing Over the Fall of Babylon (19:1-5)

A mighty thanksgiving in heaven follows the judgement of Babylon at the conclusion of God’s judgements. This segment of chapter 19:1-10 belongs to the preceding chapters (17 and 18). However, the break in chapters is fitting due to the focus changing from events on earth (ch. 18) to the heavens (ch. 19). Kistemaker notes in
chapters 17 and 18 that: “… whereas these chapters record the demise of Babylon the Great with songs of doom and destruction, the first ten verses of chapter 19 stand in direct contrast to them” (Kistemaker 2001:507-8).

3.3.1. The Heavenly Multitude of Saints Rejoice (vv. 1-3)

The command in 18:20 is fulfilled here as the multitude of saints in heaven rejoice and sing a series of “Hallelujah” choruses.

19:1 Meta\tauαta h*kousa w($ fwnh\n mega/lhn o*xlou pollou= e)n tw|=| ou)ranw|=| lego/ntwn,
(Allhloui+a/: h( swthri/a kai\ h( do/ca ka\ h( du/nami$ tou= qeou= h(mw=n. “And after these things, I heard as a voice loud of a multitude much in the heaven, saying, Hallelujah: the salvation and the glory and the power God of us.”

The verse begins with the words Meta\tauαta literally meaning “after these things,” referring to the events of chapter 18. The phrase occurs nine times in the Apocalypse and usually denotes a shift from one scene to another (Kistemaker 2001:508). After viewing the destruction of Babylon on earth, John’s attention is directed toward ou)ranw|=| “heaven” where he literally hears a fwnh\n mega/lhn “loud roar.” The word fwnh\n (roar) literally means ‘a sound,’ which is modified by the adjective mega/lhn (great) (Walvoord & Zuck [eds.] 1983:974).

The loud roar was coming from o&xlou pollou= (literally “many people”). Morris assumes that because the singers are not named, they probably are angels (Morris 1984:224); whilst Walvoord believes that they are the same multitude of 7:9, which
he interprets as the martyred dead of the great tribulation (Walvoord & Zuck [eds.] 1983:974). We tend to agree with Mounce that the “many people” refer to the church triumphant as a whole (cf. 7:9-10, 13-17), as both their songs of triumph are almost similar (Mounce 1998:341). Caird also assumes that this multitude is the same multitude of 7:9ff. He calls this multitude “martyrs” but simultaneously also alludes to them being the Church triumphant, for he says, “The victory of God is the victory won by the martyrs, and their victory is the **victory of the Cross**” (*italics added*) (Caird 1984:232). Every believer’s victory is through the cross of Jesus Christ.31 Four reasons derived from the text suggest that the interpretation of “the triumphant church” is needed: firstly, as discussed above, o&xlou pollou= is translated literally as many *people*. Secondly, Mounce, in his footnote, adds: “The angels in 5:12 and 7:12 sing of power, riches (thanksgiving in 7:12 replaces riches in 5:12), wisdom, might, honor, glory, and blessing, but not salvation” (Mounce 1998:341). Whenever ‘salvation’ is mentioned, it is by the saints for we are the objects of God’s grace. We understand salvation experientially - the angels have not experienced salvation. Thirdly, in v.5, there is a call from the throne for *all* God’s servants to praise Him, which we could deduce that previously, involved only the saints. Finally, John seems to have drawn a contrast between the solemn responses of the kings, merchants and seamen (18:9-20), and the jubilation of the faithful (Beale 1999:926). Therefore, we conclude that the *redeemed* are the worshipers here – not just the martyrs, but all of the redeemed (martyrs included).32 The saints were ‘saying’ (*legeintwn*), Allhloui+a. Beale argues that the participle *legeintwn* appears to be out of concord with *fwnh/n* in both number and case; but he adds that the genitive plural may modify the plural idea of the genitive singular o&xlou pollou= (Beale 1999:927). This is the first occurrence of

31 See also Chapter 5 (5.5.3) on the argument by Michaels (1992:136), that the whole church is a martyr church.  
32 See our argument for the identification of the *saints* in Chapter 5 (5.5.3).
the word “Hallelujah” in the New Testament and follows also in (vv. 3, 4 and 6). It is derived from the two Hebrew words *halal* and *Jah*, literally meaning ‘Praise Yahweh.’ Mounce records that the word originally was a call to praise God, but gradually developed in Judaism into an independent formula of praise (Mounce 1998:342). The cause for praise is due to the fact that God has triumphed! Therefore He is worthy to be praised for “salvation and glory and power belong to our God” (v.1c). God is also praised because He has defeated and judged the arrogance of evil and those that took part in evil. God had never abdicated his kingship, nor had He been de-throned despite the pretensions of the evil prostitute and her allies that falsely esteemed themselves as sovereign (18:7b). Boring comments,

“The eschatological events now beginning only disclose what had always been the case: God alone is the true sovereign of the world. The community of heaven and earth celebrates that this is now becoming effective and manifest, that God's eternal kingship has now become actual and concrete in the judgement of Babylon, and he has ‘begun to reign’ (ingressive aorist...)” (Boring 1989:192).

The personal pronoun *h(mw=n* (our) implies the saint’s personal relationship with God by his/her belonging to God.

**19:2** ὁ ἀληθινὸς καὶ δικαιός νόμος τῶν σκότων του ἐκ τῆς ζημιᾶς τῆς γυναῖκος μεγάλης, προσειλέφθη ἐκ τῆς πόλεως, καὶ ἐκτένθη τοῖς αἷμασι ποιμένας του ἐκ τῆς ἱλαρότητος αὐτοῦ.
Herein lies the answer to the cry of the slain souls under the altar that is recorded in 6:10. The verse begins with the word ὅτι (for, because) which points to the first reason for the ascribing of “salvation and glory and power” (v.1c) to God, i.e. because God’s judgements (κρισίν) are “true and just,” which would lead to the ἐκρίνεν of the great prostitute. The use of the aorist, indicative, active, points the prostitute’s judgement taking place in the past with a continuing effect that will take place for all eternity. This agrees with v.3 where John records that her smoke goes up forever. Mounce explains the phrase “true and just” as God’s actions being valid for they are “true;” and that the prostitute’s punishment is precisely what she deserved (just) (Mounce 1998:342). Coleman explains that the emotion behind the celebration is not “angry revenge,” but rather “righteous rectitude,” for justice and truth have prevailed (Coleman 1980:136).

Another ὅτι implies a second reason for the praise of God - which includes God’s judgement or condemnation (ἐκρίνεν) of the prostitute for the corrupting (ἐφκειρέν, from κειρέω meaning ‘corrupt morally’ but includes the nuance of ‘destroy’ since persecution is alluded to in the next phrase) of the earth by her adulteries (πορνεία, or ‘fornication’), and the spilling of the blood (ἀίμα – or the ‘bloodshed’) of “his servants” (αὐτῶν δουλῶν) (Beale 1999:927). The blood is said to be spilled by the prostitute’s hand (ἐκ χειρὸς αὐθῆς “from/at her hand”). Once again the saints are described as belonging to God (i.e. “his servants”). The prostitute shows her contempt for God and His truth by killing His servants.

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33 See also the attributes of God’s Justice and Truth being proclaimed by the over-comers (15:3), and also the voice of the altar (16:7).
19:3 kaĩ deu/teron ei*rhkav, ἸAllhlou+i+a/: kaĩ o( kapno$ au)th=$ a)nabai/nei ei)$ tou$l$ a)i)w=na$ tw=n a)i)w/nwn. “… and a second time they said, Hallelujah. And the smoke of her goes up to the ages of the ages.”

The redeemed shout again (deu/teron – literally a “second time”): “Hallelujah!”35 “The smoke from her goes up for ever and ever.”36 Boring notes that even with all the language of judgement, the scene never ceases to be one of worship to God (Boring 1989:193).

Reference is made to “smoke” that eternally “goes up” from the once ‘great’ prostitute. The phrase “forever and ever” (ei)$ tou$l$ a)i)w=na$ tw’n a)i)w/nwn) refers to an unending period. Beale notes that the phrase appears 13 times throughout the book of Revelation and often refers to the eternal being of God (Beale 1999:929). Caird understands John to be providing here an Old Testament reference of victory over evil, when he writes:

“John may use the imagery of Sodom and Gomorrah to portray Babylon as a perpetually smoking ruin, but the reality he is thus expressing is the victory of love over all that stands in love’s way” (Caird 1984:232).

Another borrowed Old Testament reference could also include Edom’s curse that was pronounced by God (Isa. 34:9-10), which is now pronounced on Babylon. The smoke from the prostitute’s destruction rises to heaven as an on-going remembrance of God’s faithfulness to His Word. The eternal smoke of the prostitute’s destruction is a reference to 20:10 where her final state of destruction is portrayed.37

34 See comment in 19:1c.
35 See comment on the word “Hallelujah!” in 19:1.
36 See also 14:11.
This eternal smoke of evil’s destruction can be contrasted to the saints’ eternal existence. Firstly, the smoke of her destruction can be contrasted to the incense of the heavenly worship that John portrays earlier (5:8; 8:3-4) (Caird 1984:232). A second contrast will include the eternality of the prostitute’s punishment (which also could be pictured as hell with its eternal flame), and also describes the severity of the punishment, as compared with the eternal new creation (Knight 1999:125). Finally, the finality of Babylon’s judgement (i.e. eternal smoke of destruction going up) is contrasted to the beginning of the saint’s eternal existence with God (21:10-27 - i.e. eternal, glorious dwelling is pictured as coming down).

3.3.2. The Twenty Four Elders and the Four Living Creatures Rejoice (v. 4)

The twenty-four elders and the four living creatures worship God and affirm the celebration of the multitude.

19:4  καὶ εὐφαντήσαν οἱ πρεσβύτεροι οἱ εἴκοσι τεσσαράς καὶ τα τεσσάρα χρῶσιν καὶ προσκυνήσαν τῷ κυρίῳ λεγόντες, ἀμήν, ἀμήν, χαλεποὶ.

“… and fell down the elders the twenty four, and the four living creatures and worshipped God the sitting on the throne, saying, Amen, Hallelujah.”

Here, the heavenly beings join in the worship. These include firstly, the twenty-four elders (πρεσβύτεροι οἱ εἴκοσι τεσσαράς). This is the last time that John mentions the twenty-four elders. There are various traditions to their identity, which includes:

“(1) stars (from an astrological background), (2) angels, (3) Old Testament saints, (4) angelic, heavenly representatives of all saints, (5) patriarchs and apostles representing the OT and NT saints together, and (6) representatives

37 Refer to our argument earlier in this chapter (17:3) on the identification of the prostitute as the false prophet.
of the prophetic revelation of the twenty-four books of the Old Testament” (Beale 1999:322).

Any attempt from the modern reader to provide an identity for the twenty-four elders will be just speculation, for Scripture does not provide their identity. However, from Scripture, the reader can identify their chief function, which seems to be worship and service to God.

The second group mentioned are the four living creatures (ta\ te\ssara zw|~a). These angelic beings are modified versions of the creatures seen in the visions of Ezekiel (Ezek. 1) and Isaiah (Isa. 6).

In 5:6-10, the twenty-four elders and the four living creatures worshipped the Lamb for His worthiness to open the seals. Again, they join together in the praise of God with the multitude (vv.1-3), over His righteous judgement. God is pictured as sitting on the throne, which points to His sovereignty over all. The twenty-four elders and the four living creatures e\pesan ... proseku/nhsan (‘prostrate’, ‘bow down’ or ‘fell down’) in their worship of God as compared to the multitude. They utter two words, “Amen” or “so be it” (Am\h\n), which indicates their agreement to what has been said (vv.1-3), and “Hallelujah” (Allhloui+av), the great word of praise. Beale notes that the word “Amen” is the formal expression of ratification and is a liturgical expression of trust. It is also sometimes used to strengthen a preceding statement (as in this context) (Beale 1999:929). He also notes that these two words echo Psalm 106:48, and adds: “The wording is not haphazard, since in the Psalm, as here, it functions as part of the people’s thanksgiving to God for gathering them to Himself after delivering them from

38 Refer to Beale (1999:322-6] for the various arguments regarding the identity of the twenty-four elders.
‘their enemies’ who oppressed them…” (Beale 1999:930). The word “Amen” is another Hebrew word, which Harris describes as:

“… a great word of positive response that can be translated ‘truly’ in most cases. It comes from a root word that carries the basic idea of certainty or support. It is the response of faith that recognizes what has been said is sure, absolutely certain” (Harris 1990:289).

These prophecies to some today, are viewed as something that might hopefully come true. The angelic beings’ full approval points to the certainty of these events taking place.

3.3.3. The Voice from the Throne (v. 5)

Finally, a voice from the throne calls on all the saints to join in praising God.

19:5 Kai\ fwnh\ a\pol\ tou= qro/nou e\ch=Iqen le/gousa, Ai)nei=te tw|= qew|=| h(mw=n pa/nte$ oi( dou=loi au)tou= [kai] oi( fobou/\menoi au)to/n, oi( mikroi\l\ kai\l\ oi( mega/lo\l. “And a voice from the throne came forth, saying, Praise God of us all the servants of him, [and] the fearing him, the small and the great.”

This unidentified voice cannot be the voice of Jesus because of the words “our God” (tw|= qew|= h(mw=n) but could be identified as that of one of the elders, one of the four living creatures or another angelic being.

The command that comes from the throne is: “Praise our God” (Ai)nei=te tw|= qew|= h(mw=n). Kistemaker commenting on this phrase states that: “… the verb normally takes the accusative, not the dative. But the dative reflects the influence of the Hebrew language, influence that is common in the LXX” (Kistemaker 2001:512).
Beale records that in the LXX “praise God” is sometimes a translation of *hallel YHWH* (praise to Yahweh) (Beale 1999:931). This can be another way of expressing another “Hallelujah.” The verb *le/gousa* “saying” [present, active participle] with the [present imperative] (Ai)nei=te), point to a command for a continuous flow of praise that needs to be directed to God, from His “servants” or “slaves” (dou’loi).

God’s servants are identified as all those who fear Him, that is, who reverence and worship, and those who serve Him. John does not have two categories of people in mind here e.g. those who serve Him and those who fear Him. For this reason Kistemaker adds the word “even” to the translation, which will read: “even you who fear Him” (Kistemaker 2001:511). Service to God is done out of reverence and worship to Him.

The adjectives mikroi (small) and mega/loi (great) may firstly point to the non-discriminatory message of the Gospel – that is, regardless of the saints’ age, gender or status, they are all required to serve God in reverence. He alone is great. A second possibility could be that these adjectives describe the angelic beings, the angels and the saints. In 19:1-3, the saints worship God, whilst in 19:4, the angelic beings (24 elders and 4 living creatures) worship. Here in 19:5, all God’s servants – i.e. saints, angelic beings and the hosts of angels are commanded to join in worship.

### 3.4. The Marriage of the Lamb Announced (19:6–10)

This section celebrates the final eternal reign of the Lord God Almighty who now is joined with His bride – the prepared Church.
3.4.1. The Heavenly Multitude responds (19:6-8)

All heaven joins in an awesome worship of God.

19:6 kai ἡκούσα ὑ($ ἐνάντια μεγάλον τὸν ὁχλόν καὶ ὑ($ ἐνάντια μεγάλο ψυχικά καὶ ὑ($ ἐνάντια μεγάλο βροντικά ἰσχύος λεγοντάς, ἀλληλούϊα, ὅτι εδιδηλούσεν Κύριον θεὸν τοῦ οὐρανοῦ ὁ Παντοκράτωρ.

This verse is a re-statement of 14:2. Here, it follows the command of verse 5. All heaven joins in the corporate worship of God. The verb ἡκούσα "I heard" (aorist, indicative, active) refers to John who is doing the hearing. The worshippers, although ὑ($ ἐνάντια μεγάλο “a great multitude,” joined together as ὁχλόν “a voice”. The sound is described as ὑ($ ἐνάντια μεγάλο ψυχικά “many waters” (cf. 1:15; 14:2) and ὁβροντικά ἰσχύος “strong thunders” which points to the ‘loudness’ of their praise. They were λέγοντας “saying” (present, active, participle) with the genitive plural participle being a generic masculine, referring to all those who were part of the heavenly choir, and modifies all three preceding genitives rather than the singular “multitude” (Osborne 2002:672). They were saying ἀλληλούϊα “Hallelujah.” The reason for praise is immediately accompanied by an ὅτι “because,” ἔδιδηλον κύριον θεόν ὁ Παντοκράτωρ “our Lord God, the Almighty” has reigned (aorist, indicative, active).” Robertson believes this to probably be an ingressive prophetic aorist – i.e. God manifested His kingship in fulness of power on earth with the fall of evil (Robertson 1933:449).

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39 Refer to 19:1 for the discussion on the word.
40 Refer to 1:8; 4:8; 11:17; 15:3; 16:7, 14; 19:15; 21:22 for this designation of God which refers to His omnipotence and sovereignty.
fact of God’s reign is a direct consequence of His judgement of evil (the prostitute) (11:15-17).

All of God’s followers are called to *xaírwmén kai a)gallíw=men kai dw/swmen th

*let us rejoice and let us drink* (both verbs are present, active, subjunctive). The two hortatory subjunctives are: “… a mutual invitation among the singers to keep on rejoicing and exulting” (Thomas 1995:365). The reason for the joy is *o%ti* “because” of the arrival [*h@lqen “came” (proleptic aorist, indicative, active)] of the *ga/mo$ tou= a)mi/ou* “marriage of the Lamb.” In the Old Testament, God is the bridegroom of Israel (cf. Isa. 54:6; 62:5; Jer. 31:32; Ezek. 16:7-14; Hos. 2:16, 19). In the New Testament, Christ is the bridegroom of the church (cf. Matt. 9:15; 22:2-14; 25:1-13; Mark 2:19-20; Luke 5:34-35; 14:15-24; John 3:29; 2 Cor. 11:2; Eph. 5:25ff.; Rev. 3:20; 19:9; 21:2, 9; 22:17). Thomas writes: “… the current rejoicing over ‘the marriage of the Lamb’… sets the tone for the extended description of the Lamb’s bride in 19:8 and chapters 21-22 (cf. esp. 21:2, 9). It is in accord with the writer’s habit to throw out hints of a future scene some time before he begins its main description (e.g. cf. 14:8 with chaps. 17-18)” (Thomas 1995:365-6). They also invite each other to *dw/swmen th

*give* (aorist, active,
subjunctive) the glory” to God for the same reason. Thomas notes that: “… this is not a cause for praise that adds to the one expressed by the hoti clause of v.6, because the establishment of the kingdom of God and the marriage of the Lamb are in reality one event viewed from two perspectives” (Thomas 1995:365-6). The command to glorify God was an all important part of the call to salvation in 14:7 and 15:4, and here it is the natural result of experiencing the reign of God and especially of being part of the bride of Christ (Osborne 2002:672). The wife of the bridegroom [i.e. gunh\ au]\ tou= “his wife”] h(toi/masen e(auth\ “did make herself ready” (aorist, indicative, active). The bride is the people of God, who are the church.

It is appropriate to read v. 8 as a continuation and at the same time, the conclusion of the song which began in v.6, since v.8 has no indication of a change in singers/speakers.

The bride e)do/qh “was given” (aorist, indicative, passive) bu/ssinon “fine linen,” i%na “that” periba/lhtai “she should be clothed in” (aorist, subjunctive, middle). The form e)do/qh occurs ca. 20 times in Revelation 6-20, each time signalling something granted by God. The linen is described with the adjectives lampro\n kaqaro/n “bright pure” which e)st\n “is” (present, indicative, active) the dikaiw/mata “righteousnesses” or “righteous deeds” of the saints. Righteous deeds are a manifestation of the inner life of the saints, and are practically equivalent to character (cf. 7:14b; 14:13). Also this metaphor is connected with the righteous works of the saints, which is presented in the use of the middle voice in the verb periba/lhtai – i.e. clothing oneself. McIlraith points out that the bride clothes herself, but the activity is also given to her. He calls this double belonging a “theological passive” which indicates the action of God (also

41 Refer to Matt. 5:12 where both verbs are used.
evident in 2:26) (McIlraith 1999:525). This picture presents a contrast with the prostitute of chapter 17. What the bride has done for herself (v.7) is in the ultimate sense a provision of God’s grace. This self-preparation equates to God’s provision for her to clothe herself in bright, clean fine linen (Thomas 1995:370).

3.4.2. The Wedding Supper of The Lamb (19:9)

19:9 Kai le/gei moi, Gra/yon: Maka/roi oi( ei)$ to\ dei=pnon tou= ga/mou tou= a)mi/ou keklhme/noi. kai le/gei moi, Ou!toi oi( lo/ goi a)lhqinoi tou= qeou= ei)sin. “And he says to me, Write, Blessed [are those] to the supper of the marriage of the Lamb having been called. And he says to me, These the words true of God are.”

The speaker here could probably be the interpreting angel last encountered in 17:15, but because no mention is made to the identity of the angel, he has to remain anonymous (Osborne 2002:675). The angel le/gei “says” (present, indicative, active), or rather ‘commands’ John, to Gra/yon “Write” (aorist, imperative, active). The content of the command to write, includes: Maka/roi oi( ei)$ to\ dei=pnon tou= ga/mou tou= a)mi/ou keklhme/noi “Blessed [are those] having been called (perfect, passive, participle) to the marriage supper of the Lamb.” The passive voice points to God who does the inviting. The book of Revelation contains seven beatitudes (cf. 1:3; 14:13; 16:15; 19:9; 20:6; 22:7, 14) of which this is the fourth. This along with the rest of the declarations in pronouncing blessing on the faithful, contrasts with those who have not been faithful to Christ who instead are in a state of mourning (chap. 18). Those invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb are described in terms of their call, which may contain a hint of the permanence of the invitation in the perfect participle (Morris
1984:227). It is interesting to note that the saints are both the “bride” of Christ (vv.7-8) and also the guests to the supper. Reference is made to Christ as both the Lamb and the Shepherd of the sheep (7:17) and is also a conquering warrior (19:11-16). In this light, it is not unthinkable that the church is both the bride (i.e. the corporate church) and the invited guests (i.e. individual believers) in this passage (see, Thomas 1995:372 & Beale 1999:945). The symbolism here also needs to be understood, for marriage portrays the believer’s union with Christ, and the marriage supper portrays the close fellowship in that relationship.

The angel continues: Οὐτοὶ οἱ λόγοι τοῦ θεοῦ εἰσίν “These are (present, indicative, active, 3rd person, plural) the true words of God.” The demonstrative pronoun and the noun Οὐτοὶ ... λόγοι “These ... words” in this phrase may be best interpreted as referring to all the preceding words since 17:1. These are happenings that will definitely come to pass.

3.5. The Command to Worship God (19:10)

John, in an overwhelmed state, worships the angel. The angel stops him and redirects John’s attention to God.

19:10 καὶ εἶπες ευπρόσδεχόμεν τῳ νοῦν αὐτῷ προσκυνῆσαι αὐτῷ | καὶ λέγει μοι Ὑδράμην | ἤτοι καὶ τῷ ἀδελφῷ σου τῷ ξοντὶ τὴν μαρτυρίαν Ἰησοῦ | προσκυνόν. ἡ γὰρ μαρτυρία Ἰησοῦ εἶναι τὸ πνεῦμα τῆς προφητείας. “And I fell before the feet of him to worship him. And he says to me, See not. Fellow servant of you I am
and the brothers of you the having the testimony of Jesus. God worship. The for
testimony of Jesus is the spirit of the prophecy.”

John records his response to the angel (similar to 22:8). He says, καὶ ἐπεσε ἐ

ἐκπροσκήνην τῶν ποδῶν αὐτοῦ προσκύνησαι αὐτῷ | “and I fell (aorist, indicative, active)
before his feet to worship (aorist, active, infinitive) him.” The combination προσκύνησαι αὐτῷ | shows that the worshipping of the angel was John’s intention in his
overwhelmed state (Thomas 1995:375). John had to be rebuked immediately with the
command, ὅρα μὴ/ “see not” or “see that you do not [do this]” (present, imperative,
active).

The angel goes on to provide a reason as to why he is not to be worshipped. He

says, σὺνδουλῶν σου εἰμι καὶ τῶν αδελφῶν σου τὴν εξοντων τὴν μαρτυρίαν Ἰησοῦν | “I am
(present, indicative, active) a fellow-slave with you and your brothers who are having
(present, active, participle) the testimony of Jesus.” Together the angelic beings, the
angels and the saints are mere “slaves” or “servants” of God. These created beings
are not to be worshipped. Worship is directed to the Creator alone, which is evident
in the angel’s next command: ἴπτωσίν προσκυνήσαν “Worship (aorist, imperative, active)
God.” Thomas writes, “The case of αὐτῷ | is dative. When this case follows προσκυνεῖω, it
indicates worship with divine honor” (Thomas 1995:380).

The last phrase ἡ (γαρ μαρτυρία Ἰησοῦ ἐστιν τὸ πνεῦμα τῆς προφητείας | “for the testimony
of Jesus is (present, indicative, active) the spirit of prophecy.” Mounce argues for the
subjective genitive instead of the objective genitive. He writes: “It could mean that the
witness or testimony that Jesus bore is the essence of prophetic proclamation – the
principle that dominates prophecy” (Mounce 1998:349-350). Beale argues that ἡ( 
marturί/a Ἰhsou= can be understood as both subjective and objective genitive, in the 
sense that it could mean “the witness by Jesus and to Jesus,” for the witness was 
first borne by Jesus and then transmitted to believers, and the witness they bear is 
about Jesus (Beale 1999:947). De Smidt breaks the expression into two parts, firstly, 
“the testimony of Jesus” and secondly, the “spirit of prophecy.” According to Rev. 1:5; 
3:14, Jesus is the faithful witness; and His testimony, which John revealed in this 
book, is the truth that is revealed to His people (De Smidt 1999:38). According to De 
Smidt, “… this presupposes that Jesus and the truth he proclaimed, and specifically 
as it appears in Revelation, has become the responsibility of the Spirit and the 
believers. They were obliged to tell of Jesus and proclaim his truth” (De Smidt 
1999:38).

3.6. Concluding Remarks:
In chapter 2, we have witnessed the constant threat that the world faces when politics and religion are combined. We have witnessed the pain that persecuted believers endure when man exalts himself to the place of God. The present teaches us that man does not learn from the past - for we encounter the similar predicament in many countries. We have further witnessed in chapter 3 the subtle seduction of humanity into false religion and commercialism which removes man away from God, resulting in man following Satan’s evil scheme – which ultimately leads to his destruction. We have also witnessed the believers’ redemption from the earthly evil system to an eternal reunion with Christ.

In the light of these findings, we now proceed to examine what life in Christ is all about whilst we live on earth. We will examine how the worship of God fits into the everyday living, and what it entails, for the believer. We will examine the role of songs, which is but an aspect of worship.

Chapter 4
The Functional Position of Songs within Worship:

“Give me the making of the songs of a nation and I care not who writes its laws,” said eighteenth-century Scottish political thinker, Andrew Fletcher (Zacharias 1994:3). These words expose the extraordinary control that song lyrics have on the moods and the convictions of people.

Du Rand presents a different approach for an understanding of the entire structure of the Apocalypse. He argues that it could be compared to, and understood through music – especially the “basso ostinato” or “ground bass.” The “basso ostinato” is described as a short phrase, either an accompanimental figure or an actual melody, which is repeated over and over again in the bass part, while the upper parts proceed normally. It has the function of binding the composition together as a unity (Du Rand 1993:301). Du Rand highlights 57 verses, ranging from the beginning to the end of the Apocalypse, and shows how music could help in the understanding of the Apocalypse as a whole. He writes:

“According to the list above (i.e. 57 verses), the Leitmotif or ‘basso ostinato’ in the narratological unfolding of the plot of the Apocalypse can be described as the enacting of the decisive and functional commitment of God to accomplish salvation as well as judgement, particularly based on the Christ-event. The Christ-event, by way of interpretation forms the ‘basso ostinato’ which binds the narrative of the Apocalypse into a unity” (Du Rand 1993:306).42

One of the most important functions of the church is that of the worship of God. Worship, which Erickson defines as, “the praise and exaltation of God” (Erickson 1985:1057), was a common Old Testament practice as is particularly evidenced in

42 Italics added.
the Psalms. Archbishop William Temple, quoted by Zacharias, offers an excellent all-encompassing definition of what worship is, and what it constitutes for the believer, in the following quote:

“Worship is the submission of all our nature to God. It is the quickening of conscience by His holiness, nourishment of mind by His truth, purifying of imagination by His beauty, opening of the heart to His love, and submission of will to His purpose. All this gathered up in adoration is the greatest of all expressions of which we are capable” (Zacharias 1994:151) (italics added).

Jesus said that true worship is worship that is done in “spirit and truth” (John 4:23-24). The constraints of truth can only be justified in the presence and character of God. Anything else will result in a descent into depths of superstition, in the name of religion. Only worship that is spiritual and true coalesces conscience, mind, imagination, heart, and will in one direction, thus creating a unity and leading to a life that is lived in harmony with ultimate good (Zacharias 1994:151).

The Book of Revelation continues with pictures of the continual recognition and declaration of God’s greatness and goodness by His creation and a call for humanity to find purpose and fulfillment in Him. One of the forms that was used, and is still being used today in the worship of God, is that of music and song. An important point to note is of the attitude of the heart in response to the Christ event as worship is explored in God’s Word.

4.1. Singing in Worship: A Historical Overview:

Singing played an important part in the worship and national life of the Jews of the Old Testament. They had a regular practice of composing songs that celebrated some special victory or significant religious experience (e.g. Exod. 15). Tenney
suggests that the first song recorded in the Bible, was sung by Lamech (Gen. 4:23-24) (Tenney 1967:805).

2 Chronicles gives an account of the dedication of the Temple that was built during Solomon’s reign. The priests and the Levitical singers, with cymbals, harps, lyres and trumpets and together with many singers, worshipped the Lord in unison. They sang, “For He is good, for his steadfast love endures forever” (5:13). This temple, in Jerusalem, became the central place of worship for the entire Hebrew people. Everyone came up to Jerusalem to rejoice before the Lord. Their acts of worship included music, solos, anthems, shouting, dancing, processions, the playing of instruments, preaching, recitations of the stories of Israel, petitions, prayers, vows, saying of creeds and confessions, etc. Segler refers to Samuel Terrien’s observations of the Hebrew Psalms, that they:

“… constitute the core of personal prayer and corporate worship for all forms of Judaism – Orthodox, Conservative, Reform – and for all churches of Christendom – Greek, Roman, Protestant. They were the liturgical food of the inner life of Jesus and provided support for Paul and Silas in prison…” (Segler 1967:23).

The Book of Psalms is rich in content with many kinds of songs. Songs were written for both personal and communal worship. These will include songs of praise, adoration, thanksgiving, lament, confession of sin, etc. The music to which these songs were sung has been lost. Tenney provides the following insight into the possible sound of the lost music:

“… it was undoubtedly similar to that of the Arabs today – plaintive, limited in compass, and marked by emphasis in rhythm” (Tenney 1967:805-6).

Singing was an integral part of the worship of the Hebrews. The Prophets remind us that worship needed not to be entered upon lightly or with irreverence. From the
Israelites’ history, we find many of the prophets protesting empty rituals and mixed motives of the people in their acts of worship (e.g. Amos 5:21-24; Hosea 6:6; Micah 6:6-8). Several of them (e.g. Jer. 2:13; Ezek. 5:11; Book of Malachi) called also for a general reformation of worship due to the insincerity of the people in worship.

It is true that early New Testament or Christian worship grew out of the Jewish practices of the Temple and Synagogue; yet, it also had its own distinct qualities. These will include the New Testament Scriptures, New Testament hymns (e.g. Phil. 2:5-11), the Sacraments (baptism, the Lord’s Supper), the presence of God’s Holy Spirit and the emphasis of the risen Christ, worship was no more confined to time, space, etc. The early church was a singing community. Singing in the early church “… functioned as a means for spiritual formation, incarnating the meaning of the gospel into the lives of those participating in worship” (Hatcher 2001:476). Paul writes in Colossians 3:16 “Let the word of Christ dwell richly in you as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God.” Paul understands that the practice of singing in worship, together with the teaching and encouragement of the Word helped to facilitate the Word of Christ Jesus to penetrate into the experience of the Christian believers (Hatcher 2001:477). Singing was one of many vehicles through which the Holy Spirit spoke to the inner person. It also functioned as a means for believers to express joy, thanksgiving and devotion to God in response to His gracious activity amongst them.
Hatcher provides an account of the eighteenth-century Methodist Revival when the intentional use of hymns was used to awaken people to the call of the Gospel and to help in their spiritual development. He writes:

“Prior to the eighteenth-century revival, hymn singing in Britain was largely confined to Dissenters and small religious societies within the Church of England. John Wesley recognized the powerful effect hymn singing could have in bringing people to religious convictions and in increasing their understanding of the Bible. From the early days of the Oxford Methodists onward, Wesley made singing of hymns a regular feature of public evangelism, Methodist meetings (societies, classes and bands), and Methodist devotional practices…. Methodists everywhere became well known for their singing” (Hatcher 2001:477).

For many years, ‘singing’ was what constituted ‘worship’ in a church. This was ‘done’ before the ‘most important part’ of the gathering – which was the preaching of the Word (at least this is the heritage of the Baptist denomination of which I am a part of). Worship is far more than music, for worship predates music. Warren gives a reminder that Adam worshiped in the Garden of Eden, but music is not mentioned until Genesis 4:21 with the birth of Jubal. He further argues that if worship were just music, then all who are nonmusical could never worship (Warren 2002:65). In recent times, there has been a great shift from the past mind-set of music being the whole of what worship constituted, to worship becoming a life-style. Also, there had been developments in worship services where everything done is viewed as acts of worship unto God.

Regarding singing and music, the trend of the 21st century is for people to go where there is vibrant singing and good music accompaniment. The present Christian culture do not just want good preaching – but also meaningful praise and worship. There is a good balance that is beginning to emerge on the scene, as worship services are becoming more Christ-focussed. This is leading to the majority of
congregants becoming tolerant of different forms of worship as people are beginning to see that there is variety in worship. In other words, the teenagers are happy to sing the old hymns that their grandparents love; and the grandparents are prepared to worship with the teenagers to the songs and music of Hillsongs - Australia.

4.2. The Worshipping of God through the Songs of Revelation:
Osborne notes that the various scenes in Revelation that reveal who God is, are worship scenes (Osborne 2002:46). In the Apocalypse, there are constant ‘looking up’ scenes, where John focuses on what goes on in heaven as worship is ascribed to God; and ‘looking down’ scenes, where he focuses on the idolatry on earth (which is a central problem in the book).

4.2.1. Worship Terminology in Revelation:
Various Greek terms are used in the Apocalypse for worship, which includes in alphabetical order (and the number of times they appear):

"a)dw (3), ai)ne/w (1), a(llhloui+a (4), a)mh/n (5), doca/zw (1), eu)xapiste/w (1), eu)xaristi/a (2), latreu/w (2), pi/ptw (8), proskune/w (24), w]dh/ (5)" (Voorwinde 1998:3).

The verb proskune/w “worship” is by far the most significant and most frequently used with its occurrence some 24 times in Revelation. Voorwinde understands the word to indicate: “… both the immense scope and the countless number of those who worship God and the Lamb” (Voorwinde 1998:3). At the same time, the word also describes the earthly worship of the rivals of God and the Lamb: i.e. demons and idols (9:20); the dragon or Satan (13:4) and the beast and his image (13:4, 8, 12, 15;
14:9, 11; 16:2; 19:20; 20:4). Humanity's worship can either be directed to the divine or the demonic – there is no middle way (Voorwinde 1998:4). Revelation presents a recurring command to worship the Creator (14:7; 19:10; 22:9), and forbids any worship of His creation (19:10; 22:8-9).

Various passages within Revelation refer to speaking, instead of singing – especially when angelic beings are worshipping. However, they are interpreted as 'songs' due to the nature of the address to God (Coleman 1980:17). Morris argues that the word for speaking is consistent with singing (Morris 1984:100). Even with all of the judgement scenes, the attitude surrounding Revelation never ceases to be one of worship.

4.2.2. Discussing the Message/s of the Songs of Revelation:
As the songs are discussed, various attributes of God become evident, and are therefore explored to understand who God is and how the unbeliever/believer is to respond to Him and His message.

4.2.2.1. God’s Sovereignty and Omnipotence:
God is referred to as “Almighty” (4:8; 11:17; 15:3; 16:7; 19:6) which Bromiley also translates as “the ruler of all things” (Bromiley 1985:468). He understands these references to point to “God’s universal supremacy, but in a static sense as compared with the more dynamic sense of omnipotence” (Bromiley 1985:468).
God’s sovereignty and omnipotence cannot be separated, for God is sovereign because He holds all power (4:11; 5:12, 13; 7:12; 11:17; 12:10; 19:1) and no-one can supercede His power. As God’s power is evidenced, the fact of His sovereignty can also be evidenced over all creation. Due to the fact that God is sovereign and omnipotent, His rule is sure - therefore no one can dethrone or replace Him.

The songs of Revelation acknowledge both of these attributes of God in His vindication of the saints and His judgement of evil and evildoers. In the song of Chapter 4, God’s power and might is evidenced in the truths that He is both the Eternal God (cf. v.8 “… who was, and is, and is to come”), and Creator God (cf. v.11 “… for you created all things, and by your will they were created and have their being”).

In the song of 5:9-13, the Lamb’s power and might is evidenced in His sacrificial role and the shedding of His blood with which He purchased people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation. In verse 12, the multitude of angels join in according unto Christ almost similar worship that the twenty-four elders had earlier in 4:11 accorded unto God. Then in 5:13, all creatures join in giving the exact same worship unto God and the Lamb (“To him who sits on the throne and unto the Lamb be praise and honour and glory and power, for ever and ever!”). A part of the celebration is the worship of God and the Lamb for their power.

In the song of chapter 7, the power of God and the Lamb is celebrated by the redeemed and heavenly beings because of their salvation plan for man. Coleman offers the following expanded paraphrase of 7:10:
“Thou, our God, sitting in majesty and power upon Thy throne, together with the Lamb who died in our place, are the cause and means of our salvation. Without Thy effectual calling and care, and the blood of Thy Son, we could not have triumphed over evil or entered into Thy presence adorned in holiness. It is all Thy doing, and to Thee belongs all the glory” (Coleman 1980:80-1).

It is true that the whole work of redemption is initiated and sustained by God’s divine will and grace - through the atoning sacrifice of the Son. Deliverance from sin and its effect is complete through the perfect salvation work of God.

Following the pronouncement of the eternal reign of God by the loud voices of Chapter 11:15, the twenty-four elders prostrate themselves before God in worship and give thanks to Him because He has taken His great power and has begun to reign (v.17). The omnipotent Sovereign God, with His mighty power, has taken charge of the situation. Coleman comments: “The long mystery of God’s rule is now revealed; that which has been hidden from the ages is manifest to all” (Coleman 1980:105). The verb forms here emphasize the certainty of what is at hand. The verb in the phrase “you have taken” (v.17) is in the perfect tense, indicating an act which continues into the future – assuring that God’s power is everlasting. The other verb in the verse “have begun” is in the aorist tense, meaning that God’s triumph is decisive and accomplished (Coleman 1980:105). God exercises His power over evil in judgement of it (v.18). God’s judgement of evil is elaborated in chapters 17 and 18; followed by the rejoicing of heaven over its destruction in chapter 19:1-8.

In 12:10-12, God’s exercising of His power is further evidenced as the accuser of the brothers, Satan, is hurled down to earth. In 12:3, Satan has seven heads with crowns pointing to the authority and power he has. Yet, he is defeated and thrown down to
earth, pointing to the fact that even his power cannot compare to God’s omnipotence and Sovereignty.

After the destruction of the prostitute (as recorded in chapters 17 and 18), there is much rejoicing in heaven (ch. 19). Chapter 19:1 re-echoes (although a shortened version) the content of the song of chapter 7:10-12. God is worshipped by the saints in heaven for His judgement of the prostitute (i.e. evil), through whom, innocent blood was spilled (v.2). God’s power is celebrated, for He is Victor and no one and nothing can dethrone Him. He has the final word.

4.2.2.2. God’s Holiness:
John’s first vision of heaven starts with God. He is taken from his world where evil abounds, and is shown heaven. John gazes upon God and can only describe Him using ‘costly jewels’ terminology. Thereafter, he encounters a scene similar to the one Isaiah had (Isa. 6:2) when God’s holiness is celebrated. The word ‘holy’ primarily means ‘separate.’ God’s separateness points to His complete purity. Evil, may seem powerful, but God’s holiness triumphs. This is evidenced as evil is completely destroyed, by God, in judgement (chapters 17-19). Purity and holiness reigns.

The songs of chapters 15 and 16 further re-iterates God’s holiness in the midst of judgement scenes. Because He is holy, whatever He does is “just and true” (15:3; 16:5). God cannot act otherwise – for anything else will be contrary to His nature. Therefore the nations will worship Him, for God’s attribute of holiness will be seen through His righteous acts (as evidenced in His judgements and His intolerance of
evil). In view of God’s holiness, evil must be punished by Him – and completely
destroyed (chapters 17-19).

4.2.2.3. God’s Infinity:
The phrases: “…who was, and is, and is to come” (4:8) and “king of the ages” (15:3) point to God’s attribute of being the eternal God. He had no beginning and He has no end. He is not created or sustained by anything or anyone – and yet He created and sustains everything and everyone (Acts 17:24-28; Col. 1:16-17; Rev. 4:11). Furthermore, the songs point to God’s reign as eternal (5:13; 7:12; 11:15; 19:6).

4.2.2.4. God’s Love:
The songs do not openly declare God’s love – yet it is the foundation for all God does. The basic dimensions of God’s love to us are witnessed in the following:

- Benevolence – i.e. God’s concern for the welfare of those whom he loves (Manikam 2001:5). The songs declare God’s love as He demonstrates it by the Lamb’s sacrifice (e.g. 5:9 “… because you were slain, and with your blood you purchased men for God from every tribe and language and people and nation”). God’s love is further evidenced as believers find refuge and security in God’s presence (e.g. 7:15b-17 “… and he who sits on the throne will spread his tent over them. Never again will they hunger, never again will they thirst. The sun will not beat upon them, nor any scorching heat. For the Lamb at the center of the
throne will be their shepherd: he will lead them to springs of living water. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes”). Also God’s concern for believers is evidenced as He avenges His servants’ deaths (16:5-7).

- God’s love is an unselfish interest in us for our sake. This is seen primarily in God sending his Son to die for us. To God, love is an active matter (1:5b-6; 5:9b-10). The entire plan of salvation, both the Cross-Event and the Eschatological hope, is built on the foundation of God’s love for man. Paul declares in Romans 8:28 that God is working out all things for the good of the believer – whether good or bad events – they all have a purpose to promote our wellbeing. Revelation points to bad times that believers will have to endure – yet the glorious hope is an eternity in heaven with no more of the present life’s pain, hardship and decay (7:15-17; 19:7-8).

- Grace – God deals with his people not on the basis of their merit or worthiness, or what they deserve, but simply on the basis of his goodness & generosity (Manikam 2001:5). God supplies us with undeserved favours – he requires nothing from us. Salvation is a gift from God (5:9-10; 7:10; 19:1).

4.2.2.5. God’s Justice:

Coleman argues that it is imperative for there to be an authority above man, a fixed standard of perfection, if there is to be justice and liberty (Coleman 1980:104). By removing God out of the picture, as atheism does, the Scriptures are also removed. This results in man becoming the defining ‘yard-stick’ on moral issues. The fact is

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43 Similar terms are used in chapters 11:17 and 16:5 which point to God’s eternality.
that every person’s ‘yard-stick’ is different leading to the problem of there being no foundation for moral judgements. Scripture is the unchanging point of reference (or absolute) by which all other changes are measured (Zacharias 1997:219). God’s acts to maintain justice that are recorded in the Apocalypse are in accordance with that point of reference that He has established. The judgements that Revelation 6-18 pronounces makes clear that there is a God – and He is in control (Witherington III 2003:131). In the light of His holiness and untaintedness by evil, God does not merely overlook it. He has to deal with evil and those that are engaged in its practices (15:3-4; 16:5-6; 19:2). Those acts of judgements prove that God is concerned about the way man lives and also about the way people treat each other.

4.2.2.6. The Deity of the Son and the Trinity:

Similar wording is constantly used with God and the Lamb pointing to the deity of the Lamb (egs. references of worship to God: 4:8, 11; 7:10, 12; and the Lamb: 5:12). Also, the portion of the song in 5:13 is addressed to both God and the Lamb who are accorded similar worship.

The work of salvation is said to belong to both God and the Lamb (7:10), pointing to the oneness that is experienced in the God-head. The Lamb is said to be “... at the center of the throne....” (v.17), and all the angelic beings and the redeemed are around the throne with the throne as the central focus. The prominent place of the Lamb

44 with the Father at the centre also alludes to the Lamb’s deity.

44 In 5:6, the Lamb is described as having seven eyes, which is interpreted as the seven spirits of God or the sevenfold Spirit of God, which is generally understood to be the third Person of the Trinity.
In the song of chapter 11, the kingdom of the world is said to belong to God and Christ (v.15), here again pointing to their oneness.

4.2.2.7. The Saints' Victory and Hope:

The Lamb’s sacrificial work provides for the believer a sure eternal security. Believers now are part of a ‘new’ kingdom, having direct access to the Father in their new role as priests. This is evidenced in the present (1:6; 5:10) and in the eschatological hope (7:15). The saints overcome the devil and his schemes by “the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony (12:11; cf. Rom. 10:9). The Lamb accomplishes victory for the saints upon the cross.

Whilst God displays His power in judgement against the godless; the hope for the believer is rewards (11:18). Part of that reward includes becoming the Lamb’s bride (19:7-8) and at the same time having fellowship with the Bridegroom (v. 9). As mentioned earlier, the believer’s eschatological hope consists of an eternal unity with each other no matter what the age, colour or language is (7:9-10); eternal fellowship with God (7:15a); eternal protection in God (7:15b, 16b, 17a); eternal satisfaction in God (7:16a, 17b); and eternal joy and peace (7:17c).

4.3. Establishing the Functional Role of Singing

It is now necessary to try and establish the functional role of song and singing from what has been discussed up to this point in this chapter.
4.3.1. Singing: How can it contribute to the believer's belief system?:

Hatcher argues that the role of singing (together with the Holy Spirit's work) has the power to affect the construction of a people’s “religious symbol system” (Hatcher 2001:480). This religious symbol system functions, both as a model of the believer’s reality, and a model for the believer’s reality (Hatcher 2001:480). In other words, there is an objective conceptual form to the social, psychological and spiritual realities of the believer (Hatcher 2001:480). For example, the singing about the holiness of God and the judgement of evil by God that the Apocalypse proclaims, are tools that provide for the believer a standard to conform to the reality of his religious system. In other words, because God is a holy God and has no fellowship in evil - but punishes evil, this represents for the believer a standard for him to live his life in holiness; or like the unbeliever, face eternity apart from God.

Hatcher also gives a reminder that singing in itself is not the source of the content of the symbol, rather that the “… content is supplied by the work of the Holy Spirit who illuminates people’s understanding of the reality to which Biblical images, narratives, and sayings point (John 14:26; 16:12-15)” (Hatcher 2001:480). This would mean that the song is not the focus in worship – but the message that the song conveys, which the Holy Spirit enables a person to understand, is the primary goal in singing.

4.3.2. Bringing Down Walls Through Song:

There are two major modes by which people interrelate with each other in their society: 1) Social mode, and 2) ‘Communitas’ mode. (Hatcher refers to the work of Victor Turner whose writings Hatcher uses to shape his arguments. The term
“communitas” was also coined by Turner. From this point on, we will use the term “community” to replace Turner’s and Hatcher’s “communitas”).

The Social mode are the normal patterns of the social structure by which a culture organizes people into various statuses and roles and provides by which people interact with each other in accordance with the statuses and the roles they occupy (e.g. husband/wife relationship, father/son relationship, store clerk/shopper relationship, boss/worker relationship, etc.). The community mode happens when people are moved to the margin of the normal patterns of social structure and experience their common humanity and oneness with each other (Hatcher 2001:480). Hatcher describes this group as people that sometimes “…shift into this mode in spontaneous ways, such as at an office Christmas party where through the singing of Christmas carols employees of all ranks get caught up in a feeling of awe and oneness with each other. Ritual processes, such as a church service, deliberately try to invoke this mode by asking people of all statuses to interact with God as one people through the corporate activities of singing, praying, giving, listening, sitting, standing, etc. The ritual process removes the differentiation of people by kinship and economic and political domains and asks people to relate to each other and to God in the structure of the symbols and symbolic activity that are embodied in the ritual” (Hatcher 2001:480-1).

Hatcher continues to point out that as people move to the margin of social structure and enter into the community mode, they experience a sense of lowliness and sacredness. As things like status, property, nomenclature, sex distinctions, etc., are stripped away, people are brought low and experience the sacred and holy. At this point, they become open to symbolic instruction from the sacred concerning fundamental patterns of human values, meaning and relationships which are carried inside them even after they exit the community mode into the social mode.
The outworking of the above is evidenced in the use of singing as a tool in worship, which helps in the breaking down of social barriers and help toward community and understanding the concept of becoming “a kingdom” (1:6; 5:10). Singing provides the following three experiences of community in worship:

a.) Singing effectively moves people to the margin of normal structures and invokes the experience of community. Just the act of singing together begins to strip away the normal structures of interrelating. This one act can lead a diverse group of people to focusing on God and not on themselves. The picture that Revelation 7:9-10 presents (i.e. the countless multitude from “every nation, tribe, people and language”), although an eschatological hope, yet it confirms Hatcher’s argument, and must be applied in the “here and now.”

b.) Singing provides an effective language during the experience of community for inter-acting with God and Scripture. Singing, as evidenced in the songs of Revelation, has the capacity to express devotion, intent and emotion that make it a tool for hearing from and responding to God. Coleman writes, “… if we concentrate on what happens around us and become absorbed with the affairs of men and nations, we inevitably become cynical and disillusioned with life. If we turn inward and direct attention upon ourselves, we shrivel in our own sphere of experience, ultimately becoming enslaved to the dying flesh. But if we focus attention upon God and the greatness of His Being, seeking to interpret all that is in the light of His Word, then our minds and spirits pulsate with the heartbeat...
of the universe, and existence takes on deathless, joyous meaning” (Coleman 1980:18).

c.) Singing provides an auditory symbol that can re-invoke into consciousness what one has experienced and learned during the time of community. Experiencing the presence of God in song has a long-lasting effect upon the believer that is stored up in the person and can be recalled every time that song is sung. The social experiences surrounding that encounter can also be recalled.
Chapter 5

Theological Issues in Revelation 17:1 to 19:10

The Apocalypse is God’s story, and it is told from a theocentric perspective (Du Rand 1997:59). In trying to gain a further understanding of the Book of Revelation, we now begin to bring to it our questions. These theological questions will enable us to dialogue with the text; but with the realization that we must not force answers from the text when none is given.

On the basic content of theological issues in Revelation, Michaels writes:

“At the very least, traditional Christian theology asks two questions of any work: ‘What does it tell us about Jesus Christ?’ and ‘What does it tell us about ourselves?’” (Michaels 1992:129).

Michaels further adds that the Book of Revelation will naturally lead to questions surrounding man’s future and also the future of the world. In addition, we will also discuss the aspects of sin and judgement.

To summarize, all theological aspects will be discussed using the following framework as a background:

1. GOD
2. MAN
3. SIN
4. COSMOS
5.1. THEOLOGY

It is imperative at this point to state that God is Trinity. As this chapter unfolds, we will present arguments for the Tri-une God: i.e. God the Father (for us), God the Son (with us) and God the Holy Spirit (in us).

5.1.1. The Sovereignty of God:

It seems clear that the primary theme of the Book of Revelation is the Sovereignty of God. Osborne, quoting Du Rand, believes that the framework of the book “… is built around the sovereign kingship of God from the standpoint of God’s transcendency over this world” (Osborne 2002:31), of which God is both Creator and Judge – the Lord over history. History is the spatial framework within which the Sovereignty of God is told (Du Rand 1997:60). God’s sovereignty demands that He be in control of the happenings on earth and in the heavens. At no point is history out of the controlling power of God. In spite of all the evil and destruction that this book presents, God’s will for creation still prevails – which is ultimate good. It would seem as if John is presenting to the readers the big picture of history, which is viewed from outside of time and space. The inevitable reign of God with good over evil will prevail, which the people outside of Christ, who are time-bound and space-bound can not see. Those in Christ are an eschatological community.

God’s providence is witnessed in His allowance for evil to run its course resulting in evil’s self-destruction. This is evidenced in chapter 17 in the prostitute. The angel identifies her as the “great city that rules over the kings of the earth” (17:18). The prostitute, in 17:3, is sitting on the beast. Morris comments on this relationship: “The
woman’s posture indicates a close connection and identifies her as one of the forces of evil continually supported by the beast” (Morris 1984:205).

This relationship will ultimately be severed as the beast and ten horns will hate the prostitute and bring about her ruin (17:16). Chapter 17:17 reads: “For God has put it into their hearts to accomplish his purpose by agreeing to give the beast their power to rule, until God’s words are fulfilled” (NIV). A theological problem arises here: “How can a God who is absolutely righteous in all His ways (Ps. 145:17) be a party to this sinful activity?” Thomas provides the following answer:

“The seeming contradiction of this verse to the character of God is irresolvable to finite minds. In the outworking of His plan for this creation God allowed the existence of evil, but He is not in any sense the author of evil (James 1:13). He does not put it into the hearts of the kings to make war with the Lamb, but to give their kingdom to the beast. He now allows that evil to run its course in bringing this creation to its inevitable end as the kings decide on their own to make war with the Lamb” (Thomas 1995:306).

Evil will self-destruct (Wall 1991:203), for the forces of evil may seem united, but there is no fellowship within them. Also, the grieving that follows, is more a concern for money and self rather than for God and neighbour. Wall refers to the grieving for material loss as “the dehumanizing values that characterize the evil empire” (Wall 1991:203). Evil alliances will never prosper for all parties concerned. One will dominate for the purpose of self-benefit. This is evidenced as the prostitute is destroyed. This self-destruction is by God's design.

Chapter 17 portrays the prostitute as being destroyed by the beast and the ten kings (v. 16). In chapters 18-19, God is the One who brings about His judgements on the prostitute through fire (18:8, 20; 19:1-2). Due to this apparent contradiction, some commentators view chapters 17 and 18 as two distinctive Babylons, and two
separate judgements (Dyer 1987:308). These commentators fail to recognize, firstly, God’s Sovereignty, and hence His providence over positive as well as negative events; and secondly, both 17:16b and 18:8 describe Babylon’s destruction by fire. Chapter 17 portrays human destruction; whilst chapter 18 does not. In both these chapters, however, God is the One who is in control over the destruction of evil, for He is said to be the One who ‘has put it into their hearts to accomplish his purpose’ (17:17), and is the “Lord God who judges her…” (18:8). Both chapters ascribe Babylon’s destruction to Sovereign God, although the former describes His sovereign use of man to accomplish His purposes.

In chapter 18, the destruction of Babylon has a wider and greater effect. Those who traded with Babylon and had become rich are greatly affected by her destruction. They are said to weep over her destruction (18:9-19). This grief is centered not upon the loss of human life, but upon the loss of the city and its wealth (Wall 1991:203). These are also partakers in Babylon’s evils for they are described as those who “committed adultery with her and shared her luxury” (18:9). There seems to be a rippling effect in the judgement of evil, through God’s providence. As people have become rich through Babylon’s wealth, they also are impoverished by her destruction. God’s Sovereignty is once again witnessed when He overcomes evil. Therefore the great multitude have course to celebrate in 19:6b with a fitting tribute to Sovereign God: “Hallelujah! For our Lord God Almighty reigns.”
5.1.2. Worship: Directed to God

The judgements that Revelation portrays are designed to drive people to their knees in repentance before it is irrevocably too late. According to Ladd, these judgements create an image of God as loving and merciful, rather than hating and vindictive (Ladd 1993:677). It is only in the Christian faith that life with God is always portrayed as a relationship of love. Zacharias gives a reminder that in Christian terms, love does not stand as an emotion or even as an expression; but, that love ultimately flowers to worship in the believer’s relationship with God (Zacharias 1994:112). So, worship is not motivated by fearing God or His judgements; but is motivated by love for Him.

The overthrow of evil and the reign of righteousness receive praise in heaven (ch. 19) from the heavenly inhabitants who are closest to God. The twenty-four elders and the four living creatures prostrate themselves before God in worship (19:4). The throne (v. 4) reaffirms God’s majesty - He alone is King and worthy of worship. God’s omnipotence and sovereignty over heaven and earth is evidenced in 19:6; yet at the same time He is the personal “our Lord God” (Coleman 1980:142-143). Coleman adds a footnote commenting that some authorities leave out the possessive pronoun ‘our’ in this phrase for the reason that in other passages where the phrase ‘the Lord God, the Almighty’ occurs (1:8; 4:8; 11:17; 15:3; 16:7; 21:22), the possessive pronoun is not found. He argues that the word must not be excluded, for it appears in many of the better manuscripts (Coleman 1980:143).

After the destruction of the prostitute on earth (ch. 17-18), John is presented with an upward look to a heavenly scene (ch. 19:1-10). In heaven shouts of jubilation take
place over the destruction of the prostitute. The angel thereafter announces an invitation to the wedding supper of the Lamb (19:9). Upon witnessing these events, John falls at the feet of the angel to worship him (19:10). A strict warning follows as the angel stops John in his angel-worship. The angel describes himself as a fellow dūlōs (slave, or servant) with John of their Lord. John is reminded by the angel to worship God. One of the reasons that God is worshipped, is because He gives revelation; the angel is only a mediator and interpreter of the visions. There is no place in Christianity and the world at large for the worship of any, but God.

5.2. CHRISTOLOGY

Revelation surely contains a Christology. The book begins with the description “a revelation of Jesus Christ” (1:1). Michaels concludes from 1:1 that it is already stated that the book is about “… the things that must happen soon” (Michaels 1992:130). Therefore Jesus is understood to be the source of the book (i.e. book is ‘from’ Jesus), as opposed to being ‘about’ Jesus, although, throughout the book, several images emerge of Him. These images are discussed hereunder:

5.2.1. Christ: The Lamb:

Various ‘roles’ of the Christ and His identity will now be discussed from: (a.) the pericope chosen, (b.) the Book of Revelation as a whole, and, (c.) Scripture in its entirety, in order to establish a greater understanding of Christ and His work.
5.2.1.1. The Identity of “The Lamb” in Revelation

Hughes makes the following comment on the identity of the Lamb and His accomplished work:

“The Lamb, who is so much the central figure in these visions, portrays the incarnate Son with reference to his offering up of himself as a substitutionary sacrifice to redeem sinful men and bring them back to God” (Hughes 1990:8).

Guthrie suggests that in order for one to best understand the significance of the title of Jesus as the Lamb, the Jewish background on the sacrificial lamb must be considered (Guthrie 1987:46). Answers must be sought from the Jewish source, for lambs played an important part of the Jewish sacrificial system. The designation “The Lamb” is grounded in the sacrificial typology of the Old Testament, with particular reference to the Passover Lamb of Exodus 12 (cf. 1 Cor. 5:7 “Christ our Passover lamb has been slain”). Jesus appears in twenty-nine references as the slain Lamb in the book of Revelation. But, the sacrificing of the Lamb is a presupposition in the book, not part of its actual story line (as in the Gospels), for, as Michaels notes,

“… the cross of Jesus is as decisive here as it is in the Gospels or the letters of Paul, for the shedding of blood defines both the Lamb’s identity and that of His followers” (Michaels 1992:133).

5.2.1.2. The Divinity of the Lamb

An important title of the Lamb to note is that He is presented as “Lord of lords and King of kings” (17:14). The titles “Lord” and “King” suggest Christ’s equality with the Father. Erickson elaborates on the Septuagint’s translation of the Hebrew Yehovah and ‘Adonai to kurios, suggesting that the term signifies divinity when it is applied to Jesus (Erickson 1985:690-1). Christ’s rule as King is also presented, reinforcing Christ’s divinity.
The Lamb is the embodiment of the rule of God that is visible in the authority of the Lamb. The description of the Lamb as being in the midst of the throne means that he is the central figure on whom the attention is focused. The title “Lord of lords and King of kings” (17:14) highlights Christ’s rule as present and future. But looking around presently, one will not see Christ’s rule being actively enforced. Therefore the tendency will be to view Christ’s rule as only future. However, Christ’s rule is evidenced in the natural universe and in His Church (Col. 1:17-18). Christ’s complete rule will be evidenced when He returns in power, which will be His final step in His exaltation. Erickson comments on Christ’s future final exaltation:

“There is a time coming when the reign of Christ will be complete; then all will be under his rule, whether willingly and eagerly, or unwillingly and reluctantly” (Erickson 1985:768).

5.2.1.3. The Lamb’s Sovereignty over Evil

The action of the Lamb in opening the seals ushers in the progressive destruction of evil, which culminates in the fall of Babylon.

Revelation 17:14 sees the Lamb as the over-comer over evil and its forces. His victory over evil and its forces is not attained at Armageddon, but at the cross (Osborne 2002:34). His Lordship is unrestricted and His Sovereignty cannot be challenged. Once again Christ’s divinity is re-iterated. The doom of Satan, who is the arch-enemy of God, evil and all its participants is inescapable. No force in heaven or on earth can withstand the greatness of Christ’s power. God’s rule, in Christ, is and will be evidenced.
There are two significant features that are present concerning the Lamb. Firstly, John describes Him ‘as though He had been slain’ (5:6). This must be interpreted that the wounding is a sacrificial act that results in His triumph over sin, death and all evil spirit forces with their earthly systems and accomplices (as described in chapters 17-18).

Secondly, Jesus is pictured both as Lion and Lamb (5:5). Michaels comments on this picture by saying:

“… the figures of the Lion and the Lamb interpret each other. If the Lion turns out to be a sacrificial Lamb, the Lamb through the rest of the book behaves very much like a Lion” (Michaels 1992:130).

An example of this would be 17:14, where the Lamb has victory over evil for He is “Lord of lords and King of kings.” Guthrie further emphasizes the Lamb’s victory, but offers a different slant in the Lamb being a ‘gentle Victor’, when he writes:

“Since the main theme of this book is the ultimate victory of God and Christ over the forces of darkness, we might have thought the Lion figure would have been more appropriate. But the Lion title occurs nowhere else in the book. Its appearance in 5:5 is a fleeting one, the idea of ferocity is swiftly replaced by the gentleness associated with the figure of the lamb. This suggests that the divine conquest will not be achieved by a display of might, as in the case of the lion-lamb in the Testament of Joseph, but by suffering and sacrifice” (Guthrie 1987:48).

Revelation does present this paradox of a victorious Lamb who is all-powerful, but yet also gentle in His obtaining of this victory. It provides for a correct understanding of how God accomplishes His purposes, for one would expect Him to overthrow evil with force (as man so often does in this world). But God attains His victory by allowing evil to use force on the Lamb to destroy Him; but, He emerges as Victor through His gentleness, and evil is conquered. Here again we view evil’s self-destruction due to its inherent bad-ness, and God’s eternal victory through good.
Zacharias, quoting James Steward, reiterates this idea of evil’s self-destruction in Paul’s use of Psalm 68:18 “He led captivity captive”, describing Jesus’ triumph. Steward writes:

“It is a glorious phrase – “He led captivity captive.” The very triumphs of His foes, it means, He used for their defeat. He compelled their dark achievements to subserve His ends, not theirs. They nailed Him to a tree, not knowing that by that very act they were bringing the world to His feet. They gave Him a cross, not guessing that He would make it a throne. They flung Him outside the gates to die, not knowing that in that very moment they were lifting up the gates of the universe, to let the King come in. They thought to root out His doctrines, not understanding that they were implanting imperishably in the hearts of men the very name they intended to destroy. They thought they had God with His back to the wall, pinned and helpless and defeated; they did not know that it was God Himself who had tracked them down. He did not conquer in spite of the dark mystery of evil. He conquered through it” (Zacharias 1994:174).

Revelation describes Jesus as the Messiah, who accomplishes his destruction of evil, only as a result of being slain. Moreover, it is not contradictory for the Lamb to be called the Lion of the tribe of Judah, for this designation describes Christ as the One with majestic power and supreme authority as evidenced in 17:14. The titles of Lamb and Lion to Jesus are fitting; for the former describes His victory through His substitutionary work on the cross; and the latter describes Him in His risen glory as a conqueror over evil and its forces.

5.2.3. Christ: The Saviour:

In 7:10 again, worship is given to God and the Lamb for salvation ‘belongs’ to them. Guthrie notes the importance of this fact, for, he says, “… it offsets the impression that this book is concerned with judgement rather than salvation” (Guthrie 1987:49).
The Lamb that is portrayed in Revelation is Saviour, for mention is made of his blood (5:9; 7:14; 12:11). He has redeemed man from sin by going the way of the cross. John does not present the person of Christ apart from His atoning work. Therefore, caution must be applied when interpreting the role of the Lamb – not exclusively as the warrior of God’s wrath, but also as Saviour.

Man is the object of God’s salvation plan. The faithful are those who eternally benefit from Christ’s atoning work due to their accepting and following after Him. In 17:14, the righteous who had been martyred by the prostitute (17:6; 18:20, 24; 19:2b) are in a place of safety (i.e. with the Lamb) – saved from destruction, for they did not adulterate themselves with the prostitute. They stood for righteousness and were martyred; therefore, they will share with Christ in His ultimate triumph over evil. Evil systems and persons will be defeated eternally whilst salvation for the believer will be for all eternity.

5.2.4. Christ: The Shepherd

In 17:14, the faithful are with the Lamb - who is also “Lord of lords and King of kings.” They are also described as “his faithful followers.” So, the Lamb is also their Leader or Shepherd (as in 7:17) – leading His sheep. In this paradox presented, the slain Lamb has conquered and hence, the reversal of roles. As Shepherd, He becomes the One that leads his people to springs of living water and the One who wipes their tears (7:17). John makes his point that Christ in His sacrifice of Himself makes provision for the needs of His people. This Old Testament imagery (Ezek. 34; Ps. 23) gains considerable significance for the Christian through its use by Jesus himself.
(Jn.1:29; 10:1ff) and finds its fulfillment in the Christ leading His sheep into eternity. The Shepherd imagery presents Christ as a loving, caring Shepherd who clearly is the protector and provider for His people. In 19:7b-9, the sheep take on a new identity – i.e. the Bride. The Lamb/Shepherd is the Bridegroom (refer below). A union takes place between the Bridegroom and Bride for all eternity.

### 5.2.5. The Lamb: The Bridegroom

McIlraith argues that a correct interpretation of the marriage metaphor in 19:7b-9 must be viewed in its 1st century Jewish context (McIlraith 1999:524-5). According to him, the Jewish marriage demanded two stages: firstly, the legal part which rendered the partners man and wife; and secondly was the banquet and the ceremonies surrounding the union, which took place about a year later. McIlraith comments on this second stage:

> “It began when the wife, arrayed in her bridal costume and finery, went in procession to the house of the groom. The wife, dressed in her bridal robe, made a ceremonial entry, and the banquet began. This was usually a lengthy affair..., and it provided the general atmosphere of rejoicing for the consummation of the marriage” (McIlraith 1999:524).

This will mean that a Jewish woman was legally married (i.e. became a wife) before she became a bride. John uses the second stage of marriage to present the final relationship between the risen Christ and Christians.

Christ is presented as the ‘Bridegroom,’ but never directly, for Christ’s task in regard to the church goes far beyond that of a human bridegroom.

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45 [Also Coleman 1980:143-144].
5.3. PNEUMATOLOGY

Scripture teaches us that God is Spirit (Jn. 4:24). De Smidt describes the Holy Spirit and His working as follows:

“The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of the Father and the Son. The Spirit expresses unity between the Father and the Son. Through the Spirit there exists a relationship between God and humankind. The Spirit creates unity among believers. He is equal in power and dignity to God the Father and God the Son. The works of the Spirit have, inter alia, to do with the salvation of humankind, namely the church, the communion of believers, forgiveness, the resurrection of the body, and eternal life. He is the comforter and the teacher of the saints, the generator and caretaker of the universal church” (De Smidt 1999:27).

When John receives the visions, he describes himself as being “in the Spirit” (1:10; 4:2; 17:3), thus revealing to us that the source of his visions is God; and at the same time pointing to fact that he had an extraordinary experience. Korner writes: “… ‘in the Spirit’ is set within the ‘space/time referent’ of 1:9, 10. This establishes for the reader John’s location ‘in the body’ both when he began the experience of being ‘in the Spirit’ as well as for the duration of his recorded experiences until the next occurrence of a ‘space/time referent’” (Korner 2000:176-7). Through that extraordinary experience, John was enabled by the Spirit to witness these visions – yet at the same time, in a conscious state (Korner 2000:29).

5.3.1. Understanding the “seven Spirits”

In 1:4, John presents a Trinitarian formula in his salutation. However, the exact meaning of the “seven spirits” (1:4; 4:5c) is debated among interpreters. We agree with Gonzalez & Gonzalez that this probably was an ancient way of referring to the fullness (i.e. the number seven) of the Spirit (Gonzalez & Gonzalez 1997:14). We
agree also with Wall that the number ‘seven’ could also imply the completeness of the Spirit’s work in the believer (Wall 1991:57).

5.3.2. The Deity of the Spirit

In the Trinitarian salutation (1:1-10), the Spirit is mentioned second. De Smidt sees here the Spirit’s close interactive working relationships with the Father and the Son (De Smidt 1999:42).

The seven Spirits are said to be before the throne (1:4; 4:5) and simultaneously are the seven eyes of the Lamb (5:6), signifying the tri-unity of God who has revealed Himself as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. This phrase should be understood as an anthropomorphism. De Smidt writes: “The Bible, and specifically the author of Revelation, describes God’s deeds anthropomorphically – in other words, as if he were in human form” (De Smidt 1999:32). This serves as proof that God cannot be fully known, understood and explained – but at the same time it affirms that God can be known to an extent, using human terms, imagery, etc (as found in His Word when He reveals His attributes). The relationship between God (“God is spirit,” Jn. 4:24), the Lamb and the Spirit is so intimate that they are sometimes referred to as collateral terms (De Smidt 1999:42). Messages, from the exalted Lord, are given to the seven churches, yet, at the same time, the individual churches are urged to hear “what the Spirit says” (2:7,11, 17, 29; 3:6, 13, 22) to them. It is the Spirit of the exalted Christ who continues to speak on His behalf to the church. The Trinity speaks in one voice with one message, for there is no conflict between the members of the Trinity.
5.3.3. The Spirit’s Working

Throughout the Bible, the Holy Spirit is depicted as “illuminator, energizer and enabler” (De Smidt 1999:29). As noted above, the Spirit speaks on Christ’s behalf (Jn. 14:15-31; 1 Jn. 4:1-6; Rev. 1:1). His role within the community of believers is to “… remind them of God’s love and truth in order to convict them of their sin and to bring about their repentance in the light of God’s truth (cf. John 16:12-15)” (Wall 1991:72).

For John, the Spirit is the One who enlightens him, as he reveals God’s hand in history which is centered on the ‘already,’ the ‘now’ and the ‘not yet’ of God’s deeds (De Smidt 1999:36).

Rev. 22:17 requires a response to the invitation from the Spirit through the bride. The Spirit is working continuously in and through the church to invite those who have not received salvation, to do so. The Spirit empowers the bride to achieve God’s purposes of witnessing and being a witness. We disagree with Wall (1991:267-8) and Gonzalez & Gonzalez (1997:146-7) who believe that the immediate context demands that the plea from the Spirit and the bride is directed to Christ as a petition; and that the latter part of v.17 is extended to the immature believer to return to God or stand firm. Hughes notes that John’s revelation has come to an end, yet in the future; but, at the same time the reality of the present age – i.e. the age of the Gospel to be spread – is once again highlighted almost at the end of the book (Hughes 1990:239-40).
5.4. COSMOLOGY

We now turn to the ‘cosmos’ to understand God’s rule and design as He directs history to His purpose, using different agents at His disposal to establish His ends.

5.4.1. Angels: God’s Special Agents

A point to note is that throughout Scripture, whenever angels are mentioned or revealed in some form, they are always in the masculine gender. The feminine form of the word does not occur. However, angels are spirits (Heb 1:14), i.e. they have not material bodies as men have; they are either human in form, or can assume the human form when necessary (cf. Luke 24:4, 23; Acts 10:3, 30).

5.4.1.1. The Status of Angels:

Throughout the Bible, angels are found to be carrying out God’s will. John’s Revelation is no exception. Erickson writes the following concerning angels and their work:

“Every reference to angels is incidental to some other topic. They are not treated in themselves. God’s revelation never aims at informing us regarding the nature of angels. When they are mentioned, it is always in order to inform us further about God, what he does, and how he does it” (Erickson 1985:434).

Erickson’s comment describing the nature of an angelic being [αρχάγγελος] fits perfectly with the meaning of his name "a messenger."
5.4.1.2. The Activity of Angels:

Angels are concerned with what concerns God. In other words, the reason for the angels’ faithful service to mankind is due to their love for God, and not their own love for humanity. Their activities are carried out due to their dedication to God.

From Revelation 17:1-19:10, we understand that angels continue to be revealers and communicators of God’s message to John. In Harrington’s discussion on the roles of the angels, he describes them as “literary mediators” in the dramatic unfolding of God’s plan for this world (Harrington 1993:29). Harrington’s use of the term ‘literary’ is misleading for it could imply the actual writing of Revelation which we understand to be John’s task, through the Holy Spirit’s guidance. Chapters 17-19 are the unveiling of the mystery and the jubilation that follows. John is still the narrator, but he speaks from a limited perspective. John merely reports what the angel reveals to him, for the angel is the narrator who knows and explains even the little details of the vision.

We firstly understand the angel to be revealing God’s message to John. In chapter 17, an angel reveals to John the punishment of the great prostitute. In chapter 18, another angel announces in greater detail the destruction of the prostitute, and also announces the weeping that follows from those who have committed adultery with her.

When describing the angel’s function as a ‘reliable narrator,’ Michaels writes (and of angels throughout Revelation): “Functionally they are all equivalent to Jesus. What they do is what Jesus himself does” (Michaels 1992:132). Michaels calls this angel Christology. A dangerous mis-interpretation of this term is for Michaels to be giving to
angels similar honour as Jesus Christ. A further problem could arise if this is to be further interpreted as ‘angel-theology.’ God is Sovereign – and it is His purposes that are being fulfilled in history. The natural deduction will be that angels will be given equal status, like God – leading to idolatry. So to qualify his use of the term, Michaels explains that Jesus appears twice in the form of an angel (chs. 1 and 19), and He appoints an angel to be His representative (22:16). The angels’ function, as per Michaels’ quote, highlights their activities, in that they function as beings that receive their ‘orders’ from God. They do not carry out their own actions; they are consistently the instruments of God’s divine judgements (Michaels 1992:132). Michaels’ use of the term “angel Christology” is understandable – but could also be dangerous if mis-interpreted and mis-applied. It must be understood that angels’ roles are purely to reveal and to do that which God wants done.

Secondly, in order for John to understand the revelation, the angel speaks or communicates to John in a language that he (John) understands. Angels do not speak their own words, just as they do not carry out their own actions. They merely communicate God’s message to John. It is important to note that John never asks any questions of the angel. It would seem that he watches in amazement, awed at the sights and sounds before and around him. It was the angel (17:7) or the Elder (7:13) that asked him questions. These questions were asked so that John would not misinterpret what he saw, for the angels’ questions were followed with an interpretation on both occasions.

Elsewhere in Revelation, another role of the angels is to execute God’s judgement on the wicked and wickedness (e.g. chs. 15-16). However, in chapters 17-18, the final
destruction of evil earthly powers is portrayed as self-destructive (as discussed above).

5.4.2. Satan and his Forces:

Satan is the source of all that is evil. He orchestrates his evil plans employing whatever means he has to seek man's total separation from his Creator. Satan and evil have one goal: causing man’s “rebellion against God's holiness” (Zacharias & Johnson 2000:103). Satan’s aim is also to redirect man’s rightful worship of God, to the worship of himself through the beast and the false prophet (13:11-18). Ladd explains that the false prophet who successfully prostitutes religion directs the worship of human beings to the Beast and ultimately the Dragon (Ladd 1993:675). John presents a contrast between the throne of God and the throne of Satan. But, the comforting fact that Revelation points to is that Sovereign God is always in control, and He uses even Satan's intentions for evil, to accomplish His good purposes.

5.4.2.1. The Satanic Triumvirate:

Rotz argues that Satan mimics God in various ways. One of these will include his copying of the Trinity with himself (dragon), the beast and the false prophet which Rotz terms “The Satanic Triumvirate” (Rotz 1998:210). God is the One who sits on the throne in heaven, whilst Satan is the great pretender to the throne. The beast is an opposing character (i.e. anti-Christ), similar to the second person of the Trinity
(Christ). He can also be identified as a manifestation of Satan. God became man in Jesus Christ (Phil. 2:6-7) to redeem man from sin; and Satan becomes the beast (13:2b) to lead man to sin. The Third Person of the Trinity (i.e. Spirit of truth) leads man into all truth; whilst the false prophet/prostitute leads humanity into all kinds of evil.

Revelation portrays the ultimate destruction of Satan (20:7-10) and his evil forces who will be punished and eternally destroyed after they insist on leading humanity away from God. God is victor.

5.4.2.2. The Identity of the Beast:
In discussing the identity of the beast, Mounce identifies it as: “… the great persecuting power that rules by brute force and is the supreme enemy of Christ and the church” (Mounce 1998:310). We further understand that the beast’s identity must be understood from an Old Testament perspective for it is quoted extensively in the Apocalypse, and its prophetic symbolism repeated often. In chapter 13, the beast’s influence is discussed. To ascertain the identity the beast, John writes, “This calls for wisdom. If anyone has insight, let him calculate the number of the beast, for it is man’s number. His number is 666” (v.18). The only instance of the use of the “666” in the Old Testament, is found in 1 Kings 10:14 and 2 Chronicles 9:13, both describing the weight of gold that Solomon received annually. We read in 1 Kings 11 of Solomon’s downfall where he took for himself “… seven hundred wives of royal birth and three hundred concubines” (v.3). These marriages were political in nature in that these marriages helped him develop commercial ties with the rest of the world. Verse

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46 Refer to Chapter 3 (Rev. 17:3) for our argument on the “temporary manifestation” of the Satanic triumvirate.
4 reminds us that these wives turned Solomon’s heart after many gods. Solomon’s downfall was two-fold. Firstly, his links with the rest of the world was for commercial benefit. Secondly, those links soon led him into idolatry. We see John using Solomon’s downfall to help his readers identify the beast.47 This beast of chapter 13 is further described in chapter 17 as the one who leads the inhabitants of the earth into idolatry through the prostitute. In chapter 18, the beast is portrayed as the one who seduces people into commercialism, through the prostitute. The seducing of humanity into idolatry and commercialism is still the beast of modern times. This beast prevents man from acknowledging God and entering into a relationship with Him.

5.4.3. The Termination of this Cosmos:

Due to decay that sin introduced into the world, Revelation pictures it as coming to an end and the appearance of a new world which will be decay-free (20:11; 21:1-5). The “new earth” will not operate as the current does. John describes a total transformation of all things. This does not necessarily mean that he speaks of physical, material matter; but rather, spiritual. Morris adds that he merely “uses the language of heaven and earth for he has no other language” (Morris 1984:243). This final state will be characterized by God’s nearness, hence no need for any outside or other support or sustenance.

47 Dr. Martin Pohlmann presented this interpretation in the Eschatology lectures at the Baptist Theological College in Randburg, in 2001, when the writer of this dissertation was a 4th year undergraduate student.
5.5. ECCLESIOLOGY

We will now focus on the Church of Christ Jesus, discussing her status, situations she faces and her function on earth and in eternity.

5.5.1. The Believer’s Status: Earthly vs. Eternal

Revelation 17:14 presents the Lamb as Victor and the believers, who are with him, who are “… his called, chosen and faithful followers” participate in the blessings of his victory. There is no power in the universe that can separate believers from the Lamb. They have been true to Christ in times of testing; therefore they will share with Him in His ultimate triumph over wickedness.

John also describes the believer’s status as the Lamb’s “bride” (19:7b). The use of marriage and the wedding feast in chapter 19 act as a metaphor for salvation. This picture creates an atmosphere of excitement and celebration; which is contrasted with the destruction and mourning that the followers of the beast endure (chaps. 17-18). The marriage metaphor continues with the bride been given “fine linen, bright and clean” to wear, symbolizing cleansing from all sin. These garments were made clean by the Lamb’s sacrifice (7:14b). The pre-fall existence of sinless-ness and communion with God, are once again ushered. Sin caused man’s downfall, and hence his shameful nakedness. The believer’s earthly existence is a constant struggle against evil, due to the inherited sinful nature. Eternity will reveal a ‘re-clothing’ for the believer – no more exposed to sin. The believer’s final state is described as a God-protected (7:15b; 17:14; 18:20; 19:2b) and God-fulfilled (7:16-17; 19:7) existence. The believer will have no needs or wants as this present existence
demands. Ultimate satisfaction will be the believer’s lot in God as service is rendered to Him (7:15a).

5.5.2. The Challenge to Overcome:

One of the important messages of this book is the challenge to be a conqueror. Osborne sees this as a military metaphor “… that connotes superiority and victory over a vanquished foe” (Osborne 2002:122). The metaphor presents an eschatological war between the beast and the people of God. Christ is “Lord of lords and King of kings” (17:14) and therefore is the Victor.

The challenge in 18:4 for believer’s to separate themselves from evil, is another way of requiring them to make a concerted effort to overcome. The believer’s victory is a participating in Christ’s victory over sin and death. This demands a daily walk with God and dependence on Him for strength. The reward for the over-comers is a participation in the “tree of life.” In order for these promises to be inherited, the ‘overcoming’ occurs first. “Overcoming” for the believer will ironically result in the world overcoming the believer through persecution (Beale 1999:269). Just as Christ overcame sin and the devil through the cross and suffering. The temptation for believers, who do not see the overall picture, is to compromise in their suffering. Lee’s comment, that in Revelation, “the realization of the ‘hidden’ and supernatural world behind the believer’s visible circumstances provides not only an alternative, but the true understanding of their situation” is true, for the believer needs to understand the situation from God’s perspective which explains his/her situation (Lee 1998:172).
The goal of the world's system is to apply pressure (through persecution) on believers so that they will compromise. Therefore the call is sounded out for believers to overcome that pressure of ‘forced seduction’ and become over-comers.

5.5.3. Martyrdom:

Michaels offers the following explanation to the identity of the martyrs and the saints that Revelation presents throughout the book:

“In the Revelation, the whole church is a *martyr church* both in the broad sense of bearing testimony to Jesus (the Greek word *marturia*, *martyria*, means *witness*), and in the narrower sense of being put to death for that testimony” (Michaels 1992:136).

In Acts 1:8, the Greek word *marture$* is translated “witness” – also translated “martyr.” There is no distinction in the Greek between these two words. The believer is expected to suffer for the Gospel (Matt. 10:37-38; Rom. 8:17; Phil. 1:29; 3:10). Therefore, if Michaels’ explanation is correct, then there is no plausible way to distinguish between those martyred for their faith that Revelation calls “saints” (17:6; 18:20, 24); and those believers that die natural deaths. The identity of Babylon in this book needs now to be briefly discussed so that this problem may be overcome, for she is referred to as the one who is the persecutor of the saints (17:6; 18:13, 20b, 24; 19:2b).

Different scholars have interpreted Babylon (or the great prostitute) to be Rome or Jerusalem. Firstly, the Jerusalem interpretation is impossible due to the fact that it was destroyed in AD 70. Secondly, Babylon cannot be identified as Rome, for, the traditional understanding to 17:9-10 is that the seven hills refer to the city of Rome,
known in John’s day as “the seven-hilled city” (Dyer 1987:437). But, there is a flaw in this interpretation in that the seven heads are associated with the beast (17:7b), not the prostitute. Chapter 17:9b must also be interpreted as a reference to the prostitute’s control, and not her location (also 17:1b).

A more favourable interpretation will be by Morris, who interprets Babylon to stand for: “civilized man apart from God, man in organized but godless community” (Morris 1984:202-3) which can be identified throughout history. Also Hendriksen in discussing Babylon’s identity, writes: “… we conclude that the harlot also represents the world as the centre of anti-christian seduction at any moment in history” (Hendriksen 1940:168). This is first evidenced in Genesis 11 and thereafter, other parts of the Old Testament. Prior to Revelation 17, John’s emphasis has been ‘with the here and now’ (i.e. God’s working throughout history). Continuing in chapters 17-18 with the “here and now,” Babylon represents evil in general and throughout history, which has run its course, and to which God brings a final and complete overthrow (19:3 “The smoke from her goes up for ever and ever”). If this interpretation is correct (which is the interpretation in this thesis), then Michael’s identification of the martyrs is correct. [Also refer to Chapter 3 (Exegesis) for the repeated use of the present tense when describing Babylon, indicating that John is not referring to the past, but the continuous present state of Babylon – which we interpret as the presence of evil, throughout time, in the world].
5.5.4. Holiness

There is a call to believers in 18:4 to separate from Babylon’s wickedness. McIlraith writes the following concerning this call for separation from Babylon:

“In 18:4, God’s people are called out of Babylon ‘lest (they) have fellowship in her sins.’ The only other place where this vocabulary of sharing is used is 1:9, where sugkoinwno$ describes fellowship with Jesus. There seems to be a deliberate contrast” (McIlraith 1999:520).

The people associated with Babylon’s evil, share in her sins, rather than sharing in Christ. McIlraith equates e)rga (works) in 18:6 with Babylon’s sins (a(martiai) (18:4), adding that Revelation presents evil works as sins or iniquities (McIlraith 1999:520). John presents the good works (dikaiwmata) of the bride of the Lamb (19:8) as a contrast to Babylon’s sins (a(martiai) and iniquities (a)dikh/mata).

This call for holiness has constantly been sounded from God in Scripture. The point of tension for many comes when the question is asked: ‘At what point should God’s people separate from the world?’ Holiness calls the believer to recognize that the false must be abandoned for the truth. There needs to be an elimination of all appearances of evil in the believer’s lifestyle. In chapters 17-18, the prostitute symbolizes arrogant power and control, and also wanton luxury. Believers are urged to separate themselves from this influence so that they would not be tempted into compromise.

God’s people are in, but not of this world. Some feel they should isolate themselves from society, but they find it difficult to penetrate society with the Gospel. Others strive to communicate well, but they find identifying with the culture weakens their distinctive counter-culture message. Therefore, for many, it becomes difficult to draw
the line on this issue. In any case, there is a point for a decision: i.e. let go of the world or let go of one’s convictions. If God’s people should abandon the Gospel for the seductions of the world, then the global community itself is lost to the self-corrupting influences of evil and its forces (Wall 1991:203). So, God’s people are called to separate themselves from the lure of evil rather than from society, in which they are called to be “salt” and “light” (Matt. 5:13-16). The motivation and grace for this process stem from a reverence for the holy God. Being holy will therefore mean a resisting of evil and gaining self-control through the sanctifying work of the Spirit of God, whilst at the same time interacting with, and being an example to the unholy. Zacharias and Johnson refer to holiness as a life willingly and totally lived for God even when that choice is hard and costly (Zacharias and Johnson 2000:101).

5.5.5. Worship

Worship is central for the Church, motivated by the believer’s love for God. The goal of Christian missions is to bring people into the worship of the True and Living God. Worship unites heaven and earth. The object of worship is the One on the throne and the Lamb. The voice of worship on earth blends with the sound of worship in heaven. Harrington argues: “… so central, indeed, is worship that the inimical ‘inhabitants of the earth’ are also intent on worship: they are worshippers of the beast” (Harrington 1993:30).

John points out that human creatures are subject to lordship hence worship of that lord. The created order is that man worships God. Idolatry corrupts the created order
and God will not tolerate it. Therefore, the worship of the One on the throne and the slain Lamb functions as a clear boundary between Christians and non-Christians.

Chapter 19:1-10 speaks about created beings rejoicing over the destruction of evil and evil systems, and the worship of God that follows. God is worshipped for his Sovereignty over all creation. The Church of Christ needs to understand that, whether worship is conducted on earth or in heaven, the focus is always towards the triune God on the throne. This truth will greatly alter and redirect the Church’s perception of the worship of God; for all of life is worship directed to God. He is Sovereign. He has overcome.

5.5.6. The Church: The Bride

Chapter 19:7b describes believers collectively as the bride of the Lamb. John employs the marriage metaphor as a metaphor for the covenant (McIlraith 1999:523). In 19:8, McIlraith views the metaphor as the new covenant of the church with the risen Christ, in which Christ is presented as the covenant partner or bridegroom.

Heavenly truths are being revealed here, and the only way that these truths can be communicated and understood, is by using familiar human analogies. Hence the use of marriage which describes the intimacy of the believer’s relationship with God. This picture is in direct contrast with the adulterous prostitute (18:3). The bride’s attire described in 19:8 is also contrasted with the prostitute’s attire in 17:3. The prostitute is linked to the “red dragon,” Satan in 12:3; whilst the bride is linked to her Holy God.
(20:11). The Bride is in a state of spotlessness, for the Lamb has made her perfect (7:14b; 19:8).

The believers’ earthly existence is viewed as a time of preparation for the wedding (19:7b), which is made possible when evil is finally destroyed (chap. 18). This earthly existence for the believers can be interpreted as their engagement. During this time love, loyalty and devotion must only be given to the Bridegroom. Anything else results in prostitution, which has terrible consequences as evidenced in chapters 17-18.

5.6. ESCHATOLOGY:

The word “eschatology” derives from two Greek terms, the adjective “eschatos” (meaning ‘last’), and the noun “logos” (meaning ‘word,’ or ‘study’). Eschatology concerns itself with the study of what is the ultimate or last – i.e. what is final in God’s program.

5.6.1. Some Introductory Remarks

The book of Revelation is definitely eschatological for John describes its content as what must “soon take place” (1:1; 22:6b), or what will “take place later” (1:19). The initial recipients of Revelation understood this book and were spiritually encouraged but also admonished by it (Du Rand 1994:269). For the modern reader who reads the Revelation ca. 1900 years later, hermeneutical problems abound. Due to this mammoth problem, Du Rand explains that the:
“... modern reader of Revelation again endeavours to become the intended reader by means of his reader strategies and through knowledge of the symbolism and imagery, within the framework of their content and function in the text” (Du Rand 1994:269 italics added).

Revelation has witnessed various interpretations in history until presently. All these trends will not be discussed here due to pericope chosen for this thesis. However, one important matter on this point is the consideration of the world-view of Revelation. Revelation was not created in a vacuum. The historical events that shaped Revelation, and its Eschatological slant must be viewed in perspective, and their relationship explored. To re-iterate this point, reference is made to Pohlmann, who considers John’s Revelation as the primary New Testament source for Eschatology with the reason that Revelation has a “Weltanschauung,” or world-view, which influences the book’s theological thrust (Pohlmann 1997:3-4). Du Rand offers some insight into establishing the relationship between history and Eschatology, after he interacts with the various arguments. He concludes that:

“... the interpretation of Revelation has to be sought on an eschatological and not exclusively on a salvation-historical level. It deals with the breakthrough of the kingdom of God and the destruction of the hostile godless forces. Revelation does not only want to unveil apocalyptic secrets but is much more comprehensive. It also explains with imagery difficult to understand that the kingdom of God has already broken through in Jesus Christ and has also found its fulfillment in him” (Du Rand 1994:283).

In other words, time and history in Revelation, firstly, must be interpreted as a short time before the final end. Secondly, Revelation presents history as only receiving meaning from the future, therefore the close relationship between history and eschatology is needed when interacting with the text. Also, it is to be noted that Eschatology cannot be separated from Christ’s historical incarnation and atonement made for man, for it is in that historical act that the believer will find eschatological eternal, redemption.
5.6.2. Eschatological Hope in Revelation 17-19:10  

Erickson argues that when speaking of eschatology, one needs to distinguish between *individual eschatology* and *cosmic eschatology*. He defines these terms as “… those experiences which lie, on the one hand, in the future of the individual, and, on the other, in the future of the human race and indeed of the entire creation” (Erickson 1985:1167).

The Lamb’s victory is certain for John (17:14) - the Lamb will triumph. Evil will be destroyed as God works out His plan in history. The final destruction of evil and the final state of the believer are only realized in the person of Jesus Christ, who is the personal *eschatos*.

Presently, for the believer, the future is uncertain in the sense that the actual appearing of Jesus cannot be worked out. On the other hand, the future is certain, for, He will come and redeem the believer, and nothing and no-one will be able to stand in His way, for He is “Lord of lords and King of kings” (17:14).

Revelation 17-18 also brings out the futility of chasing after materialism, and rejecting Christ. The temporal worth of material possessions is highlighted in chapter 18 as these are destroyed together with those who seek after it.

The believer’s ultimate eschatological hope is to be eternally united with God.

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48 Reference must be made to Du Rand (1994:269 ff.) who gives great attention to these trends.
Concluding Remarks:
The Apocalypse reminds man that he was created for eternity. If this world were the ‘be all and end all’ of existence, then the advice would be that man needs to live for self. There will be no need for morality and therefore no higher authority to be set the agenda for life. This world would be chaotic. Revelation gives the reminder that God has created man for eternity. Whatever decision man takes on earth is actually an eternal choice, for these choices bring either blessings or consequences that will have eternal value or death.

As we have discussed in the preceding chapters, Sovereign God has set His plan of redemption in motion. Even though many live their lives without God – and in fact they follow after Satan, their reward of eternal separation from God in hell is the result. Their style of living will cease as God brings evil to an end. Yet at the same time, believers should be encouraged to hold the faith – no matter what troubles and persecution they face, for God will reward them for their perseverance and godly living. This earth is not home for the believer. Yet the believer needs to make the most of life, in Christ, on earth – with eternity with God as their constant hope. For when life is lived with eternity in mind, this causes priorities and values to change. Revelation 17 and 18 reminds the believer of these priorities, for worldly pleasures will be destroyed. And following after God will reap eternal blessings (Rev. 7:9-17; 19:1-22:21).
We conclude with the words of the angel in chapter 19 where he reminds John to include the following words to remind the readers of the validity of the Apocalypse’s message: “These are the true words of God.”
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