



# Book of Revelation

## VISION TO STRENGTHEN THE SAINTS

Oakland International Fellowship

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## The Drama of History

### Revelation 11:19-15:4

Chapters 12-22 introduce the second half of the Apocalypse, telling the same story as 1-11. Those who are in opposition to Christ and his church are introduced in greater detail in 11:19-15:4: the dragon, the beast out of the sea, the beast out of the earth (alias a false prophet) and the whore Babylon (including those marked by the beast). The church's struggle arises, not because Satan is too strong, but because he has been defeated and is in demise. Chapters 1-11 show the church and the world in perpetual conflict. Now John provides deeper insight into the spiritual conflict behind it all as Christ triumphs over evil. John encourages believers to endure the Devil's vicious onslaught, as God refines the church's faith. (Jn.15:18-21 ; Ja.1:2-4 ; Eph.6:10-13).

This section begins with the opening of the temple and a viewing of the ark of his covenant. This is the 3<sup>rd</sup> manifestation of God in the elements of nature: **1<sup>st</sup>** before the throne (4:5), **2<sup>nd</sup>** with the opening of the 7<sup>th</sup> seal (8:5), **3<sup>rd</sup>** in the sounding of the 7<sup>th</sup> trumpet (11:15,19), and **4<sup>th</sup>** in the outpouring of the 7<sup>th</sup> bowl (16:18). The lightning, rumbling, peals of thunder, earthquake and hailstorm (4:5 ; 8:5 ; 11:19 ; 16:18) here especially relate to the trumpet sound that is to be heard in the last days (Mat. 24:30-31 ; 1 Thess.4:16 ; 1 Cor.15:52); a sound (11:15) set in the context of the temple of heaven being opened (11:19), and the heavenly voices and the universal church all praising God forever (as in chapters 4, 5, 7 and 19).

This section divides into 7 portions: **An interlude seen as 7 signs.** {G. K. Beale's 7 divisions are instructive here}

**1<sup>st</sup> Sign:** The conflict of the serpent with the woman and her seed (Chapter 12)

**2<sup>nd</sup> Sign:** Persecution by the beast from the sea (13:1-10)

**3<sup>rd</sup> Sign:** Persecution by the beast from the land (13:11-18)

**4<sup>th</sup> Sign:** The Lamb and the 144,000 standing on Mount Zion (14:1-5)

**5<sup>th</sup> Sign:** The proclamation of the Gospel and of judgment by three angels (14:6-13)

**6<sup>th</sup> Sign:** The Son of man's harvest of the earth (14:14-20)

**7<sup>th</sup> Sign:** The saints' victory over the sea beast and their victory song (15:1-4) – {G. K. Beale=15:2-4}

#### A. **1<sup>st</sup> Sign: The conflict of the serpent with the women and her seed** (Chapter 12)

The time period represents the birth of Jesus Christ, his resurrection and the period of the church age. The appearance of a great and wondrous "**sign**" in heaven echoes Luke 21:11,25.

##### 1. **The woman figure:**

- Symbol: covenant community of believers, both O.T. and N.T.
- Giving birth to a child who will rule the nations - Christ (12:6,11-17) (2:27; 12:5; 19:15; Ps. 2:9)
- In contrast to the woman who rides the beast (17:1-5).
- Crown of 12 stars: 12 tribes of Israel, God's covenant community like in Joseph's dream (Gen. 37:9).
- Sun & moon under the woman's feet (12:1) emphasizes the salvation of God that protects God's church

##### 2. **Then "another sign"**

- Symbol: complete oppressive power of ancient kingdoms - Egypt (11:8) & Rome (17:9) (Ex. 14:8-14).
- Symbol: Dragon / beast forms a composite of every evil kingdom the world has ever known.
- "Great dragon"** = Ancient Serpent (Gen. 3:1ff - deceiver), the Devil (slanderer) and Satan (accuser)
- Ambition is to **"lead the whole world astray"** (2:9 ; 3:9 ; 12:3,9 ; 13:13,14 ; 20:2 ; Mat. 24:24).
- Heads, horns and crowns indicate the devil's strong world dominion (Eph. 2:2; 6:12; Dan. 7:7,24).
- Dragon is identified with the beast coming from the sea (12:3 ; 13:1) and later on out in the desert (17:3-4,7) and with the powerful 4<sup>th</sup> beast in Daniel's vision (Dan.7:3,7,19-27)
- "1/3 of the stars"** in contrast to woman's crown, are the dragon's demonic angels (12:4,7,9b), who war against heavenly angels led by Michael (12:7). Their judgment is sure to come (2 Pet.2:4 ; Jude 6).

##### 3. **God's protects the woman** (12:6,14 ; Ex.19:4 ; Deut.1:31-33 ; 32:10-12 ; Ps.91:1,4,10)

- a. Desert signifies God's protection for His church. Parallel to Israel's exodus - Egypt, (Ex. 16:32 ; 19:4; Deut. 2:7 ; 8:31,16 ; 29:5 ; 32:10,11; Isa. 40:31). Parallel to Elijah's 3½ situation (1 Kings 17 ; 19:3-8 ; Ja.5:17) and true in the life of Moses too (Ex.2:15).
  - b. Like Daniel's prophecy, angel Michael protects God's people (Dan.10:13,21 ; 12:1-3 ; Jude 9)
  - c. Michael's battle is heavenly counterpart to the earthly struggle on the cross (Rom. 8:1-3).
  - d. Lamb brings about Satan's fall (5:9 ; 12:10,11). Victory is in the blood and testimony of the Lamb.
  - e. Same period of time when the Gentiles will "***trample on the holy city for 42 months***" (11:2 ; 13:5).
  - f. Same period of time as "***1260 days***" that believers are taken care of (12:6)
  - g. Same period of ***3½ years*** allotted the antichrist to persecute the saints, "***a time times and a half of time***" (12:14). This harkens back to Daniel (Dan.7:25 ; 9:27 ; 12:7 ; 1 John 4:3).
  - h. Same period of time the 2 witnesses appear (11:3-4): 2 Olive trees symbolic of O.T. witness of believers and 2 lampstands symbolic of the N.T. witness of the church (1:20).
  - i. Red color of the dragon (12:3) links to woman and beast dressed in scarlet and riding a scarlet beast, "***drunk with the blood of the saints***" (17:3-6).
  - j. God's protection does not keep the saints from persecution (12:11,13,15,17). God uses the adversity to train up His children (2 Cor.4:16-17 ; 12:7 ; 1 Thess.2:18 ; Heb.10:32-39 ; Ja.1:2-4 ; 1 Pet.4:1,12-13).
  - k. Dragon's claim to kingship is temporary, a counterfeit in comparison to the real King. His days to deceive are numbered (12:7-9,12,13 ; 20:10).
4. **The beginning of the end:** A song-like medium reveals Michael's heavenly battle (12:10-12). Behind earthly antagonists are spiritual forces of evil at work (Eph.6:12), and here the great dragon and his minions are hurled down to earth in defeat, losing a privileged place (12:7-9,10,12,13) (Lk.10:18). God's salvation and kingdom rule is inaugurated under Christ's authority (11:15 ; 12:10 ; Eph.1:19-22).
- a. The loud voice heard a plurality, implied by "***our God***" and "***our brethren***". Voice angels, 24 elders Or those "***slain because of the word of God and the testimony they had maintained***" yet this is unclear
  - b. Defeat of Satan is certain, and his demise will ultimately lead to his condemnation in the fiery lake of burning sulfur (20:10). Devil and his followers foster harmful schemes against the saints.
  - c. Those who "***overcome***" (2:7,11,17,26; 3:5,12,21) know that he is already a defeated enemy (12:14).
  - d. "***Time is short***" figuratively refers to the N.T. church age, embracing the time period of the "***little longer***" (6:11). It corresponds to the "***delay***" mentioned by the angel standing on the sea and on the land (10:6-7) and includes the "***short time***" that Satan is set free, after bound for the 1000 years (20:3).
  - e. The 1,260 days, the 42 months or the 3½ years are not literal rather symbolic (11:2-4 ; 12:6,14 ; 13:5 ; Dan.7:25 ; 9:27 ; 12:7). Saints are encouraged to continue their witness as they face persecution.
  - f. These are times of suffering for the church due to the "***fury***" of the dragon hurled down to earth. The sign of the woman 1<sup>st</sup> in heaven (12:1-2), transitions to the suffering church on earth (12:6, 13-17).
  - g. The "***water like a river***" from serpent's mouth (12:15) signifies the evil attacks against the church.
  - h. Overcoming because of their faith in Christ, the saints know there is no need to fear the second death (2:11 ; 3:21 ; 20:6). "***Heavens***" (only plural use of over 50 occurrences in Rev.) are called in advance to rejoice in God's wonderful victory (12:12 ; 1 Chron.16:31 ; Ps.96:11 ; Isa.44:23 ; 45:8 49:13).

## B. 2<sup>nd</sup> Sign: Persecution by the beast from out of the sea (13:1-10)

1. **Interpretation of Signs 2 & 3:** Chapter 13's signs are set in parallel to one-another and elaborate upon the persecution of the church described in 12:6,13-17. Two strands of interpretation are, **1).** Some see this as a pervasive evil spirit that continually manifests throughout history instigating false teaching and persecution to defeat the church, while **2).** Others see this as a personified individual Antichrist-figure who is to come at the final stages of history, one that John's vision sets forth over against the personal Christ figure.
  - a. These two strands can merge into one comprehensive understanding that focuses upon evil at work in and through the social / political / economic / religious authorities in the world, while at the same time acknowledging a real, evil demonic entity at work behind the scenes who forcefully and increasingly seeks to become the dominant power during the final stages of history.
  - b. The dragon stands on the shore between the sea and land (13:1). The 2 beasts come from the sea and the land respectively. They are the forces of demonic evil active in the world through national gov'ts, and false religions or philosophies. They use a vast array of seductive temptations to entice humans to sin. And, they also point to the motivating agency behind these beasts, the great dragon: for in giving worship to the beasts one actually worships the dragon (13:4). There is strong influence from Daniel 7.
2. **Relationship between the Dragon and the Beast:** it's evil power working through earthly kings & kingdoms. Note: Order and number for the heads, horns and crowns of beast (13:1) and red dragon (12:3) are different.

- a. In Daniel, beasts are kingdoms (Dan.7:16-17,23) & horns are kings (Dan.7:16,20,24): both found in Rev. In Daniel, there are four individual beasts (Dan. 7:2-7,17) but in Revelation the 1<sup>st</sup> forms a composite beast out of the sea, a body of a leopard, feet like a bear, and the mouth of a lion (13:1-2 ; Hos.13:4-9).
- b. Horns, heads, and crowns symbolize universal influence of evil over earthly kings and kingdoms with the express intent to use worldly religious, economic, political and social powers to destroy the church, like the Roman Empire (17:9-10), but never limited to a single period of history.
- c. Authority “given” to the beast to blasphemy God and destroy His work in creation (13:1,5-6 ; 17:3).
- d. The beast has a “fatal wound” by the sword, yet is healed (13:3,12,14); echoes of the serpent (Gen.3:15). The beast imitates and rivals Jesus Christ in several ways:
  - (1) Both are involved in conflict having to do with a sword (1:16 ; 2:12,16 ; 13:14 ; 19:15,21),
  - (2) Both have devotees with names written on their foreheads (13:6-14:1),
  - (3) Both are pictured as having horns that represent a kingship (5:6 ; 13:1,11),
  - (4) Both are described as having had a marvelous healing (5:6,9,12 resurrection; 13:3,8 fatal wound),
  - (5) Both are given a vested kind of authority over nations (5:9 ; 7:9 ; 13:2,7 ; 17:12,15), and
  - (6) Both receive worldwide worship (5:8-17 ; 13:4,8).
- e. “Who is like the beast?” and “Who can make war against him?” (13:4). The beast uses its “power to make war with the saints”, seeking to conquer them (6:9-11; 11:7; 13:7 ; 16:6 ; 17:6 ; Dan 7:21). In his other letters John explicitly states that the “antichrist is coming”. This is both a present reality that is, and a future reality that is not yet, for “even now many antichrists have come” (1 Jn.2:18 ; 2:22 ; 4:4 ; 2 Jn.7). Still, Satan will have opportunity for a short period (12:12 ; 13:5-8 ; Dan. 11:32a,36 ; Lk.4:5-8).
- f. The dragon / beast is worshiped (13:8), speaks blasphemy (13:2,5,6 ; 2 Thess. 2:3,4,7) and is a ferocious creature having 7 heads but only 1 boasting mouth. This runs parallel to Hosea’s prophesy of a lion, leopard and bear (Hos.13:4-9).
- g. The beast receives power to war against the saints and conquer them (13:7) making them martyred for the faith (13:9,10). God calls His saints to patiently endure in faithfulness (1:9 ; 13:10 ; 14:12).
  - (1) Believers who have an ear to hear (echoes of the faithful followers of chapters 2 & 3),
  - (2) Believers who are recorded in the book of life (3:5 ; 13:8 ; 17:8 ; 20:12,15 ; 21:27),
  - (3) Believers belonging to the Lamb that was slain (5:6,12), from the creation of the world (17:8 ; 1 Pet.1:18,21 ; Acts 2:23 ; Mat.25:34 ; Eph.1:4),
  - (4) Believers who have been, or will be, sent into captivity or even killed (2:10 ; 6:8,9,11 ; 11:7 ; 12:11 ; 13:10,15 ; 17:6 ; 18:24 ; 19:2 ; 20:4),
 And, (5) Believers who will ultimately be victorious (7:14-15 ; 11:11,12 ; 15:2 ; 17:14 ; 1 Pet.4:19), those who overcome (2:7,11,17,26 ; 3:5,12,21 ; 12:10-11 ; 1 John 2:13,14 ; 5:4,5 ; Rom.8:35-37).

### C. 3<sup>rd</sup> Sign: Persecution by the beast from the land (13:11-18)

1. **A second beast comes forth out of the earth** (13:11). His appearance seems harmless, a lamb having 2 horns (13:11 ; In Daniel’s time likely the Medo-Persian Empire – Dan.8:3), but it is another manifestation of the dragon, who’s speech beguiles and deceives (13:11 ; Mat.7:15 ; 12:33-37 ; 2 Cor.11:13-15). The two horns may be an attempt to mimic the “two witnesses”, who are described as the two olive trees and two lampstands (11:3-4). This 2<sup>nd</sup> beast serves the 1<sup>st</sup> beast, representing false philosophies and false religions of the world. Both are associated with the Roman state but not identical to it. The 2<sup>nd</sup> beast leads people to worship and follow the 1<sup>st</sup> beast. Later, this 2<sup>nd</sup> beast is referred to as the “false prophet” (16:13 ; 19:20 ; 20:10 ; Mat.24:5,11).
2. **Using the authority of the 1<sup>st</sup> beast**, the 2<sup>nd</sup> beast shows great signs and wonders in order to deceive (13:12 ; 16:14 ; 19:20 ; Mark 13:22 ; 2 Thess. 2:9-12). This imitates Moses (Ex.4:17,30 ; 10:2 ; 11:10) and Elijah (1 Kings 18:38-39 ; 2 Kings 1:10-14 ; Mal.4:5-6). Earth beast glorifies sea beast, leading men astray to prepare the way for a false messiah (Mat.24:24 ; 2 Pet.2:1-3 Antichrist, compare Deut.13:1-4).
3. **Deception perpetrated by the beast** is both external to, and from within, the visible church.
  - a. Authority and ministry are received from his master (13:12a,13-17)
  - b. Recovery from the fatal wound impresses the inhabitants of the earth (13:3,12b,14), and
  - c. Miraculous signs confirm his false teaching and seduce people to follow his lead (13:13,14).
  - d. The beast sets up an image (like Dan.3:4), enabling it to speak (like the idolatry of Caesar & Rome?).
4. **Inhabitants of the earth receive the mark** (13:16) in surrender and allegiance to the power of the state. This mark of bondage contrasts the seal of the faithful (7:3 ; 14:1 ; 22:4 - Ezek.9:3-8), and is a part of the spirit of antichrist (1 John 2:18,19,22 ; 4:3 ; 2 John 7), affecting the buying and selling of things (13:17).
  - a. Mark on the forehead and hand connote human mind and actions (Deut.6:4-9).

- b. Striving to imitate God, the beast's mark is entitled "***the name of the beast, or the number of his name***" (13:17). The number of the beast is said to be man's number, 666, and this always falls short of God's perfect standard of 7. It "***calls for wisdom***" (13:18 ; 17:9) to rightly understand it, and for "***patient endurance and faithfulness***" (13:10) of believers experiencing persecution because of it. Saints do not worship the beast, nor do they receive the mark, but become those "***victorious over the beast and his image and over the number of his name***" (15:2 ; 20:4). They are given the seal of God written on the forehead (7:2-8); a new, divine name of God and of the Lamb (3:12 ; 7:3-4 ; 14:1 ; 22:4).
  - c. This controversial number 666 refers to the 1<sup>st</sup> beast (13:1-8) and has been given varied interpretations:
    - (1) Hebraic / Greek numerical calculations of the names of world leaders that might align with 666 have been suggested. For example take the Greek form of Nero's name using a contested transliteration into Hebrew (nun=50, resh=200, waw=6, nun=50, qoph=100, samech=60, resh=200) and then King Nero's name calculated in Hebrew turns up to be 666.  
Problem: there are methods and other names that configured add up to 666 (e.g. Hitler).
    - (2) A chronological estimation of the duration of the beasts reign, Problem: same as # (3).
- And,
- (3) Symbolic interpretations of the number relate to the Antichrist or antichristian dominion.  
Problem: As metaphorical language is commonly used in the Apocalypse, this prohibits trying to extract a literal computation of the number.

## D. 4<sup>th</sup> Sign: The Lamb and the 144,000 standing on Mount Zion (14:1-5)

Chapter 14 divides nicely into three complementary parts, each one perceived to be a sign: **1)** the Lamb and the 144,000 (14:1-5), **2)** a warning given by 3 angels (14:6-13), and **3)** the harvest time (14:14-20). It moves forward to a time of final reward for the faithful and final judgment for those who follow the beast.

1. **Lamb and the 144,000** come into view (14:1-5), in stark contrast to the beasts and marked followers.
  - a. Mount Zion is the city Jerusalem where God presence dwells, a place of redemption. Standing on the mountain contrasts the beast standing on sand (13:1). Jerusalem: later a city symbolic of God's people.
  - b. 144,000 are inclusive of true believers from both O.T. and N.T. periods. All believers redeemed and purchased by Christ's blood follow the Lamb (6:9-11 ; 7:14 ; 14:3-4 ; 17:14 ; Mk.8:34-38 ; Heb.9:14). 144,000 = 12 x 12 x 10 x 10 x 10, symbolic of a perfect / complete number of those saved (7:1-10).
  - c. Believers are given the Lamb's and the Father's name written on the forehead (3:12 ; 14:1 ; 22:3,4). This seal enables the saints to persevere and contrasts all who follow the beast, who are marked on the forehead or on the hand (14:9-11); a mark that ultimately condemns them to the lake of fire (20:13-15). It is "***the mark of his name***" (the beast's - 14:11), but symbolically man's number, 666 (13:17-18).
  - d. Believers kept pure like a faithful virgin bride (14:4). If 144,000 is a figurative number, so too is the reference to women and virgins (14:4). In contrast to immoral adulteries of following the beast (14:8), Israel is spoken of as the "***virgin daughter***" of Zion in the O.T. (2 Kings 19:21 ; Isa.37:22 ; Jer.14:17 ; 31:4,21 and Lam.1:15 ; 2:13). and "***Virgin Israel***" (Jer.18:13 ; Amos 5:2). Paul too portrays the church as a "***pure virgin***" to Christ (2 Cor.11:2), rescued from the spiritual adulteries and defilement of those who masquerade as apostles of Christ.
2. **They sang a new song that only the 144,000 could learn.**
  - a. Sound "***like a roar of rushing waters***" harkens back to Christ at the center of his church (1:15), and anticipates the great multitude that will praise God for his salvation and glorious reign (19:1,6).
  - b. The "***loud peal of thunder***" harkens back to the opening of the seals with "***a voice like thunder***" of one of the four living creatures (6:1), "***the voices of the seven thunders***" from heaven sealed up (10:4) as well as the repeated rumblings before the throne of God itself, (4:5 ; 8:5 ; 11:19 ; 16:18).
  - c. Sound "***like that of harpists playing their harps***" (14:2) suggests the "***new song***" sung by the 4 creatures and 24 elders with harps (5:8-10).
  - d. Accompanied by harps "***the song of Moses the servant of God and the song of the Lamb***" (15:2-4), where O.T. and N.T. saints sing together (19:1-7 - may reveal content of the "***new song***").
3. **144,000, before sealed** (7:2-3), **are now redeemed** from the earth and offered as "***the firstfruits***". N.T. teaching concerning both Christ and those who convert to the faith are to be the firstfruits (Ja.1:18 ; 1 Cor.15:20,23 ; Rom.8:23). Israel coming out from Egyptian slavery was called the firstfruits of God's harvest (Jer.2:2-3). The rest of humanity, utterly polluted by its beastly idolatry, is to be harvested for judgment (14:9-11,14-20).
4. **144,000 are faithful witnesses**, like Christ (1:5 ; 2:13 ; 6:9 ; Isa.53:9 ; 1 Pet.2:19-23 ; 3:14-17).

**“No lie was found in their mouths”** (14:5,12-13), for all liars end up in the fiery lake of burning sulfur; known as the second death (21:8). Zephaniah spoke of the remnant of Israel, the daughter of Zion on his holy mountain, calling for her to sing and rejoice as God had taken away Israel’s punishment and eliminated her enemies (Zeph.3:8-17).

## **E.5<sup>th</sup> Sign: The proclamation of the Gospel & of judgment by three angels (14:6-13)**

1. **Another angel flies in midair**, (like the eagle of 8:13). This angel has the eternal gospel to proclaim to those who are sealed (5:9 ; 7:9) and those who are marked (11:9 ; 13:7). A warning of judgment comes to the unbelieving world (6:17 ; 14:6-7 ; Rom.2:16 ; Jn.3:18-21). The Gospel always brings forth a double effect of  **blessing and curse**, salvation and judgment (2 Cor.2:14-16 ; Acts 17:32).
  - a. **1<sup>st</sup> angel** declares **“eternal gospel”** to every “nation, tribe, language, and people (14:6-7 ; Mat.24:14). It is also a warning of judgment (8:7-12), for the hour has come (3:10 ; 11:13 ; 17:12-18 ; 18:10,17,19).
  - b. **2<sup>nd</sup> angel** decrees that **“Babylon the Great”** has fallen (14:8 ; 16:19 ; 18:2,10,21 ; Isa.13:19-22 ; 21:9 ; Jer.51:6-10,24-26,62-64). Nations are made to drink the maddening wine of her adulteries (14:8 ; 17:2 ; 18:3,9). This runs parallel to Jeremiah’s prophecy of nations made to drink the wine of God’s wrath poured out through Babylon (Jer.25:15-31), including Jerusalem / Judah for 70 years.
  - c. **3<sup>rd</sup> angel** focuses upon those receiving the mark of the beast (13:16,17 ; 14:9-11). They are those who **“worship the beast and his image”** (13:4,8,12,15-17). The wine of God’s wrath is to be poured out in full strength (16:19 ; 19:15b ; Jer.25:15-17,27-29 ; Ps.75:8). Torment with burning sulfur (9:17,18 ; 18:6-10a ; 19:20 ; 20:10,15 ; 21:8) will be experienced in the presence of holy angels and the Lamb (like Sodom and Gomorrah - Gen.19:24,28 ; Lk.17:29) (11:8). This parallels the destruction of Edom (Isa. 34:9-10) and supports eternal judgment, not annihilation (6:12-17 ; 11:18 ; 14:10 ; 16:17-21 ; 18:1ff ; 19:2,11-21).
2. **Focus shifts to believers, for them to patiently endure and obey God’s commands** (12:17b ; 13:10b ; 14:12). A voice from heaven utters the 2<sup>nd</sup> of 7 blessings (1:3 ; 14:13 ; 16:15 ; 19:9 ; 20:6 ; 22:7 ; 22:14). Those who **“die in the Lord”** will be blessed (14:12-13), as the Spirit calls them to vigilant watchfulness and spiritual discernment of evil (13:10b,18). Believers are to look forward to their promised rest from their labor, and their deeds will follow them (2:23 ; 6:9-11 ; 12:11 ; 19:7-8 ; 22:12 ; 1 Cor.15:58).

## **F. 6<sup>th</sup> Sign: The Son of man’s harvest of the earth (14:14-20)**

1. **Judgment shifts to a double harvest theme concerning “One like a son of man”** (14:14) who is seated on a white cloud. End-time N.T. teaching pictures Christ coming on clouds as the son of man (Mat.24:30 ; 26:64 ; Mk.13:26 ; 14:62 ; Lk.21:27). In chapter 1, the Christ **“like a son of man”** comes on the clouds to rule over the church (1:7,13ff), and then later comes in judgment to conquer (19:11ff) as redeemer and judge (also Dan.7:13,14 ; Mat.24:30-31 ; 26:64).
2. **A judicial function is in focus with the “sharp sickle”** (14:17-20) and possibly in the image of a **“crown of gold”** on his head (14:14 ; 19:12-13). Redemption is symbolized by **“harvest of the earth”** (14:14-16). But judgment too is symbolized by the angel’s command to harvest and gather in the ripe grapes that are thrown into **“the great winepress of God’s wrath”** (14:18-20). So both justification of the righteous and judgment of the wicked are in plain view, preparing the next scene of the 7 bowls of wrath poured out (chapters 15-16), and the approaching fall of **“Babylon the Great”** prophesied here (14:8 ; chapters 17-18).
3. **Angel “in charge of the fire” of the altar calls for gathering the ripe grapes of God’s wrath** (14:18-19). Before at the altar, an angel offered incense with the prayers of the saints (6:9 ; 8:3-5), then took a censor of fire and hurled it down to the earth, in preparation for the 7 trumpets that warned of judgment (8:5ff). This gave an answer to the prayers of the saints (6:10 ; 8:3-4 ; 19:15), but it also indicated that God’s people will go through tribulation (7:14 ; 12:11 ; 13:9-10 ; 16:6 ; 18:24 ; 19:2,13).
4. **Trampled in a “winepress outside the city” implies disgrace like that of Christ Jesus** (14:20 ; Heb. 13:11-14). Judgment of unbelievers will take place outside the city of God (20:8-9 ; 21:27 ; 22:14-15). The blood’s depth and length, a distance of **“1600 stada”**, points to complete judgment. This is evidently equivalent to 184 miles, 300 kilometers, or approximately the length of Palestine.

## **G. 7<sup>th</sup> Sign: The saints’ victory over the sea beast and their victory song (15:1-4)**

1. **Another “great and marvelous sign”** is revealed, depicted as 7 angels with the 7 last plagues (15:1). This 7<sup>th</sup> sign harkens back to the 1<sup>st</sup> **“great and wondrous sign”** (12:1) so that the 7 signs form an

extended interlude between the sounding of the 7<sup>th</sup> trumpet and the pouring out of the 7 bowls of wrath. Thus the 7<sup>th</sup> seal contains and reveals the 7 trumpets, and the 7<sup>th</sup> trumpet contains and reveals the 7 bowls.

- a. The interlocking function of 15:2-4 operates similar to the interlocking function of 8:3-5.
  - b. After Christ **“opens”** the 7<sup>th</sup> seal heaven is opened (8:1), and 7 trumpets are given to the 7 angels (8:2); but portion 8:3-5 is placed prior to the sounding of these 7 trumpets (8:6ff). After the 7<sup>th</sup> trumpet is **“sounded”** (11:15) the temple in heaven is opened (11:19) and the 7 signs are given, but in like manner portion 15:2-4 is placed prior to the 7 bowls of wrath being **“poured out”** upon the earth (16:1ff). This is then followed by a view of the open temple, the **“tent of witness”** (15:5).
2. **The 7<sup>th</sup> sign is described as 7 angels with the 7 last plagues** (15:1), the full measure of God’s wrath.
- a. In the O.T, the plagues poured out upon Egypt warned future generations (Deut.28:59-60). Now in chapter 15, all is ripe for final judgment of those who worship the beast and harm God’s saints.
  - b. **“God’s wrath is completed”** (15:1). Bowls run parallel to the seals and trumpets in these visions. The divine purpose of God was revealed in small part by the seals (6:12-17) and then in greater measure by the trumpets (8:6-9:21), but now is **“completed”** through the bowls (15:1b,7-8 ; 16:17).
3. **A prophetic picture of the ultimate triumph and praise is offered to honor God** (15:2-4). This completes the 7 signs of interlude, for the visions never aim to follow a strict chronological progression.
- a. A **“sea of glass”** evokes an image of stillness. Earlier it formed part of the throne of God in heaven (4:6 ; 15:2). Next, the earth’s sea was associated with the power of evil (13:1). Later, an image of waters will symbolize peoples, multitudes, nations and languages (17:1-2, 5,15). These waters are contaminated by the **“mother of prostitutes”**, **“Babylon the Great”** and the temptations of the earth. Consummation of the Kingdom of God is in full view, because the evil trinity of dragon, beast, and false prophet have been solidly and finally defeated (11:17-18 ; 15:1-4 ; 19:11-21 ; 20:7-10).
  - b. The appearance of sea mixed with fire (15:2) uses fire as a metaphor for God’s purification and judgment. It harkens back to the **“seven torches of fire”** before the throne, and the seven spirits of God (4:5-6). Daniel prophesied about the throne of God as **“flaming with fire”** with a **“river of fire”** flowing out from before the Ancient of Days (Dan.7:9-11). Daniel’s context presents a powerful and terrifying 10-horned beast slain, its body destroyed and thrown into the blazing fire. So too, the 7<sup>th</sup> sign heralds God’s divine and holy judgment completely poured out upon the wicked (15:1-4).
  - c. Victorious over evil, the saints break out in glorious song. They sing about the **“the King of ages”**, about his righteous deeds that are just and true, and about his holiness (15:3-4). When Pharaoh’s military elite were destroyed in the Red Sea, Jews sang the song of victory. It was called the song of Moses (Ex.15:1-18). Here, the song of Moses and the song of the Lamb are united. The song echoes fulfillment of O.T. prophecy like that of Isa.51:9-11; where God brought His people through the sea on dry land, and when the redeemed of the Lord return to their city, they **“enter Zion with singing”**. Both Moses and the Lamb represent God’s promised deliverance, and that is why the redeemed burst forth in praise (Ps.92:1- 5). The harps they hold are given by God, and the song they sing solidly inter-connects this passage with the 144,000 who also sing a new song while harpists play (14:1-5 ; 15:1-4). The group and song are apparently one and the same for both passages, just two Hebrew ways to say the same thing (as did the vision of chapter 7).