

Revelation Series – 2022

Chapters 6-18

Chapters 6-18 - The “craziness” of Revelation - in brief

- Chapter 6 - The seals that held together the scroll referred to above are opened. Each tells of the implications of sin making its final impact upon humanity. Sin brings death, spiritual confusion and wreaks havoc upon nature. This is the section of the FOUR horsemen. Each is a “symbol” of judgment on the brokenness and sin of the world. This is also the section where those “under the altar” of God (those who suffered for the faith) are crying out in anguish, looking for the resolution to the story of God’s salvation and for the restoration of the kingdom. We all LONG for that day!
- Chapter 7 - An "interlude" in the action of Revelation. This is basically John's attempt to bring people an opportunity to make another decision about who is going to run their lives. 144,000 "faithful" are mentioned (vs. 4-8). They belong to God. “144,000” (12x12x1000) – not a literal number but a sum total of God’s covenant people.
- Chapters 8-11. The Trumpets are sounded. This is God's intervention into human history. We anticipate the visitation of God. Each trumpet sounds and brings us closer and closer to God having the final victory.
- Chapter 9 – A look into the “BOTTOMLESS” pit – reservoir of evil that has a “ruler” that is personified evil and a destroyer. An evil army destroys humanity (image of the evil of war and its devastation upon real people). There is an appeal at the end to repentance.
- Chapter 10 - Another "interlude" in the action of the book. An angel picks up a smaller book and tells John to "eat" it. This is symbolic of the dual nature of proclaiming the Word and Truth of God. On the one hand, it is a privilege to share God's word. On the other hand, when you proclaim it, sometimes it isn't easy to hear and respond to.
- Chapter 11:1-2 - the image of the measuring rod. Another image that points to the decisional character of the book.
- Chapter 11:3-14 - the two witnesses. They are heralds of the end times. They have miraculous power, kingdom authority, the power of God's Word behind them and a very impressive prophetic ministry. The point - there is still a chance to come to the Lord. He is waiting (Revelation 3:20).
- Chapter 12 and 13 - the dragon and the two beasts - this is the great antithesis to the Holy Trinity. The Dragon is none other than the Devil. The first beast has to do with political power. The second beast has great religious power. A “woman” and a “child” are also referred to – this is a metaphor of the story of the incarnation. Despite the brokenness of the cosmos, God acts and STILL acts through Jesus.
- Chapter 14 and 15 - another reiteration of God's victory in our lives and the centrality of Christ
- Chapter 16 - The bowls of wrath are poured out. Judgement upon the earth is intensifying.
- Chapter 17 – The “doom of Babylon” is proclaimed – anything that has aligned itself with the “beast” (evil) is to be exposed and defeated by the Lamb.
- Chapter 18 - the fall of evil powers and institutions that align themselves with evil and rebellion against God.

Chapters 6-18 - The “craziness” of The Book of Revelation – in detail

The point – our world is the object of divine action. The Lamb opens the seals, the angels unleash the disasters that play a role in God’s resolution of the disorder that sin brought to God’s cosmos. Sin is finally getting a chance to have its full impact on humanity. There is a dismantling of the present order so that we going to witness. Real power, represented in part by the vast, supernatural forces aligned with God, belongs to God and the Lamb and NOT to pretenders who are seen at last merely to strut and fret their hour upon the stage as players in the dragon’s long standing and long failing rebellion against the Almighty. The Seals, the Trumpets and the Bowls portray the same events, each showing the trauma that comprehensively increases in intensity. These can be seen as three cycles that carry the same message, each calling people prophetically to repentance.

Note – When I’ve taught on the book of Revelation in the past, I’ve often used the moniker, “The Villains of Revelation” to describe this section of the book. The fact that evil has invaded God’s created order (which was deemed by God Himself as “good” and “very good” in the book of Genesis) to such an extent as described in Revelation chapters 6 through 18 is striking. From “looking into a bottomless pit” in chapter 9 verses 1 through 11 where John describes what it is like to look into the face of evil (fallen “stars”, locusts that sting like a scorpion, 200 million army bent on destruction, etc.) to beasts and dragons...this section of the book is not for the faint at heart. What’s the overall “point” of this revelation? A call to decide, “whose side are you on; the beast or the Lamb?” as well as to discern what it is that motivates and drives people to their knees in dependance and worship. This section of Revelation outlines the BATTLE that we face as the Body of Christ. As the Bible proclaims, we are in a battle against evil – evil personified in dragons and beasts while at the same time doing battle against our own “flesh” and the world at large. We as followers of Jesus must take this battle seriously. We don’t have to buy into pessimism, cynicism, or fear. We also can’t release personal responsibility from engaging this battle by pointing the finger of blame to the Devil. We can’t surrender! The Bible doesn’t underestimate the power of evil and neither should we. But the book of Revelation is gloriously unapologetic when it comes to this fact – CHRIST WHO IS IN US IS GREATER THAN HE OR ANYTHING IN THE FALLEN WORLD! We are overcomers through Jesus!

Chapter 6 – The Seals begin to be broken open – this is a clear reference to chapter 5 and the scroll of God that only Jesus Himself is worthy to open.

Interesting detail – “praise” surrounds the opening of each seal. Praise needs to surround our lives. Worship puts all of our lives struggles and joys in context. Romans 5:3ff – “rejoice in suffering.” James 1:2ff – “give thanks in suffering.”

Four Horseman – image adapted from angelic horsemen in Zechariah 1:8-11, 6:1-8 (used in a different way by John). In Zechariah’s vision, the horsemen deal out the vengeance of God upon Babylon/Egypt and the nations that have oppressed God’s people – like “winds” that cover the earth.

In Revelation, the Four Horsemen are either angels of judgement OR symbols of Christ’s coming in judgement. They are metaphors for accepting the reality of judgement.

- Let’s talk about God for a moment – judgement is one of those aspects of God we would rather ignore – but God’s grace and judgment go hand in hand – why?
- Response to people’s questions – if Jesus promised to come again, why are we suffering? Why are people martyred? Why does world look like this?

The Seals being opened - for this aspect of the Revelation journey – I encourage you to put together a chart: Who opens? Who announces? What it unleashes? What power each seal has? What it means?

Seals #1-4, 6 - Five of seven seals contain – war, militarism, political oppression, and domination; strife within the world, violence, will to destroy, famine, misery, injustice, hunger, death, pestilence, luxuries available to rich but poor having nothing, terror, martyrdom, earthquakes, shattered cosmos, natural disasters (all picture of end times Jesus talked about in gospels)

Seal #5 (6:9-11) Martyrs – “how long” common Old Testament (OT) prayer in Psalm 6:3, 13:1 – they are seeking vengeance – sometimes that is tough to understand how the people who love Jesus seek vengeance, but remember, they are human. They experienced horrors, flames, beasts, torture...we have no right to criticize unless we’ve been through the same.

Key theme - When human beings resist the law of God and God’s design, there is utter chaos.

You can see that in Romans 1 – sin’s influence is destructive to created order.

Can you imagine a scenario where ¼ (25%) of earth’s population dies (that’s 2 billion people)? Even so, within the text, that image is one that is meant to communicate “limited” death.

John lives in a time of great strife within the world that was tearing it apart. In many ways, Roman power was beginning to crumble and persecution was out of control.

Seal #7 (Revelation 8:1-5) – dramatic silence – as in a play or sermon, gets people thinking – prelude to something

Seventh seal is actually the first of the seven Trumpets.

In other words, trumpets are meant to sound the alarm or summon to battle. This is clearly a symbol of intervention of God into history (c.f. Gideon's victory in Judges 6-8, Jericho in Joshua 6).

Silence – heaven is allowing the prayers of God's people to be brought to God.

Chapter 7 – “Sealing”/Preserving God's people' and expressions of praise!

7:1-3 – The “calm before the storm”

7:1 – Four angels are standing at four corners of earth, holding back the winds. The gentile/Greek belief was that the elements of nature had “gods” associated with them. So, this is figurative language here. Jews believe God had delegated authority over various parts of nature to angels under His command (Ps 148).

7:2 – “The angel rising with the sun.” This is a very significant and powerful angel - the angel here brings the authority of God.

7:3 – “Don't harm the earth until the bond-servants of God are sealed.” God's servants are sealed as His protected ones (Is. 44:5) – they belong to the King.

- John's audience will learn that the “marking” of God's servants with God's seal means they will be protected from God's plagues even as God kept the Hebrews out of harm's way in the time of the Exodus
- Possessing THIS seal is immensely better than bearing the seal of the beast
- Ezekiel 9:4-6 – judgment could not take place until the righteous were protected
- Ephesians 1:13 – “sealed with the Holy Spirit”
- Marked on forehead/hand – most obvious place to mark a person – it is obvious that Christ in their life

Question – how are you marked for Christ? Is relationship with Him obvious in your life?
What makes it obvious?

7:4-8 – The 144,000

- Symbolic use of number – completeness of the people of God
- These are people who are still in the thick of history and adversity
- There is an interesting connection between this roster and the census taken in the book of Numbers that determined the military capacity of God's people as they came to inhabit the promised land. Note – this group will fight alongside of the Lamb in chapter 14.
- Protected by God – all children precious to him - doesn't want to lose anyone – Romans 8:38-39
- What identifies these people?

7:4 – They are sealed – they belong to God; will be protected from destruction

7:4 - From “every tribe in Israel

7:5 – 12,000 from each tribe – 12x12x1000 – number of completion – the totality of God's people

- 12 – number of perfection related to God's people
- 7 – number of perfection related to God

- Tribe of Dan omitted here – Dan always associated with idolatry
- Dan's sons blasted in Judges 18:30, 1 Kings 12:29, Amos 8:14
- One tribe omitted because of the danger of apostasy even among God's people
- Ephraim – from tribe of Joseph – the tribe of Joseph usually broken down into 2 – Manasseh and Ephraim

7:9-17 – The Great Multitude

- This image is mostly associated with the Church (the faithful disciples of Jesus) victorious
- Timelines in Revelation are NOT important – John is describing the timelessness of eternity – he could be seeing past, present, and future simultaneously.
- What identifies these people (the great multitude)?

7:9 – very numerous

7:9 – represented all humanity

7:9 – stand before the Lamb

7:9 – white robes and palm branches – symbols of victory

7:10 – praising God

7:14 - These came out (emerging victoriously) of the great tribulation – Jesus made them righteous

Profile of life in heaven depicted in Chapter 7 – people are before the throne, serving God; no hunger, thirst, reversal of Genesis curse, no tears, and no wants (“The Lord is my shepherd” Ps. 23)

7:14ff – The Great Tribulation - The “great tribulation” is not a title – simply a description of real life/broken life and cosmos because of sin

Great tribulation views - both held by intelligent, respected scholars

1. Viewpoint #1 – “Dispensational Theological position” – this refers to the end of time – Daniel 9 (future event)
 - 7 years of intensity
 - Mathew 24 – great suffering at the end of time
 - Some believe this justifies dispensational thinking
 - Pouring out of God's wrath – “not appropriate for church to endure”
 - Dispensationalists believe this is a picture of Jewish converts
2. Viewpoint #2 – More traditional, hermeneutically faithful, older, more historical view
 - Not one particular time but generally the Church has and will face persecution
 - On-going persecution of Christians in the world even in our time – be aware of that reality (“Voice of Martyrs” ministry).

Chapter 8 – The 7 trumpets (remember the growing “intensity” of the consecutive “sevens” – the 7th seal is the first of the 7 trumpets – the 7th trumpet is the first of the 7 bowls – symphonic interpretation (growing crescendo)

8:1 – silence – dramatic pause before something big happens (Zeph. 1:7 “be silent before the day of the Lord”)

- Trumpets – symbol of God's intervention in history – fanfare that marks God's presence – alarms at the beginning of battle – call to assembly or celebration – alerts
- Incense – symbol of prayer (ref. back to martyrs praying for justice)

Pause - here's a moment of decision – pause for a minute – what are you going to do?

The seven trumpets (forces of nature bring “judgment” – connection with plagues against Egypt in Exodus)

8:6-8 – hail, fire (1/3 of earth affected)

8:8-9 – “mountain” thrown into sea – sea becomes blood (1/3 sea life affected)

8:10-11 – star (asteroid) hits earth (affects water supply – bitter)

8:12 – earth is darkened (“clock” of the world affected)

9:1-11 – locusts (with “scorpion” power to torment those on earth) – some regard these as “demonic hordes” given that they have a “leader” who is clearly Satan because he is aligned with destruction (underscoring the need to be “sealed” by God for protection)

9:13-21 – vast, destructive army – the trumpets being sounded shows us the destruction of a world that is regarded at the time as Caesar’s world – his “might” is no match for the true power of God

11:15-19

8:13 – special verse – break between 4th and 5th trumpet

- Eagle flying in the heavens – messenger of God proclaiming woe
- Remember seals – 1/4 of people already died
- As bad as first 4 trumpets are, more coming
- Midheaven – layer between heaven and atmosphere
- Dramatic pause – decisional time – “are you on side of Lamb or not?” In other words, more judgment is coming

Chapter 9 – The Sixth Trumpet “sounds”

9:1-11 – A look into the bottomless pit and the one who “holds the key” to the pit

- Satan revealed in this section – “star who fell from heaven” – personified evil,
- Bottomless pit refers to reservoir of evil - fire, smoke, heat – judgement images
- Locust – symbol of destruction (Deut. 28:42,, Psalm 78:46)
- Sting of scorpion – doesn’t bring death in most cases...wish you were dead – symbol of torture
- Abaddon – Christians who had been Jews would recognize this name ...ruler of bottomless pit
- Apollyon – Greek Christians would recognize this – destroyer – reference to god apollo (whose symbol would be a locust), by the way, Domitian used this symbol to refer to himself

9:12 – another pause – have you decided yet?

9:13-21 – Army from east – could appear as a huge army (we have a tendency to overexaggerate – we say “millions” as an illustration

- 25% die in seals (25% of remaining population – approx. 2 billion)
- 33% more people die in trumpet #6 (approx. another 1.75 billion)
- 9:20-21 – what do people learn from this? Are they driven to their knees? NO!

Chapter 10 – Angel and ANOTHER scroll

10:1-11 – The Angel and little scroll

- I don’t believe that this angel is Jesus – another powerful angel around God’s throne
- The little scroll denotes the fact that this reveals only a small piece of God’s overall plan
- “Eating the scroll” – part of prophetic ministry – John getting a taste of what it means to proclaim God’s Word – it is a blessing/privilege and a curse

Chapter 11 – The measuring rod and the two witnesses

This is getting difficult, isn't it? We are seeing evil run its full course. The impact of judgment is intensifying. That is the preface to 7th trumpet – when that trumpet sounds, God will accomplish His purposes. He will triumph!

- 11:1-2 – measuring rod – a unit of measurement for the Jew in that day was about 9 feet
- Measuring the temple and altar
- Parallel passage – sheep and goats in Matthew 25
- “Leaving out the outer courts” is one way of saying, “don’t protect those outside of a relationship with God – they will receive judgment”
- Measuring the courts of God’s temple was one way of praising the magnificence of the building whose purpose was to praise God.
- John can’t be speaking of the literal temple (which had been destroyed in 70 AD) – he is talking about the people of God (HS dwells in people’s hearts) OR a reconstructed temple that kicks off last days
- 42 months is 3 ½ years – this is another issue dispensationalists grab on to justify a mid-trib view

11:3-14 – Two witnesses

- Lord gives His authority to two witnesses – their ministry during tribulation
- Malachi 3:1 and 4:5 tell us that these witnesses are “heralds of the end”
- Sackcloth symbolizing mourning and repentance – consistent with John the Baptist prophetic garb
- There are scholars that believe that these two witnesses are symbolic (parabolic reading) for the witness of the whole people of God – this is God’s call for us to be faithful to great commission.

11:4 – They are two olive trees and two lampstands before the Lord – they are anointed for special purpose – they stand before God – alive in the Lord – Moses and Elijah (transfiguration)

11:5 – They cannot be harmed because of the power of the Word of the Lord in their mouth – Jeremiah 5:10, 14 – tells us that prophetic words have and power of judgment

11:6 – These witnesses have power – power to shut the sky (see Elijah in 1 Kings 17) and turn water into blood (see Moses in Ex 7:20)

11:7-10 – The enemy (Satan) doesn't like what these witnesses are doing so they are killed and their bodies lay in public for ridicule and celebration. They are killed in a city of betrayal and sinfulness – equated with Egypt and Sodom – Jerusalem where Jesus was crucified- refusal to bury the dead was a great cruelty in ancient world and usually an indication of a godless and spiritual mockery

11:11-13 – Their bodies had been decomposing in public and then they are resurrected. That touches off a minor judgment against the city – more people die but actually some “give glory to God” - could be a symbol of Jewish conversions

11:15-19 – Seventh trumpet – another pause in action – this time pause of praise

- Theme – the power to rule belongs to the Lord – there are praises being sung in heaven because of the ultimate victory of God is in sight
- In these verses, we see a glimpse of the temple in heaven and ark of covenant – telltale signs of presence of God -thunder, lightening
- Note the tense switch in verse 15 – the kingdom of the world HAS BECOME the kingdom of God...really? This could show us that John sees God standing outside of time...another possibility is that John is showing us a “heavenly parenthesis” through the end of chapter 12 – the story logically picks up again in chapter 13
- Chapter 11:15-Chapter 12 could be a picture in a picture of what has happened in history

Chapter 12 - The Woman, the Dragon, the Child, and the Angel

12:1-2 - The Woman

* This symbol is one that has caused a lot of speculation and confusion over the years...there is symbolism used from ancient mythology in this short section. Obviously, the image of the "12 stars" is an allusion to the 12 tribes of Israel (or more generally, the people of God throughout history). The most common understanding here is that "faithful or restored Israel" was to be the mother of a restored future. This is an image of the chosen people (OT narrative and covenants) who give birth to the ONE who will rule for eternity.

12:3-4 - The Dragon

*Textual Note - The emergence of **dark images** shows us the serious extent and nature of evil*

* This is clearly a look at Satan who has tremendous power (7 heads, ten horns, etc.). The Bible speaks of a "war" in heaven (later in this chapter) where Satan is cast out with a 1/3 of the angels. The purpose of the dragon's appearance here in Revelation is to destroy the child that the woman gives birth to. This image stands outside of a specific "timeline" that often people want to use as they interpret this book from a dispensationalism perspective. Satan going after Jesus is something that happened and continues to happen.
* Obviously, that's what Satan wanted to do to Jesus during His earthly ministry. That's what Satan wanted to do to the Church. That's what Satan wants to do now in the lives of the Body of Christ which is the contemporary "incarnation" of Jesus in our world.

12:5-6 - The Child

* The child is Jesus.
* See how often the words "God" and "throne" are put together in Revelation. This is a symbol of God's coming victory.
* The woman is taken out to the wilderness to be cared for by God (that's what happened to Israel in the wilderness and that's what happened to Jesus when He was driven to the wilderness - Mark 1).
* The Woman is protected from the final tribulation of 1260 days - which is the equivalent of 3 ½ years.
* This is an image of God protecting His Church. That's consistent with the rest of Revelation.

12:7-17 - The angel and the War

12:9 – Satan's power restricted – Christianity isn't a dualistic religion – God/Satan not contradictory co-equals

* A victory has been won. Satan is tethered
* There is a huge war in heaven...Michael and the angels of God vs. the dragon. The dragon is defeated and tossed out of heaven. This is a snapshot into eternity so it defies our need to find definition in "chronos" time
* Then we are told in verses 10-12 that salvation has now come...the accuser has only a little time left to wreak havoc on the earth
* The dragon is out to persecute the woman and her faithful descendants who obey God's commands and are faithful to God. If Satan can't get to Jesus, he'll go after the Christians
* God's "faithful" are protected by eagle's wings and the wilderness. Certainly, this is a symbol of God's protection (Isaiah 40:31 and Exodus 19:4).

Chapter 13

1. There are two beasts mentioned in this chapter. Now, before you start pointing the finger at the person next to you, let's look at what John tells us:

Beast #1 (vs. 1-10)

- * "out of the sea" - emerging from time of chaos (sea=chaos). Another option that has a specific contextual connection is that Rome was regarded as a city emerging "out of the sea."
- * In John's Day, people often used this type of language to be able to protect imperial power and abuse. Remember, John was trying to get this letter off to the mainland while in Exile. He couldn't come right out and say, "the emperor is a beast."
- * Ten horns and 7 heads which is like the description of the dragon. This beast is aligned with evil. The dragon gives the beast its power. Its task - blasphemes God

Characteristics:

- * "Like a leopard" - fast, killer, disguised
- * "Feet like a bear" - silent
- * "Mouth of lion" - ferocious
- * "Does miraculous" - amazes people, gains following (vs. 3)
- * "Has the authority to make war," control nations, insult God, and to do what the dragon couldn't do directly, fight against God's people and harm them
- * vs. 10-a call for endurance and faith from people of God. This is a message that would ring true for those looking for the justice of God to reign upon the earth against those who have and are rebelling against God (remember the fifth seal?). -:-

* Summary-this beast has great political power. He becomes an earthly god (the antithesis of the Son of God). This beast represents the evil and injustice of political structures constructed by evil leaders.

Beast #2 (vs. 11-18)

- * "out of the earth" - in other words, emerging from among the people/
- * "lamb like"- seems peaceful but it is a horned lamb (like Christ but a parody of Christ)
- * "speaks evil words" - spoke as a dragon" (false prophesy)
- * "right hand of beast #1" - force behind worship (spiritual gestapo) enforces worship of the first beast
- * "wonder worker" - miracles, builds image of beast #1
- * "666" - imperfect mark of beast, mark needed to buy/sell – mark is parody or mockery of perfection
- * Remember that God's people have been "sealed" or marked with the mark of the Lord on their forehead. In other words, it won't take much during the end times to figure out who's side people are on. The question begs to be posed, "who's side are you on?"
- * In that culture, people were used to seeing certain people "marked" - slaves were branded (ownership), loyal soldiers tattooed their general's name on themselves (devotion), property deeds were sealed (ownership rights).
- * When a person burned incense to the emperor, they were given a certificate of worship that proved their devotion. What in your life would prove your devotion to Jesus?

*Summary-this beast has great "religious power"

* There is wide-spread speculation on the identity of Anti-Christ. Don't go there! Don't go into foolish speculation because that will cause you to miss the point – it isn't necessary a "person" but rather a "spirit;" a mood or a cultural reality that is anti-everything that Jesus lived, died, and rose for.

* Here's something to ponder - There is a great antithesis to the Holy Trinity in this chapter in the dragon and the two beasts – mocking the Trinity.

Chapter 14

Over and against this bleak picture comes a picture of hope and good news...not only is it not too late to turn to God but God will have victory

1. 14:1-5 - army of 144,000...blameless, redeemed, totality of God's people, demonstrate the mark of the Lamb, the voice of Jesus is heard. They assemble on Mt. Zion (city of God, associated with victory)

A voice from heaven is heard in vs. 2. It is the voice of Jesus (see chapter 1 for cross references). In addition, His voice sounds like harps (David played the harp for King Saul when he had his crazy moments...why? Comfort). See also Philippians 4:4-6

2. Angels released:

14:6-7-Angel #1-the gospel, hope, honor God for the time has come for the final scroll to be read

14:8-Angel #2-Babylon is judged for idolatry and unfaithfulness. Who or what is Babylon? Rome in John's time was the center of evil in times to come.

14:9-13-Angel #3-judgement on all who received the mark of the beast

3. vs. 13-a call for endurance and faith..."blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on." They will be saved. Those who don't, will be judged

4. vs. 14ff-the harvest that Jesus promised in Matthew 13:24ff

Chapter 15-17

Introduction - We are heading for the home stretch. The last half of this "great tribulation" and the glorious return of Christ are highlighted in this section. The forces of evil are gathering together for the final showdown. The doom of evil has already been proclaimed in chapter 14. The final judgement is right around the corner.

Chapter 15

15:1 - We are taken up into heaven again for a glimpse into God's victory. It is important for us to keep the victory of God in our minds (as it was for John's audience) especially in the midst of all this "craziness" and the unleashing of evil. Remember, this is outside of history and time as we have pointed out in prior sessions. We see 7 angels with the seven last "judgements" or plagues of God (then He is finished). Because they are referred to as "plagues", it should give us a clue at what God is trying to accomplish with these judgements upon sin. Hint - what was the purpose of the plagues during the time of Moses in God's showdown with the Pharaoh?

Now...answer the question, why these plagues? What is God's ultimate purpose in them? Just to make humanity miserable? Or what?

15:2 - We see the "sea of glass" (referred to in chapter 4)...this time the sea is being stood in by those victorious in the Lord. Remember back to the Exodus with the crossing of the Red Sea? How might that

story help us in the interpretation of this section of Revelation? Separation between God and creation – God has a distinct character and nature.

15:3, 4 - Those victorious in the Lord sing the song of Moses from Exodus 15:1-19 and Deuteronomy 32. The only problem is that they sing only a portion of it. This being a symbol for uncontrollable, ungodly chaos.

15:5-8 - We see angels coming from the presence of God. They are dressed in priestly garb, coming from the covenant tent/tabernacle (denoting the presence of God), smoke only underscores the mysterious glory of God that filled his temple (Isaiah 6:4, 1 Kings 8:10-11), no one is allowed to enter before the wrath of God is over

Chapter 16

This chapter covers the "bowls of wrath" as they are "poured out" (vs. 1) upon the earth. We'll take them one by one. Each should remind you again of the Exodus and the reason they are used in this context.

- Bowl 1 (vs. 1-2) - poured out upon the earth...sores on those worshiping the beast. Sores were the sixth plague in Exodus 9:10.
- Bowl 2 (vs. 3) - poured out into the sea...water to blood...all the sea dies (food sources damaged). We've seen this already in Revelation
- Bowl 3 (vs. 4-7) - poured out into the rivers and streams...water into blood...fresh water sources now die...angels proclaim the justice of God. The judgments of God are just. "Those who have died for their faith in the Lord proclaim that the justice they have sought is finally being brought upon the earth. This takes us back to chapter 6:9ff.
- Bowl 4 (vs. 8-9) - poured out on the sun...burning people (Ozone layer?)...people curse God, recognize His authority but do not turn to Him in repentance (remember Moses and the plagues...why did Pharaoh not turn to God? Because his heart was hard. What does it mean to have a hard heart? Why is that a great analysis of people stuck in sin and rebellion against God?). The Old Testament refers to the purpose of judgement is to secure repentance (Amos 4:6-11)
- Bowl 5 (10-11) - poured out onto the throne of the beast bringing darkness on to the kingdom of the beast. It also brings pain to the point where people curse God but still do not turn from their sin. The security and apparent "goodness" that kept people worshiping the beast is now coming down. Darkness was the ninth plague in Ex. 10:22 also seen before in Revelation 8:12.
- Bowl 6 (12-16) - a natural barrier is dried up making massive warfare possible. Every reader at that time would have known all about this. The large army from the east is the feared Parthian army. It would take huge delays to get armies across the waters...here, we see no more delays. All the forces of evil are called together ("frogs" carriers of plagues) for a climactic battle. Demons motivate the hearts of these armies to make war. In the midst of this, a voice that says "I am coming like a thief," Jesus says, "watch for me"...don't be caught "with your pants down". By the way, Armageddon referred to as the strategic plain of Megiddo. It is a corridor of land that is easily traveled below the Sea of Galilee in a place the Jews called the valley of Jezreel and Esdraelon. It was an easy place to travel in order to avoid the mountains of the Holy Land.
- Bowl 7 (17-21) - poured out into the air (food, water, now air supply)... "it is finished" is proclaimed (sound familiar?) by a voice from the temple (presence of God)...the judgement of God is nearly over....thunder and earthquakes denote the unraveling of God's initial creation. Here's an interesting side note, remember "swords into" plowshares and the rough places plain" as an Old Testament prophesy Micah 4:3) about the end times? Here they are. But still...people do not turn to God.

Chapter 17

In this section of the book, we see the "doom of Babylon". This is clearly not just a special city or place but also an image of general unfaithfulness, idolatry, and a label for those who aligned themselves with the beast. The overriding theme of this chapter is "victory is at hand".

17:1-8 - a description of the great Harlot or Babylon. This harlot rides on a red beast 1 (the beast is clearly beast #1, the Antichrist from chapter 13). She is aligned with the beast (vs. 4), has killed many saints {vs. 6}, and has a name on her head that all the people knew (in public brothels in Rome, prostitutes often wore their names on a frontlet upon their heads). Though defeated, John is still amazed by this deceptive and intoxicating beauty and power. How are people drawn into power and beauty even if it is false, misleading and downright evil?

The beast is referred to as the antithesis of God..."was and is not and is to come" versus "who was, who is and who is to come"

17:9-13 -the kings and powers of the earth serve the beast and get ready to make war against the Lamb

* This is one of the most confusing- sections of Revelation. We'll attempt to take it apart:

A. It was common knowledge that Rome sat on 7 hills

B. The seven kings refer to the 7 emperors who ruled Rome up to Domitian who was currently in power at time of Revelation

C. The ten horns are the ten kings in Daniel 7:24 probably the leaders of the rest of the world (outside of Rome's power or under Rome's influence, "puppet kings")

* Eventually they turn on the beast and this center of evil

vs. 14-18 - The victory of the Lamb...the Harlot is devoured from within...her own people, power and weapons turn against her

John wants us to know that any city, power, or culture that aligns itself against God and allures God's people, will fall!

Chapter 18

Here's a take on this chapter -we made it! Hope is at hand...the end is near...evil is finally defeated and we're moments away from enjoying God's presence for eternity.

1. Verses 1-8: The fall of Babylon - ("the woman") - this is a symbol of all those who have not aligned themselves with the dragon, the beasts and with evil. In verse 4 a voice instructs the people of God to come out of her and not look back, in other words, to be delivered from the wrath that is to come...does that remind you of an OT story? Which one? (Hint - Genesis 18-19). In verse 7, Isaiah 47:8-9 is quoted as an example of evil's smug security and spiritual arrogance. Many people believe they are invincible.
2. Verses 9-19: Voices of mourning concerning this judgment -
 - a. Kings weep (they took part in her immorality)
 - b. The marketplace weeps (they took advantage of her bounty)
 - c. The ships of the sea mourn (they made money off her too)

* We have already seen that the mark of the beast was necessary to survive in this bleak time in history

* Here we are seeing the complete breakdown of the beast's system

* The judgement of materialism as a base evil in the world. In addition, this is showing a breakdown of the world's economy. People who have put trust in riches now are coming up empty do you see this as relevant today? What's the message here?

* Important note - in the coming Kingdom, all that has value in this world is commonplace (e.g. "Streets paved with gold" in Revelation 22)

3. Verses 20-24: In heaven, there is a celebration of God's justice...God is going to judge not just human sin but institutional sin and high places of power that promote the anti-Christ value system...can you see where that may be good news to those who are going through suffering?