

*The Deep Things of God*  
*by Jon Paulien*

**Chapter Eight**

**Seeing Christ in the Old Testament**

As I write, my wife is driving through the countryside on Interstate 57 in central Illinois. The landscape is extremely flat, mostly farmers' fields and grazing grass, with an occasional stand of trees. It is one of those grey days in mid-March. There is little variety to the scenery. So I was a bit startled an hour or so ago to see what appeared to be a gigantic grey cross barely visible against the grey sky in the distance. My first impression was that it must be some sort of industrial contraption that was only shaped like a cross. But as we drew nearer, it became clear that it was truly a representation of the cross of Jesus Christ, the beams set in diamond-shaped metal, perhaps eighty feet high. There was no sign or other explanation as to why it was there by the road, it just was.

I wondered if that monument was someone's response to a special intervention of God. Perhaps he or she was drowning in a lake and said, "Lord, if you'll save my life right now, I'll build you the biggest monument in the state!" Or perhaps it was supposed to be the bell tower to a church, but they ran out of money before they could build the church! Be that as it may, that

cross is certainly the center piece of that portion of the Illinois landscape.

It is like that with the book of Revelation also. If we are not careful, we might get the impression that the beasts, the vultures, the darkness, the earthquakes and the hailstones are what the book of Revelation is all about. But they are more like the general landscape of the Illinois prairie. The true center piece of the book of Revelation is not war or catastrophe, it is not oil or the Middle East, it is Jesus Christ and him crucified. His presence permeates the book even when He is not named. To read this book without gaining a clearer picture of Jesus is to miss the key point.

In the book of Revelation the symbols of the Old Testament are transformed because of what Christ has done. We have seen that Revelation is built on the Old Testament background and its major themes. But because of Jesus' earthly life, His death and resurrection, and His ministry in the heavenly sanctuary, these Old Testament themes find fresh and creative meaning. Since the book of Revelation is a New Testament book, it picks up on the New Testament's understanding of the Old Testament themes in the light of the Christ event.

The book of Revelation is "the Revelation of Jesus Christ", not that of Moses, Peter or Daniel. As you go through the book of Revelation, Jesus Christ is found everywhere. Almost every chapter has a reference to Him in one way or another. Besides the direct use of His name He is also observed in symbols like Son of Man, Lamb, and child of the woman. In addition to Christ, there are also references to churches and the cross (for example, Rev 1:5-6,11; 5:6; 11:11). All this evidence makes clear that the book of Revelation is a Christian book designed to teach us something about Jesus, life in the church, and the meaning of the cross.

This general picture of the book is confirmed by an introductory statement in plain

language near the beginning of the book, Rev 1:5-6. There we are addressed with a minimum of symbolism, in language that cannot be misunderstood, as if John wanted to establish without question, right at the beginning, just what this book is about. It is about Jesus Christ, the “faithful martyr” (cross), “the firstborn from the dead” (resurrection), and the “ruler of the kings of the earth” (His ministry in heaven). Jesus is “the one who loves us” (present tense), who “freed us from our sins by His blood” (past tense), and who “made us a kingdom and priests” (past tense—the phrases in quotation marks in the last two sentences are my own translation). Because of what Jesus has done, we are loved, we have been freed from the bondage of sin, and we have been elevated to the highest possible status in Him.

So no matter how strange the language of the book may seem, its basic message is in harmony with the themes, words, and ideas of the New Testament. We must never limit Revelation to messages about world history, politics or the future. We must never be satisfied with a prediction of secular realities. The book of Revelation is a deeply spiritual book, it unveils Jesus Christ and it calls forth mighty songs of worship and praise. If we have failed to see a message about Christ at any point in this book, we have probably not understood that passage. So a fourth step of interpretation is vital. We cannot stop with basic exegesis of the book, with an examination of its structure, or with reference to the Old Testament. Revelation must also be read with reference to the New Testament context as well. We *must* find out how Jesus Christ is the center and substance of each part of the book, even the seals and the trumpets. We *must* discover how He transforms the symbols and ideas drawn from the Old Testament. Truly in the book of Revelation “all the books of the Bible meet and end.” (AA 585)

There is a basic insight that we need to keep in mind here. Throughout the New

Testament, Christ is seen as the One Who fulfilled the whole experience of the Old Testament people. In the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, there is a fulfillment of the entire experience of His Old Testament people. The author of Revelation is constantly pointing to the New Testament Christ, but he is using Old Testament language to do it. Based on what we have learned so far, that is exactly what we would expect— *God meets people where they are*. John, as he is writing Revelation, sees the Christ of the New Testament in the Old. This leads to amazing depth when you dig behind the references. Let me give you an example.

### **The Ruler of God’s Creation**

“To the angel of the church of Laodicea write: These are the words of the Amen, the faithful and true witness, *the ruler of God's creation.*”

Rev 3:14

Let's look more carefully at the phrase, “the ruler of God's creation,” which in some translations reads “the beginning” of God's creation. Why the big difference? Why do the translators not agree? Because the underlying Greek word is that ambiguous, “*arche*” (pronounced roughly as *ar-kay*). Jesus is the “*arche*” of God's creation. *Arche* can mean “old” or “beginning,” (first) as in “*archaeology*.” What is archaeology? A word brought in from the Greek meaning the study (“logos”) of old things (“*archae*”), the study of beginnings. So the word, “*arche*” can mean “beginnings.” But, it can also mean ruler--the first in the kingdom and the source of power and authority. Our English word, “*patriarch*,” means “rule by the father” and “*monarchy*,” means “rule of one.” So the word “*arche*” has a double meaning, resulting in two different ways of translating it.

If you had a Greek Old Testament and you went back to Genesis 1, you would find a very

interesting thing. “*Arche*” is the first major word in the Bible— “*in the beginning* God created” (“*en arche*”). So Rev 3:14 contains an allusion to Genesis 1:1, it is pointing us to that verse. Why is Jesus called the beginning--or the ruler--of God’s creation? Apparently, Jesus and creation are a very important combination for the author of Revelation. But the combination is not unique to Revelation, it is common throughout the New Testament. For example, not only does Genesis 1:1 (in Greek) begin with “*en arche*,” John 1:1 begins with exactly the same— “*en arche*.” “*In the beginning* was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” (John 1:1)

### *The New Creation*

Here John, the gospel writer, is making a very interesting point: Genesis 1:1 says, “in the beginning God” but John 1:1 says, “in the beginning was the Word” (in the beginning there was Jesus). That Word that was the God of creation became flesh and lived among us. And here we find the driving force behind the Gospel of John: it is the incredible recognition that a human being Who lived on earth for thirty-three-and-a-half years, Who ministered to others, performed miracles, died and rose again, was the same One Who formed the earth, said “Let there be light,” created life, and made Adam out of the dust of the ground.

We find an even more interesting reference showing that the theme of “Jesus and creation” is used widely in the New Testament: “The angel answered, ‘The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God.’” (Luke 1:35) The language here is reminiscent of Gen 1:2: “Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters.” Just as the Spirit overshadowed the water of creation, now (Luke

1:35) the Spirit overshadows Mary. The Spirit was the active agent in the original creation. When the Spirit overshadowed Mary it produced a new creation--the conception of Jesus. He was conceived in Mary's womb by the action of the Holy Spirit. The earth is the old creation of the Spirit but Jesus is the new creation.

It should not surprise us, therefore, that Jesus is also called the new or "second" Adam in the New Testament (Romans 5, 1 Corinthians 15). He is the counterpart of the old Adam as much as He is the counterpart of the original creation. As such, Jesus can be called "the image of God" (2 Corinthians 4:4, Colossians 1:15, Hebrews 1:3). Adam was the image of God in the original creation. But in the new creation, Jesus takes the place of Adam. He becomes Adam as Adam was intended to be.

#### *Adam As Adam Was Meant To Be*

In New Testament thought this concept goes very deep. Let's take a look at the "image of God" passage in the account of creation:

“Then **God said, ‘Let us make man in our image**, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground.’”

“So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; **male and female he created them.**”

“God blessed them and said to them, 'Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. **Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground.**’”

Gen 1:26-28

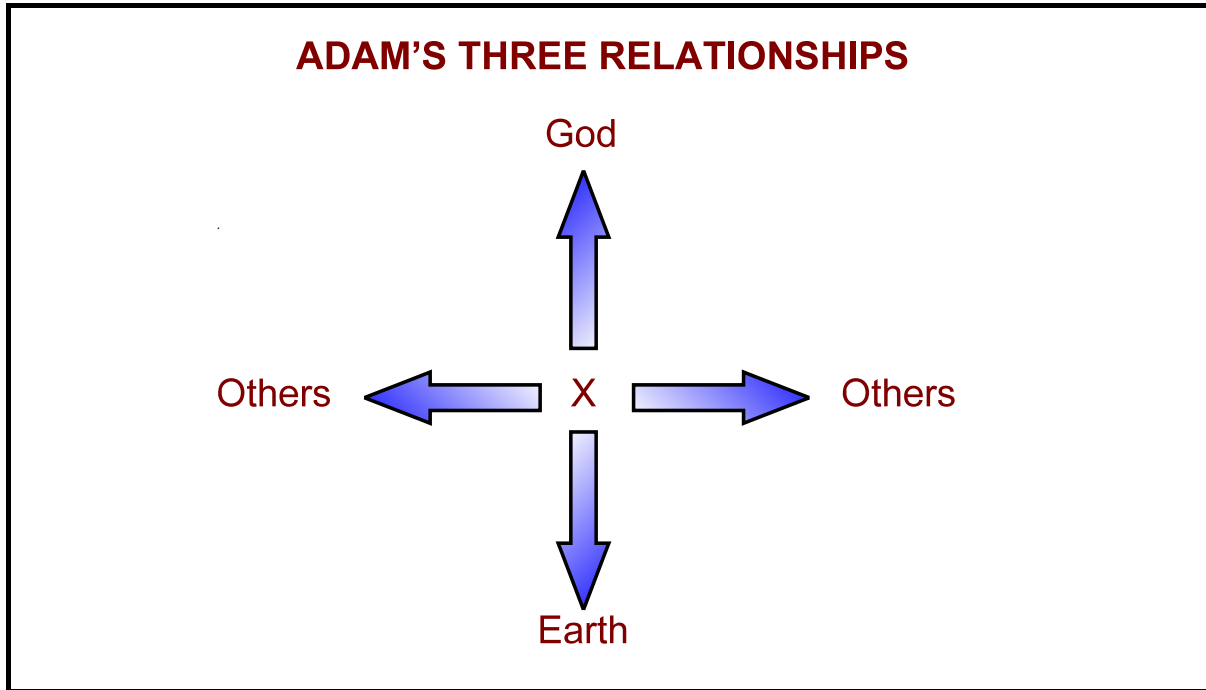
In the story of Genesis 1 “the image of God” manifested itself in three basic relationships, highlighted in the text above. (1) First of all Adam was in relationship with God. As the “image of God” he had great dignity but was clearly in an inferior position to God. He was dependent on

God as his mentor or teacher. God was the Creator and Adam was the creature. His relationship with God was that of a subordinate to a superior.

(2) The image of God included both male and female. Adam and Eve were designed for relationship with each other. God did not create Adam to be alone. He created the human race for relationship among equals, regardless of gender or ethnic background (all ethnic groups share the image of God and ancestry from Adam). Ellen White addresses the former in *Patriarchs and Prophets*, page 46:

“Eve was created from a rib taken from the side of Adam, signifying that she was not to control him as the head, nor to be trampled under his feet as an inferior, but to stand by his side as an equal, to be loved and protected by him. A part of man, bone of his bone, and flesh of his flesh, she was his second self, showing the close union and the affectionate attachment that should exist in this relation.”

(3) The image of God also included dominion over the earth. Adam ruled over the fish of the sea, the birds of the air, and the creatures that move along the ground. Adam and Eve were to be like mentors to the animals, the plants and the whole environment. These three relationships can be illustrated as follows.



The New Testament describes Jesus as the second Adam. He is Adam as Adam was meant to be. Jesus' experience on this earth is described in terms of Adams' experience. Do you remember the basic principle, *God meets people where they are*? This holds true for the second Adam concept in the New Testament. As Jesus' life is described in the gospels, it is described in the language of the original Adam and his experience.

(1) **Relationship with God.** After the Fall all of Adam's relationships were broken relationships. The first to be broken was his relationship with God. But Jesus came to restore the broken relationships of Adam. Jesus came to be Adam as Adam was meant to be. So Jesus had a perfect relationship with God. For example he said, ". . . the Father is greater than I." (John 14:28) There are some who believe this text expresses that Jesus was inferior to God by nature. But that is a misunderstanding of this text. He is not inferior to God in His divine nature, but as the second Adam he has taken a position of subordination to the Father. Jesus subordinated



Himself to the wishes and commands of His Father throughout His time on earth. He was demonstrating the relationship that Adam was intended to have. It was as the Second Adam that Jesus said things like, “I do nothing on my own but speak just what the Father has taught me” (John 8:28), and “I have obeyed my Father’s commands and remain in his love” (John 15:10).

(2) ***Relationship with Others***. Adam wasted no time putting the blame on his wife as soon as sin came in (Gen 3:12). In contrast, Jesus had a perfect relationship with others. His whole attitude to others was one of service. In acts of loving service He illustrates a perfect relationship among human beings. He carried His willingness to serve all the way to death. Two verses state this with clarity:

“For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”

Mark 10:45

“: Who being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness.”

Phil 2:5-7

In serving other people, Jesus demonstrated what a perfect relationship among human beings would be like. If everyone exhibited the desire to serve and benefit others, we wouldn't have strife, war, or most other problems of today. In His life on earth, He had the kind of relationship with other people that Adam was intended to have in the original creation.

The ideal “other relationship” is beautifully illustrated by the foot-washing service. Jesus knew Who He was. He knew that He had come down from Heaven where He had been a member of the Godhead from eternity (John 13:3). Nevertheless, He willingly performed the act of a slave (Phil 2:6-8). He stooped down to wash His disciples' feet. It is that sort of attitude that brings

peace and harmony into a relationship with others. No wonder Paul said, “Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus.” Phil 2:5.

(3) *Relationship with the Earth*. In addition to a perfect relationship with God and with others, Jesus also had a perfect relationship with the environment. He as Adam as Adam was intended to be. Like Adam, He had dominion over the fish of the sea, the birds of the air, the wind and the waves. This is delightfully illustrated in a number of New Testament stories.

For example, one day Jesus was out in a boat with His disciples. It was a wooden sailboat on the Sea of Galilee. But the boat ran into a storm. Jesus was asleep in the back while the waves were lashing the boat and the rain was pouring down. The disciples feared that the boat was going down so they roused Jesus and asked Him to intercede for them. He stood up in the boat, put up His hands and said, “Peace, be still.” The wind and the waves immediately obeyed Jesus (Matt 8:26-27). He had “dominion over the earth.” He was Adam as Adam was intended to be.

The original Adam’s dominion included dominion over the fish of the sea (Gen 1:26, 28). This is illustrated by one of my favorite stories in the gospels. One night the disciples went out fishing without Jesus (John 21:2-11). Why did they go out at night instead of during the day, when it would be more pleasant? There are two types of fishing: net fishing and lure fishing. Lure fishing requires light so that fish can be attracted to some object that looks tasty or interesting to them. When the fish bites at the object, it gets caught by the hook. So lure fishing works best in the day time.

With net fishing, on the other hand, your task is to surprise fish and catch them unawares, if possible. That’s why net fishing works best at night. At night the fish won’t always see the net coming. It will just be swimming along happily and suddenly there’s this thing trapping its

movements. Before the fish knows what has happened, it is in the net. The disciples were doing net fishing, therefore they fished at night. The whole night they were casting nets out into the lake, but they caught nothing. Morning came and the sun was beginning to rise over the Galilean hills. They had one last chance to surprise some fish. There was only one thing to do, cast the net into the shadow of the boat. Fish swimming in the bright sunshine might wander into the shadow of the boat and get caught before they realize a net is there.

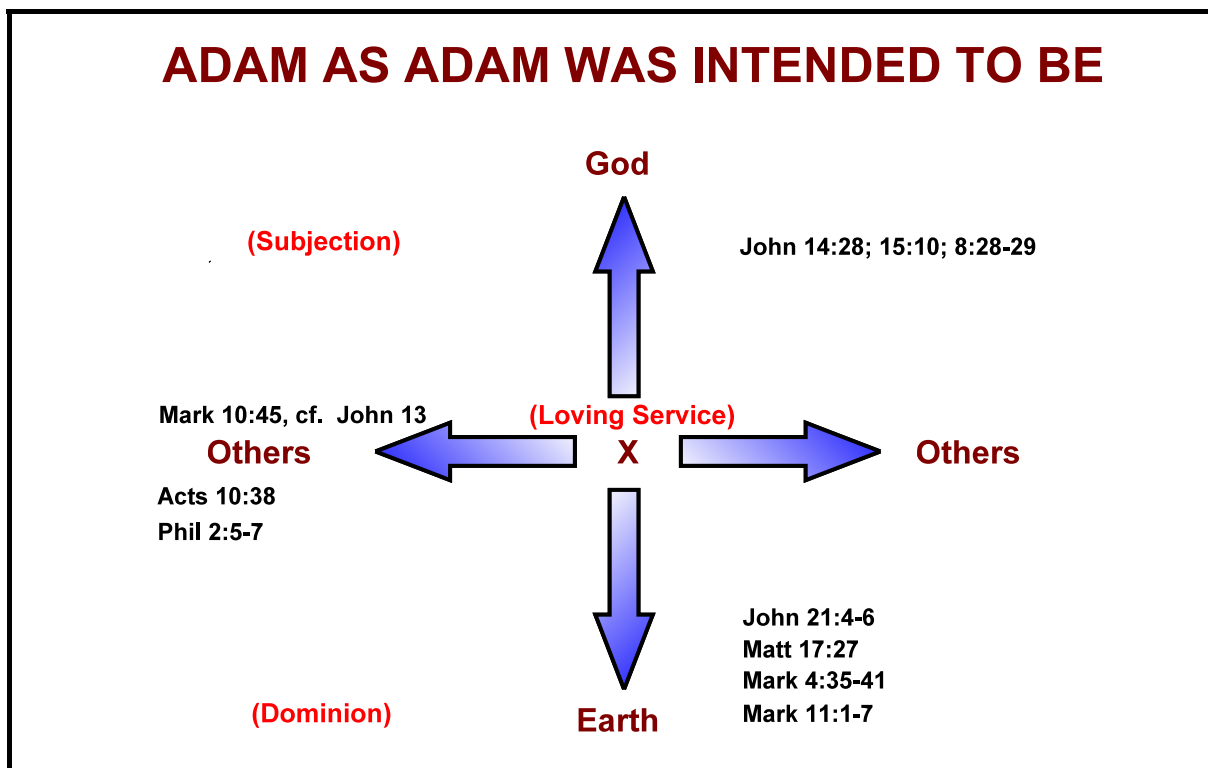
All of a sudden, there was a man standing on the beach, not far away. It turns out this man knew a lot about preaching, but He seemed to know very little about fishing. He called out to these disciples, "Cast your net on the other side of the boat." That would have been the sunny side.

The disciples must have thought he was crazy but they did it anyway. What happened? Fish came into that net from all over the lake. Big ones. Lots of them. Jesus didn't have to know the art of fishing, at least in human terms. He had dominion over the fish and could tell them what he wanted them to do. I can imagine Him communicating with the Galilean fish, "Hey, you, and you and you. Yes, you too! Let's go! Everybody! Into that net!" And 153 huge fish filled the disciples' nets. Why? Because Jesus was Adam as Adam was intended to be.

On another occasion Peter was talking about the need to pay some taxes (little has changed in the last 2000 years). Jesus not only directed a fish to catch the appropriate coins, He also directed it to grab onto Peter's hook so he could retrieve the coins (Matt 17:24-27). Jesus had dominion over the fish of the sea (Gen 1:26,28). Jesus had dominion over every living thing. Jesus was Adam as Adam was intended to be.

Do you remember Jesus' last ride into Jerusalem? When He rode over the Mount of

Olives on an unbroken colt (Mark 11:1-7)? Have you ever tried that? I can assure you of one thing, if you try to ride an unbroken colt, it will be a very short ride, and probably more exciting than any of the rides at Disneyland! It's a scary thing to ride an unbroken colt unless your name is Jesus. When Jesus sat on that colt, however, it obeyed Him like a trained animal. It recognized its master even though it had never met Jesus before. Jesus was Adam as Adam was intended to be. The three relationships of the Second Adam are illustrated in the following box, along with sample texts.



As the second Adam, Jesus' experience was modeled on that of the first Adam. Like the first Adam, Jesus was put to sleep and an opening was made in His side (Gen 2:21-22; John 19:31-37). Out of that opening came the substances with which God created the church--blood

and water (1 John 5:6). In 1 Cor 11:2-3 and Ephesians 5, Jesus is described as a second Adam and the church is a second Eve--the bride of Jesus Christ. Just as Adam and Eve were together in the Garden of Eden, Jesus becomes the “husband” of His church. So New Testament writers see Adam in all of Jesus’ life and experience, Adam as God created him and Adam as he was intended to be.

But not only did Jesus act out the commission of the unfallen Adam, He also succeeded where Adam failed. He was tempted along the same lines that Adam was tempted, beginning with appetite. But He did not yield to any of Satan’s temptations. He walked the ground where Adam walked and conquered Satan at exactly the same points where Adam failed. Jesus relived Adam’s experience and redeemed Adam’s failure.

### *A New History*

This is one of the most powerful messages of salvation in the New Testament. As the second Adam Jesus walked over the ground we all experience. Like Adam, we have a history of failure, dysfunction and disgrace. But the story of the second Adam tells me that Jesus has walked the ground that I have walked, He has redeemed my history and made it possible for me to succeed where my ancestor Adam failed. My flawed personal history can be replaced by His perfect history. That leaves me the hope that I can be more like the second Adam and less like the first Adam.

But there is more. Jesus not only redeemed Adam’s failure He also reaped the consequences of Adam’s failure. When Adam sinned, he suffered the consequences of sin– in his case thorns, sweat, nakedness, and death. All of these were also experienced by Jesus, the second

Adam. Jesus wore a crown of thorns (Gen 3:18; Matt 27:29), He sweat great drops of blood in Gethsemane (Gen 3:19; Luke 22:44), and He hung naked on the cross (Gen 3:10-11; John 19:23-24). And the final result of the cross, of course, was death (Gen 2:17; 5:5; John 19:30-34).

So the second Adam not only redeemed Adam's history (and thereby ours) but accepted its consequences so that, in Christ, we can walk in newness of life (Rom 6:3-6). The New Testament as a whole ties the fullness of Jesus' experience to Adam. Revelation does not need to repeat all of the above. When the book of Revelation speaks of Jesus as the beginning of God's creation, it alludes to a whole sequence of ideas that would have been readily recognized by first-century Christians. When Jesus offers Himself as the "ruler of God's creation" to the church at Laodicea (Rev 3:14) the whole second Adam background is brought into play. As the second Adam He is well able to redeem His church from the lukewarmness of Laodicea. If we didn't understand how the book of Revelation brings the whole Bible into focus, we would miss a great deal.

In Revelation everything finds meaning in the light of Christ and how He fulfills the entire experience of God's Old Testament people. When the New Testament writers present the Gospel, they describe it in the language, experience, and history of the Old Testament. As we gain a better understanding of this principle, the book of Revelation becomes a new book. We can begin to experience the revelation of Jesus Christ at a deeper level than we ever imagined. In the book of Revelation, "all the books of the Bible meet and end." (Ellen White, *Acts of the Apostles*, 585)

## The New Israel

In the New Testament Jesus is much more than just the second Adam. New Testament writers describe Jesus as a new Isaac, a new Moses, a new Joshua, a new David, a new Israel, a new Solomon, a new Elisha, and even a new Cyrus. They saw in Jesus a complete fulfillment of the whole Old Testament. While we don't have space to detail all of that here (you can find it in my book *Meeting God Again*), there is one more aspect that is extremely crucial for understanding Revelation. Jesus is the end-time fulfillment of Israel, and through Him, the things of OT Israel can also be applied to the church. This is addressed in one of the most important passages in Revelation, Rev 5:9-10:

“And they sang a new song: ‘You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, because you were slain, and with your blood you purchased men for God from every tribe and language and people and nation.

“***You have made them to be a kingdom and priests*** to serve our God, and they will reign on the earth.”

Rev 5:9-10

Much of the language in this text is drawn from the Old Testament. You will no doubt recognize in “they will reign on the earth” another allusion to Adam’s dominion over the earth. But that is not my reason for quoting this passage here. The sentence “you have made them to be a kingdom and priests” recalls God’s original charge to Israel at Mount Sinai in Exodus 19:

“Now if you obey me fully and keep my covenant, then out of all nations you will be my treasured possession. Although the whole earth is mine, ***you will be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.***’ These are the words you are to speak to the Israelites.”

Exod 19:5-6

In Exodus 19, God founded Israel as a nation to be a kingdom of priests. It was God's intention that Israel, as a nation, would represent Him before the whole world. As priests they

would be mediators between God and the nations, helping the other nations to understand and know God. In Revelation 5, the language of Israel's commissioning as a nation is taken up again—but this time it is applied to the experience of God's New Testament people, those that the slain Lamb purchased with His blood from every tribe, language, people and nation.

In the New Testament, Jesus is not just the second Adam, He is also the New Israel. New Testament writers apply the experiences of Israel as a nation, from Exodus to Exile, to Jesus. Jesus experiences what Israel experienced, succeeds where Israel failed, and reaps the consequences of Israel's failure. This concept is not difficult to illustrate as it can be found all over the New Testament.

“Two men, Moses and Elijah, appeared in glorious splendor, talking with Jesus. They spoke about his *departure*, which he was about to bring to fulfillment at Jerusalem.”  
Luke 9:30-31

Luke is describing the scene of Jesus' transfiguration. Moses and Elijah speak to Him about His *departure* that He is about to fulfill in Jerusalem. The Greek word behind this translation is “*exodos*.” So they were speaking to Jesus about His “exodus” in Jerusalem. That “exodus” is a clear reference to the cross. Just as Israel went down to “death” at the bottom of the Red Sea and came out to a new life on the eastern shore, Jesus' death became a new Exodus for a new Israel (Matt 2:13-15: Jesus also becomes a new Moses for the new Israel— Acts 3:22-24, cf. Deut 18:15).

There are many interesting ways in which the New Testament writers apply Moses, the Exodus and Israel to the experience of Jesus. Let me share a few. When Jesus was born, there was a hostile king who wanted to take His life. In the process of trying to kill Jesus, he killed all the babies in Bethlehem (Matt 2:13-18). Do you remember that when Moses was born, there was



a hostile king seeking to destroy all the babies of Israel? He succeeded in destroying all the babies except Moses who escaped inside Pharaoh's own household (Exod 1:15-22; 2:1-10). So the experience of Jesus and Moses is parallel.

In Exodus 33 (20-23) Moses is the only Old Testament person to ever see God. The Fourth Gospel recalls this fact when it compares Moses and Jesus in John 1:17-18. Moses fasted for forty days on a mountaintop and then delivered the law (Exod 24:18; 34:28). Jesus fasted for forty days in the wilderness (Matt 4:1-11— tradition even has it as a mountain in the wilderness of Judea) and then went up on a mountain to deliver His law— the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7). Moses appointed seventy elders (Num 11:16-30) and Jesus had seventy disciples (Luke 10:1). Moses was glorified on a mountain (Exod 34:29-35) and at the time of His transfiguration, so was Jesus (Matt 17:1-8). There are many other parallels between Moses and Jesus, but these are enough to give the flavor here. The New Testament writers understood Jesus to be a new Moses—a new lawgiver and a new teacher of a new Israel.

Jesus is also seen as a new Israel in the book of Matthew, for example. Matthew tells us that Jesus had to go down to Egypt and return because Israel was called to its destiny out of Egypt (Matt 2:13-15; Hos 11:1-9). After He is brought up from Egypt, He passes through the water of baptism (Matt 3; Luke 3) just as Israel passed through the waters of the Red Sea (Exod 14-15). After His baptism, Jesus spends forty days in the wilderness (Matt 4:1-11; Luke 4:1-13) just as Israel, after going through the Red Sea, spent forty years in the wilderness (Num 14:33-34). We don't have time to note every parallel, I just wanted to illustrate how the New Testament writers saw Jesus' life, death and resurrection as a replay of the experiences of Moses and Israel.

Do you remember a principle we discussed earlier in this book? *Since God meets people*

*where they are He uses the language of the past to describe His actions in the present and the future.* If you want to understand God's intention for His Word, you must first understand how that language spoke to that time and place— it is the language of that prophet's past. That's why the language of the New Testament sounds so much like the language of the Old Testament— God was meeting them where they were.

Jesus is the new Israel in the New Testament. Not only does He re-live the experience of the old Israel, He obeys God in the very circumstances where Israel failed. Jesus also suffered the consequences of Israel's failure, just as He had suffered the consequences of Adam's sin. Jesus experienced the curses of Israel's disobedience to the covenant. A quick reading of Deuteronomy 28 is sufficient to show the many ways in which Jesus' experience paralleled the consequences of Israel's disobedience.

Deuteronomy 28 predicted that a disobedient Israel would be stripped of its wealth and force to live in poverty (Deut 28:15-20). Matt 8:20 tells us that Jesus had nowhere to lay His head. The cursed ones of Deuteronomy 28 were to be "smitten before your enemies" (verse 25), this certainly took place on the cross. Among the other curses of Deuteronomy 28 was darkness (Matt 27:45), being mocked (Mark 14:19,31), hunger (Matt 4:2), thirst (John 19:28), and nakedness (Matt 27:35). With the exception of hunger, all of these were fulfilled in Jesus experience at the time of the cross.

The climax of the curses in Deut 28 is found in verses 65-67. Israel was to be cursed with an anxious mind and a despairing heart. Jesus experienced the same at a place called Gethsemane (Mark 14:32-42). So we see powerful connections also between the curses of the covenant and the experience of Jesus. Jesus not only relives the life of Israel and redeems it, He also takes up

the curses of Israel and experiences them. He is the complete historical counterpart of Israel's experience. He redeems her failures and exhausts the curses of the covenant which were against her.

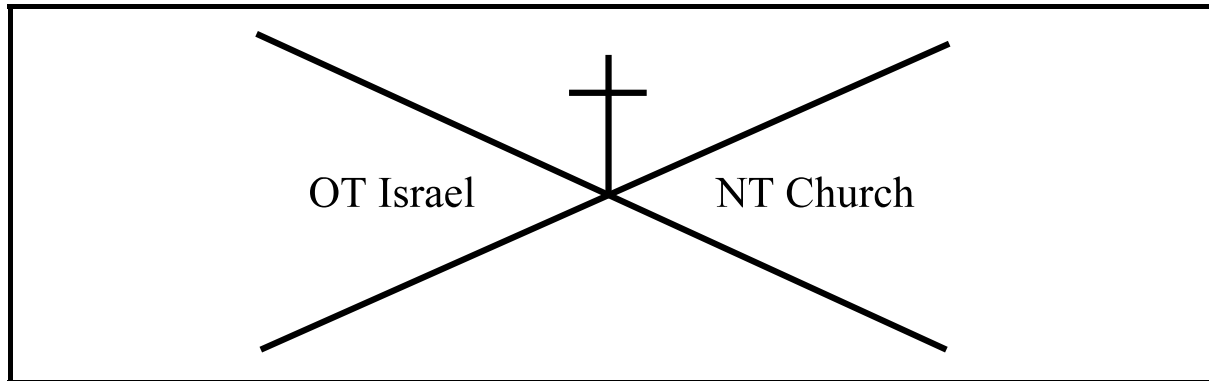
All this is important when it comes to understanding Rev 5:9-10. When the language of Old Testament Israel is applied to the church, it is understandable because the Jesus Christ is the new Israel. Who was the old Israel? The first Israel was Jacob, who received the special, spiritual name Israel when he entered into a covenant with God (Gen 32:24-30). Jacob had twelve sons. Their descendants became the "twelve tribes of Israel." So the original Israel started out as a family. Jesus, as the new Israel, also developed a family--the twelve disciples. No doubt Jesus had exactly twelve disciples because He knew that His experience was to be modeled on Old Testament Israel.

### ***Israel, Jesus, and the Church***

Just as Christ fulfilled the history of Israel in His own experience, therefore, the experience of the church is also modeled on that history. So when the New Testament talks about the church it often does so in the language of Israel. That means, for example, that when Revelation introduces the 144,000, 12,000 from each of the twelve tribes of Israel, it is probably talking about the church as twelve spiritual tribes descended from the witness of the twelve apostles (Matt 19:27-28). The church, in the book of Revelation and throughout the New Testament, is modeled on the experience of Old Testament Israel.

So the church really has two models for its behavior. On the one hand, it is modeled on the experience of Old Testament Israel. In the book of Revelation the church battles with Sodom,

Egypt, and Babylon just as Old Testament Israel did. The experience of the church is described in the language of the past, the language of the Old Testament. But we have already seen that Jesus went through all the experiences of Old Testament Israel. So the church also models on Jesus Christ. “Where I am, there also will my servant be.” (John 12:26)



Jesus’ life, experience, death and resurrection become models for the life, experience, and behavior of the church. In the book of Revelation, you can see it illustrated in some fascinating ways— the church is pursued in to the wilderness (12:6,14), is put to death (6:9-10), endures suffering (13:9-10; 12:14), is made up of kings and priests (1:5-6; 5:9-10), serves 1260 days clothed in sackcloth (11:3— Jesus ministry was 3 1/2 years long), is slain and mocked (11:7-10), but is also resurrected and ascends to heaven (11:11-12). So in the book of Revelation, the church is described in terms of both Jesus and Israel. But in what sense can the church be called Israel? Is it ethnic, geographic, or relational?

***The Ethnic Option.*** In ethnic terms, Israel started out as a birth family with twelve sons physically descended from Jacob. They became a race, and then a nation. Can the church be called Israel in an ethnic sense? No. In Revelation 5:9-10 it tells us that on the cross Jesus

purchased His followers from every tribe, people, language, and nation and made them to be a kingdom of priests. So in Revelation the language of Israel is applied to all the people of the earth who accept Jesus Christ. Whoever is in relationship with Jesus belongs to Israel because Jesus is the new Israel. The language of Revelation 7 sounds as if the 144,000 are exclusively of the ethnic tribes of Israel, but the things of Israel have been expanded through Jesus Christ.

Jesus is the new Israel, He has re-lived the experience of Israel. Anyone who is in relationship with Jesus, therefore, is adopted into the family of the new Jacob. It doesn't matter if you are German, African, Australian, Indian, or Chinese--it does not matter where you are from or what your ethnic background is--if you are in relationship with Jesus Christ, you are part of the family of Israel. So when Revelation applies the attributes of Israel, we should not think in ethnic terms. It no longer who you are descended from but Who you are related to that counts.

***The Geographical Option.*** Old Testament Israel was geographically oriented. The family/nation became attached to a particular place. They had borders--borders that would change from time to time--but were reasonably identifiable. Whenever individual Israelites moved away from that national territory, they would seize every opportunity to travel back home, particularly to Jerusalem. Should the church be thought of as Israel in geographical terms? The answer is also no. Jesus, the new Israel, is located in heavenly places (Rev 5:6-14; 7:15-17). There is no place on earth that is closer to Him than any other. No matter where you live you have equal access to Him through the Holy Spirit.

To speak of the church in terms of Israel, then, is based on its relation to Jesus Christ. So while Revelation uses Old Testament language about Israel and its neighbors, the significance is neither ethnic nor geographical. Babylon, the Euphrates River, Jezebel, David, Egypt and Sodom

are not to be understood in the old ethnic or geographical sense. They have to do with Jesus, the church, and the challenges the church faces in the course of Christian history.

### *Spiritual and Worldwide*

The book of Revelation uses the language of the Old Testament but the meaning is different. Physical things about Israel and its neighbors are applied in a spiritual and world-wide sense. The new Israel is not located in any one particular place or made up of any one particular people. Anyone in any place who is related to Jesus Christ can become a part of that new Israel.

If the above is true, it has powerful implications for the interpretation of Revelation. An interpreter who misses this point will have as much difficulty understanding the book as will one who never heard of the Old Testament. So we must be honest and say that many sincere Christians do not read Revelation in this way. They believe that Revelation is not written to Christians, it is written to ethnic Jews living at the end of time. It really has nothing to do with the church, even though the beginning (1:11,19) and the end (22:16) seem to say that it does.

But while I respect all godly Christians who differ, I think the point is not hard to demonstrate, beginning with Rev 5:9-10. There the language of God's Old Testament people, an ethnic group heading for a geographical place, is applied to the purchase of the cross, to people from every tribe, language, and nation. There is no ethnic or geographical limitation to the Israel of Revelation 5.

In Rev 7:4-8 was have a description of 144,000 individuals made up of 12,000 from each of the twelve tribes of Israel. But John never sees this group. Instead, he looks and sees a great multitude that cannot be numbered, made up of people from every tribe, language and nation

(7:9-10). So when he hears about 144,000 Israelites he is not thinking ethnically about Israel. Israel has spiritual, worldwide characteristics in Revelation.

But let's put this thesis to the test in a way that cannot be denied. Let's look at a specific geographical term in Rev 16:12: "The sixth angel poured out his bowl on the great river Euphrates, and its water was dried up to prepare the way for the kings from the east." If you want to take the language of Revelation literally, the Euphrates River must mean the Euphrates River, a literal, geographical spot in the Middle East (in modern day Iraq). But is that what it actually means in the book of Revelation? If you had to choose between an answer someone gave you and one the author himself gives, which would you choose? Obviously, the author of a book should have the privilege of telling us what he means by any symbol he chooses to use. And that's exactly what he does in this case. Let's explore this question by looking at Rev 17:1.

"One of the seven angels *who had the seven bowls* came and said to me, 'Come, I will show you the punishment of the great prostitute, who sits on *many waters*. . .'" There are two things I want you to notice in this text. First, one of the bowl angels of chapter 16 has come to explain something, and, second, that something has to do with "many waters." So which of the seven bowl angels is this? Which of the seven bowls have anything to do with water? That would be the second (Rev 16:3– falls on the sea), the third (16:4-7– rivers and springs) and the sixth (16:12– Euphrates River). Which of the angels is it? Either the second, third, or sixth. But let's be more specific.

"This title was written on her forehead: MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF PROSTITUTES AND OF THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH." (Rev 17:5) What is Babylon? It was an ancient city located on the Euphrates River. So when you talk

about a woman who sits on many waters (17:1) and whose name is Babylon (17:5), there is no question exactly what the waters of Rev 17:1 are--the Euphrates River (see “many waters” in Jer 51:13). The angel who comes to John in Revelation 17 is the sixth bowl angel. He has come to explain something about the Euphrates River. That something is found in Rev 17:15.

“Then the angel said to me, ‘The waters you saw, where the prostitute sits, *are peoples, multitudes, nations and languages.*’” What are these “waters you saw?” They are the waters of Rev 17:1, the waters of the Euphrates River. What does the Euphrates River represent? In verse 15 the angel tells us exactly. They are “peoples, multitudes, nations and languages.” The Euphrates River is a symbol of many nations– the political, secular, and economic powers of this world. In the Old Testament, the Euphrates River was a literal and local river but in the book of Revelation it is a symbol of a world-wide spiritual concept.

The principle of “spiritual and worldwide” is not difficult to demonstrate throughout the book of Revelation. In Zech 12:10 the “inhabitants of Jerusalem” mourn over the one they have pierced. In Rev 1:7 “every eye” will mourn in the language of Zechariah. What the Jerusalemites do in Zechariah the whole world does in Revelation. In Isa 34:9-10 the land of Edom (a small nation in the Old Testament) burns forever, with smoke going up, in Rev 14:10-11 this is the experience of everyone in the world who receives the mark of the beast. In Joel 3:12-13 the tiny “Valley of Jehoshaphat” outside Jerusalem is the scene of the final battle between Judah and its enemies, in Rev 14:14-20 “outside the city” clearly has to do with the whole world.

So in the book of Revelation, Israel, the neighbors of Israel and even Babylon and its river are all applied in a spiritual, world-wide sense. The key to the language is relationship with Jesus Christ. Those who are on the side of the Lamb are ranked with Israel. Those who find



themselves in opposition to God are Babylon, Egypt, Edom and the Euphrates River. Just as Israel is to be understood as spiritual and world-wide, so Babylon in Revelation is also spiritual and world-wide.

<b>Spiritual and Worldwide in Revelation</b>	
Literal and Local (OT)	Spiritual and Worldwide (Rev)
Euphrates River	Peoples, nations, languages (Rev 17:15)
Inhabitants of Jerusalem (Zech 12:10)	“Every eye” (Rev 1:7)
Edom (Isa 34:8-10)	All who have the Mark of the Beast (Rev 14:9-10)
Israel at Sinai (Exod 19:5-6)	Some from every tribe, language and nation (Rev 1:5-6; 5:9-10)
Valley of Jehoshaphat (Joel 3)	Earth (Rev 14:14-20)

This principle is crucial for understanding Revelation. If you read into the book of Revelation the literal and local things of the Old Testament, you will misunderstand the whole purpose and intent of the book. You will have a great deal of difficulty finding Jesus Christ in that book and Jesus Christ is what the whole book is supposed to be about. The book of Revelation is not “The Revelation of the Middle East,” nor is it “The Revelation of Modern Day Israel.” It is “The Revelation of Jesus Christ” (Rev 1:1) and of His church (Rev 22:16), it is about Jesus and the people who are in relationship to Him (Rev 17:14).

If a method of interpretation does not bring Jesus into clearer focus, the book of Revelation has not been understood. In the book of Revelation all the other books of the Bible

meet and end. In the book of Revelation you find the Old Testament and the New Testament. You find a revelation of the gospel. Revelation makes the Old Testament come alive because the things of the Old Testament are baptized into Jesus Christ and applied to people who are living in the last days. So, the book of Revelation can make the Old Testament come alive for God's people today.

### **Finding Christ in the Trumpet Plagues**

But I sense that you still have doubts. How can the plagues of the book be a revelation of Jesus Christ? How can the horrible events of the seals and the trumpets shed any light on the gospel? *Perhaps you can find Christ in other parts of the book, you may be thinking, but what about all the horror stuff?*

OK, let's take up the challenge. To conclude this book on method let's go to the most horrible, most perplexing, most difficult "gospel" passage in the book, the fifth trumpet (Rev 9:1-11). If you can find Jesus there, you can find Him anywhere.

1 The fifth angel sounded his trumpet, and I saw a star that had fallen from the sky to the earth. The star was given the key to the shaft of the Abyss. 2 When he opened the Abyss, smoke rose from it like the smoke from a gigantic furnace. The sun and sky were darkened by the smoke from the Abyss. 3 And out of the smoke locusts came down upon the earth and were given power like that of scorpions of the earth. 4 They were told not to harm the grass of the earth or any plant or tree, but only those people who did not have the seal of God on their foreheads. 5 They were not given power to kill them, but only to torture them for five months. And the agony they suffered was like that of the sting of a scorpion when it strikes a man. 6 During those days men will seek death, but will not find it; they will long to die, but death will elude them.

Rev 9:1-6

At first glance, is this a typical presentation of the gospel? Does Jesus seem visible anywhere? Or is this passage more like a horror show? I once made the mistake of trying to

dramatize this passage for a children's story in church (my wife doesn't always vouch for my sanity)! I told the kids about the trumpet and the falling star and the Abyss (or bottomless pit). I told them about the darkness. Then I portrayed giant locusts flying around with huge stingers that would sneak up behind people and sting them in the seat cushions! Before I could finish I noticed a couple of girls around twelve years of age looking horribly frightened. I made a mental note to apologize to them and their parents after the service. When the service was over, I asked for them and was told that they had become ill and had to go home early! I never saw them again! Not much gospel on the surface of this text! Handle with care.

So where is Jesus Christ in the plagues of the fifth trumpet? Where is Jesus in the Abyss? Where is Jesus in the darkness? Where is Jesus in the stings of the locust/scorpions? If you can find Jesus in this passage, He must be everywhere in the book! Let's follow the method outlined here and see what we learn. We will compare this passage in the trumpets with parallel texts in the New Testament and see if the gospel meaning of these images can be clarified.

First of all, there is an Abyss in this passage. In verse 1 a fallen star receives a key from heaven to open up the shaft leading into the Abyss. In Luke 8:30-32 we gain some insight into the Abyss. It is the passage about Jesus encounter with a demoniac and the demons within him: "Jesus asked him, 'What is your name?' 'Legion,' he replied, because many demons had gone into him. And they begged him repeatedly not to order them to go into the Abyss." Whatever we understand by "Abyss" it is clearly a place where demons do not want to go. It is a place where demons are confined and prevented from the kinds of activity that they prefer. So opening the Abyss would prepare the way for a demonic attack on the inhabitants of the earth. But the key to the Abyss comes down out of heaven, suggesting that God's purpose is somehow being served in

this demonic attack.

In the second verse the focus of the plague is on darkness. Smoke rises out of the Abyss like the smoke of a great furnace (Sodom– Gen 19). And the whole air and sky are darkened by the smoke from the Abyss. In the New Testament there is a consistent theme of light and darkness. Jesus is the Light of the World (John 8:12; 9:5). Wherever He goes light comes into the world (John 3:18-21). How people respond to that light determines their relationship with Jesus and their ultimate destiny. Darkness, on the other hand, spells the absence of Jesus and the absence of the gospel. So in the fifth trumpet this demonic plague blots out the view of Jesus and the knowledge of the gospel from the world. Whatever the fifth trumpet is about, it brings an absence of Jesus' presence and an absence of the truth about Him.

Is there any good news in this passage? Yes there is. In verses three and four the smoke resolves itself into locusts with scorpion stingers. This sounds like further horror, but there is the first sign of good news here. The locust/scorpions are given a restriction, a limitation. They were told (Rev 9:4) “not to harm the grass of the earth or any plant or tree, but ***only those people who did not have the seal of God on their foreheads.***” These are strange locusts! Normally locusts feed on vegetation and leave people alone. These locusts are symbolic of God's judgments on human beings. But those judgments are limited to those who are not on God's side. So this demonic plague cannot hurt those who are sealed.

There is one text elsewhere in the New Testament that takes up more of this language than any other and that is Luke 10:17-20. I highlight the language that reflects Greek words and themes also found in the fifth trumpet:

The seventy-two returned with joy and said, "Lord, even the demons submit to us

in your name." He replied, "I saw Satan *fall like lightning from heaven*. I have given you *authority to trample on snakes and scorpions* and to overcome all *the power of the enemy*; nothing will *harm* you. However, do not rejoice that *the spirits* submit to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven."

Luke 10:17-20

There are seven or eight major words in common between the two texts. While we cannot be certain that John ever saw a copy of Luke, he must have been familiar with this saying of Jesus. The disciples of Jesus were given His power over the demons. Their names were written in heaven. And from that assurance they discovered that all the power of the enemy was unable to harm them. To those who are in relationship with Jesus the demonic "sting of the scorpion" has no power to hurt. Luke 10 confirms that scorpions are a symbol of Satanic power on this earth.

Luke 10 also helps us see the picture of Jesus in Revelation 9. At some point in history (leaving the details for another book) God permits an unlocking of the Abyss. The result of that action is massive demonic attack on this earth. That attack will strike at people's knowledge of God, and seek to obliterate the good news of the gospel from the earth. When that attack comes Jesus will be a shelter and a comfort to His people. The demonic attack will have no power over them. Satan will only be able to hurt those who have allowed him control over their lives. The lion can roar. He can rattle the windows. He can try to block up people's way in life. But his power to hurt and to kill is subject to the authority of Jesus. The disciple need not be afraid.

The message of the fifth trumpet turns out to be roughly the same as the message of Romans 8:35-39:

*Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?* Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? As it is written: "For your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered." No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, *neither angels nor demons*, neither the present nor the future, *nor*

*any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

### **Seeing Christ in the book of Revelation**

- 1) Collect potential New Testament parallel texts
  - √ Bible margins
  - √ Commentaries
  - √ Concordances
  - √ Computer Bible programs
- 2) Copy the passage in Revelation and the potential parallels texts in large print
- 3) Using a colored pen or highlighter mark all significant parallel words
- 4) Use a concordance to seek out thematic parallels and echoes of NT theology
- 5) Through a broad-reading approach, constantly upgrade your understanding o the main themes of the New Testament
- 6) Try to determine how the gospel of Jesus Christ affects each passage of Revelation

### **Conclusion**

It is hard to imagine horrors greater than those portrayed in the book of Revelation. The vision piles one horrific image upon another. But the purpose of the whole book is not to entertain or to intimidate. The purpose of Revelation's horrors is to highlight the grace of God in Jesus Christ. No matter how bad things get, the gospel still wins. No matter how out of control events seem, God is still in control. Our eyes and our ears tell us that things are falling apart, that there is no safety anywhere. But the book of Revelation points us beyond the reality we can perceive. Revelation points us to a God who sent His Son to die for us, that we might have life, a more abundant life. And the Lamb that was slain (Rev 5:5-6) is alive again forevermore (1:17-18). Those in relationship with Him can overcome by the blood of the Lamb and the word of their testimony (12:11-12). And in the end evil, terrorism, hatred, war and abuse will all be over (Rev 21:3-4). We will see His face (22:4). And God will wipe every tear from our eyes (7:16-17).