

Comment on the Revelation of John

Matthias Czerny

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Foreword

The highly learned and blessed Apostle Paul admonishes his readers in 1 Corinthians that all our knowledge is provisional and imperfect and will therefore pass away. Elsewhere in his writings he points out that it is intrinsically impossible for man to comprehend the full depth and breadth of God's wisdom and love. Recognising this limitation, he nevertheless calls for the knowledge of God, the Lord Jesus and His will to be sought and increased.¹

Aware of this tension, I dare to publish my present notes on the Revelation of John. They are personal impressions and comments which in no way claim to replace other interpretations. I would urge every reader to prayerfully examine everything. And above all, I would advise them to read that great, deep and wide prophetic scripture for themselves under insistent prayer.

Personally, the Spirit has been testifying to me for some time that the world is in for very troubled times; times for which God threatens to afflict the earth with suffering and terrible trials. It is my prayer that God will let this cup pass over man and the other creatures; but it is not in my hands whether this or that will happen.

Now, any sensible person will readily admit that times of great suffering have come upon the earth before: Famines, epidemics, wars and hate crimes. In Europe, we have thought for the last thirty years that all this was now over. Political détente, military disarmament and open borders have widely nurtured the illusion that the dark times are finally buried. Recently, there have been increasing signs that this is unfortunately not the case. Those who wonder about this can be helped by the Revelation of John: In it, at first, not peace and prosperity, but catastrophes and doom are predicted. The redemptive news of the complete renewal of earth and heaven is only reserved for the last chapter of that biblical book.

A major part of the book in which John recorded his visions deals with the personal appearance of the Lord Jesus on earth as well as with manifold events, especially divine wrath judgements, which are connected with it. I am aware that many people have already published some kind of calculations or prophetic announcements about when Jesus will supposedly return, and the end of the world will take place. Now, with a glance at the New Testament (NT) we can immediately see that such dates will most probably be wrong, because Jesus said: *"But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only."*² (Mt. 24:36, and analogously Mk. 13:32). Jesus connected this statement with the call to always remain awake and sober in view of His return. (Mt. 24:42-44)

I certainly do not presume to be wiser than the Lord Jesus and the angels of God. No, I do not know the day and the hour when Jesus will return and begin his judgement.

On the other hand, the NT contains quite extensive and detailed statements about the end-time events, and these are given to us so that we can do something wise with them. Jesus Himself also wanted to make this clear to His disciples by telling them in a parable: Watch the events and recognise by the omens that that day is approaching (Mt. 24:32.33).

Even if we do not know the exact day and hour, we may and should observe the course of events in the world attentively in order to verify the progress towards the end. And equally, we may and should draw conclusions for our own lives from our observations. When we become aware of how close He is at the door, this could, for example, spur us on to prepare ourselves even more intensively for His

¹ For example, in: Eph. 1:17; 2Cor. 2:14 & 8:7; Col. 1:19; Phlm. 1:6; 1Tim. 2:4. Similar also in other apostles, for example 2Petr. 1:2 & 1:8 & 3:18.

² Most of the Bible quotations in this publication were taken from the King James Version. Readers may use the corresponding passages from other translations as a reference.

arrival (even though we should always be prepared...). This is what this scripture invites and encourages us to do.

Revelation Chapter 1

1 The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him, to shew unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass; and he sent and signified it by his angel unto his servant John: 2 Who bare record of the word of God, and of the testimony of Jesus Christ, and of all things that he saw. 3 Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein: for the time is at hand. 4 John to the seven churches which are in Asia: Grace be unto you, and peace, from him which is, and which was, and which is to come; and from the seven Spirits which are before his throne; 5 And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth. Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, 6 And hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen. 7 Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him. Even so, Amen. 8 I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty. 9 I John, who also am your brother, and companion in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, was in the isle that is called Patmos, for the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ. 10 I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and heard behind me a great voice, as of a trumpet, 11 Saying, I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last: and, What thou seest, write in a book, and send it unto the seven churches which are in Asia; unto Ephesus, and unto Smyrna, and unto Pergamos, and unto Thyatira, and unto Sardis, and unto Philadelphia, and unto Laodicea. 12 And I turned to see the voice that spake with me. And being turned, I saw seven golden candlesticks; 13 And in the midst of the seven candlesticks one like unto the Son of man, clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about the paps with a golden girdle. 14 His head and his hairs were white like wool, as white as snow; and his eyes were as a flame of fire; 15 And his feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace; and his voice as the sound of many waters. 16 And he had in his right hand seven stars: and out of his mouth went a sharp twoedged sword: and his countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength. 17 And when I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead. And he laid his right hand upon me, saying unto me, Fear not; I am the first and the last: 18 I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death. 19 Write the things which thou hast seen, and the things which are, and the things which shall be hereafter; 20 The mystery of the seven stars which thou sawest in my right hand, and the seven golden candlesticks. The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches: and the seven candlesticks which thou sawest are the seven churches.

The Revelation of John opens with the announcement of who the sender of this book is: It is the Lord Jesus Christ Himself, who in turn received it directly from God. This prophetic vision is intended for people who acknowledge Jesus as Lord and are obedient to him as servants³. Blessed are those who read or hear the words of this prophecy *and keep them*.

It seems important to me to emphasise that God himself is the author of the messages that John received and wrote down. Anyone who, as a Christian, worries whether God, in the midst of all the chaos and the many catastrophes that are already plaguing our world,⁴ has not perhaps lost the

³ Revelation offers a word at this point whose literal meaning is indeed "slave". Those who take offence to this, however, should bear in mind that a human being never belongs to himself. Originally, we belonged to God as our Creator. As a result of original sin, the whole of humanity passed into the possession of Satan - with all the terrible consequences that follow: Suffering, curse and death. Through the act of redemption on the cross, we have the opportunity to belong to the Lord Jesus and to return to a life with God.

⁴ Especially through the notes on the sixth and seventh chapters below, it should become clear why the world is already deep in crises and disasters.

overview, must be vigorously contradicted here: No, it is not like that. And if you read on, you will read this fact repeated several times in Revelation. God knows what is going to happen, even if the events develop terribly.

Jesus himself revealed this message to a man named John. Some commentators equate this person with Jesus' favourite disciple of the same name, and why not? Let us ask ourselves to whom we would entrust a particularly significant message: Would we not also choose someone for such a task to whom we are particularly attached?

John then wrote down the received message according to the commission and sent copies of it to the original recipients - namely to seven Christian congregations in the area of the eastern Mediterranean. This region of the world belonged to the Roman Empire at that time and was called the province of Asia. It is therefore not identical with the continent of Asia today. John greets these churches in the name of the triune God: *"Grace be unto you, and peace, from him which is, and which was, and which is to come; and from the seven Spirits which are before his throne; And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth."*

This greeting is both a confession and a blessing. We may wonder why the Holy Spirit is referred to here as a person of seven spirits. The number seven in the context of the Bible is always to be understood as a number indicating completion or perfection. For example, God rested on the seventh day after creating the universe. Thus, in relation to the Spirit of God, the number seven is initially nothing more than a specific way of expressing the holiness and perfection of the divine spirit being.

In the seventh verse of the first chapter, the theme of the whole book is already present: *"Behold, he (Jesus) cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him. Even so, Amen."*

As briefly stated above, the Revelation of John is essentially about the visible return of the Lord Jesus. And the first core statement of this book is: *He will come*. And then all people will see him - also those who were involved in his death (even if only symbolically, by rejecting, mocking or even persecuting his messengers). And a second core message, which is already conveyed here at the very beginning: *There will be great lamentation on his account among all the peoples of the world*.

Why this lamentation? Because when Jesus becomes visible, all his despisers, deniers and persecutors will suddenly realise how wrong they have been and how terrible is the punishment that now awaits them. For Jesus will show Himself with such impressive signs of power and greatness that every doubt will be dispelled. Every person who has eyes in his head will then realise: Yes, this one *is* truly the Son of God; He has not only claimed that, but He actually is. And at His second coming He will not spare, but judge.

John was at that time on a small island in the eastern Aegean Sea. Patmos has an area of just 34 square kilometres⁵ and is more hilly than mountainous; the highest elevation reaches 269 metres. The vegetation at present is very sparse; there are hardly any trees, only the typical phrygana - that is low, evergreen bushes and shrubs - cover the land. Patmos today has about 3047 inhabitants;⁶ 2000 years ago there will hardly have been more. So it is not exactly an inviting or central place; and so it can be assumed that John had been banished there or had to flee there because he had proclaimed Jesus as Lord and King of the World.

⁵ If you think of the island as rectangular, this corresponds to a measurement of just under six kilometres each in length and width.

⁶ <https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Patmos>

On one of those days during his stay on Patmos, John received a great preview of things to come. John was transported in his mind to the Day of the Lord for this purpose. The expression "Day of the Lord" is used quite consistently in the Bible as code for the coming Last Judgement. For example, in the prophet Amos: *"Woe unto you that desire the day of the LORD! to what end is it for you? the day of the LORD is darkness, and not light. As if a man did flee from a lion, and a bear met him; or went into the house, and leaned his hand on the wall, and a serpent bit him. Shall not the day of the LORD be darkness, and not light? even very dark, and no brightness in it?"* (Amos 5:18-20)

Already beforehand, an important statement should be made here: The "Day of the Lord" will not be exactly *one* day in the literal sense. As John saw and recorded later, the divine final judgement will extend over a longer period of time, probably several years. But there will be the *one* day when the realisation will abruptly prevail: Now the time has come; now the great wrath of God will be poured out on the unrepentant earth.

At the beginning of the extensive vision, Jesus himself appears to John. John describes this encounter quite extensively in verses 12 to 18, and we should turn our attention to it. Let us first put ourselves in the situation of John, the apostle, prophet and disciple of Jesus: he was a person who was very close to Jesus. I would even say that as the favourite disciple he knew Jesus better than any other person on earth. John had travelled with the earthly Jesus for a long time; he had witnessed countless miracles; he had been an eyewitness to the transformation of Jesus on the "Mount of Transfiguration"; and he had also seen and witnessed the Risen Lord himself. If John had been asked before the Patmos experience whether he knew Jesus, he would probably have answered with conviction: "Yes, I even know him quite well!"

But despite this rather close acquaintance, this time Jesus shows himself in a way that completely bowls John over: *"And when I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead."* (Verse 17a)

Therein lies a deep mystery and also a lesson that we cannot hear often enough: Jesus is always able to surprise us; He is able to give us revelations of Himself that are almost beyond our comprehension and can even instil great fear in us. And how much we need His encouragement in such moments: *"Fear not!"* (Verse 17b)

Supernatural forces pulsate in this Jesus, manifesting themselves in fiery brilliance, indeed like the radiant power of the sun. Everything about this person is filled with light and power: His voice is piercing like fanfare and powerful like the roar of a waterfall, and his words appear like a sharp sword. No army commander and no king can stand before him, how much less us ordinary mortals!

It is interesting to note that Jesus shows himself in close connection with the communities of his followers: The seven golden candlesticks in the middle of which he showed himself to John symbolise these communities, and their leaders ("angels") are like stars in his hand. Didn't Jesus himself teach his disciples: "You are the light of this world"? Yes, the true church of Jesus is to shine as a light in the darkness. What will happen to churches that do not live up to this mission and claim?

It is this powerful-supernatural Son of Man, Jesus, in whose hand are not only the leaders of the Christian communities, but literally all people; from the smallest to the greatest. In Jesus' hand are also the keys of the abyss; whoever He locks there will not come out for eternity. So it makes perfect sense to submit to this heavenly King in humility. This should absolutely include turning with undivided attention to the things Jesus showed and commanded His disciple John to write down.

So let us count ourselves fortunate if we are allowed to read the Revelation to John, and let us urgently ask God's Spirit to make this precious Scripture understandable to us!

Revelation Chapters 2 and 3

To the Church in Ephesus

1 Unto the angel of the church of Ephesus write; These things saith he that holdeth the seven stars in his right hand, who walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks; 2 I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil: and thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars: 3 And hast borne, and hast patience, and for my name's sake hast laboured, and hast not fainted. 4 Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love. 5 Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent. 6 But this thou hast, that thou hatest the deeds of the Nicolaitanes, which I also hate. 7 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God.

To the Church in Smyrna

8 And unto the angel of the church in Smyrna write; These things saith the first and the last, which was dead, and is alive; 9 I know thy works, and tribulation, and poverty, (but thou art rich) and I know the blasphemy of them which say they are Jews, and are not, but are the synagogue of Satan. 10 Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life. 11 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death.

To the Church in Pergamos

12 And to the angel of the church in Pergamos write; These things saith he which hath the sharp sword with two edges; 13 I know thy works, and where thou dwellest, even where Satan's seat is: and thou holdest fast my name, and hast not denied my faith, even in those days wherein Antipas was my faithful martyr, who was slain among you, where Satan dwelleth. 14 But I have a few things against thee, because thou hast there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balac to cast a stumblingblock before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed unto idols, and to commit fornication. 15 So hast thou also them that hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitanes, which thing I hate. 16 Repent; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth. 17 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it.

To the Church in Thyatira

18 And unto the angel of the church in Thyatira write; These things saith the Son of God, who hath his eyes like unto a flame of fire, and his feet are like fine brass; 19 I know thy works, and charity, and service, and faith, and thy patience, and thy works; and the last to be more than the first. 20 Notwithstanding I have a few things against thee, because thou sufferest that woman Jezebel, which calleth herself a prophetess, to teach and to seduce my servants to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed unto idols. 21 And I gave her space to repent of her fornication; and she repented not. 22 Behold, I will cast her into a bed, and them that commit adultery with her into great tribulation, except they repent of their deeds. 23 And I will kill her children with death; and all the churches shall know that I am he which searcheth the reins and hearts: and I will give unto every one of you according to your works. 24 But unto you I say, and unto the rest in Thyatira, as many as have not this doctrine, and which have not known the depths of Satan, as they speak; I will put upon you none other burden. 25 But that which ye have already hold fast till I come. 26 And he that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations: 27 And he shall rule them with a rod of

iron; as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers: even as I received of my Father. 28 And I will give him the morning star. 29 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.

To the Church in Sardis

1 And unto the angel of the church in Sardis write; These things saith he that hath the seven Spirits of God, and the seven stars; I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead. 2 Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die: for I have not found thy works perfect before God. 3 Remember therefore how thou hast received and heard, and hold fast, and repent. If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee. 4 Thou hast a few names even in Sardis which have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with me in white: for they are worthy. 5 He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels. 6 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.

To the Church in Philadelphia

7 And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write; These things saith he that is holy, he that is true, he that hath the key of David, he that openeth, and no man shutteth; and shutteth, and no man openeth; 8 I know thy works: behold, I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it: for thou hast a little strength, and hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name. 9 Behold, I will make them of the synagogue of Satan, which say they are Jews, and are not, but do lie; behold, I will make them to come and worship before thy feet, and to know that I have loved thee. 10 Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth. 11 Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown. 12 Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out: and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, which is new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God: and I will write upon him my new name. 13 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.

To the Church in Laodicea

14 And unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write; These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God; 15 I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. 16 So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth. 17 Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked: 18 I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see. 19 As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent. 20 Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me. 21 To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne. 22 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.

The 2nd and 3rd chapters of Revelation contain letters ("Epistles") with messages that Jesus himself sent to the Christian communities in seven ancient cities. As we know from the Acts of the Apostles and from Paul's letters, the centre of gravity of early Christianity was in the eastern Mediterranean

region. Especially as a result of the evangelisation by Paul and his companions, Christian congregations had arisen in numerous places in those Eastern Roman provinces.

There are numerous interpretations of the meaning of these letters. It is not my intention here to mention or even evaluate all of them. I would like to limit myself to a few key points that seem to me to be particularly worth emphasising in general.

First of all, we should bear in mind that Jesus, as the Lord of the Christian communities, knows exactly what is going on in each one. Whether it is positive or negative, Jesus knows about it. By the way, those churches in which he sees nothing reprehensible are clearly in the minority; they are in fact only two out of seven - Smyrna and Philadelphia. Jesus is not a "critic" who always looks for the fly in the ointment. Certainly, there were individual sins in Smyrna and Philadelphia, but on the whole, the attitude and the direction of the Christian communities there were right. The Lord Jesus commends this.

Furthermore, in all cases where Jesus criticises certain aspects of church life - whether for false doctrines or for unkindness or for other reasons - he always calls for correction with patience.⁷ Jesus' interest is not to punish with a harsh hand. Rather, he points out circumstances that are worthy of criticism so that people will turn away from their wrongdoing. Let us understand it correctly: Jesus is faithful, but he does not turn a blind eye. Whoever does evil as a Christian and does not desist from it despite admonition must expect punishment. But whoever lets himself be admonished will also be granted grace. This becomes particularly clear in the example of the church of Laodicea. The Christians there are severely criticised by Jesus, because a spiritual climate of self-righteousness and superficial piety apparently prevailed there. Jesus openly addresses these faults, but he does not (yet) condemn anyone, but invites them to repentance. Jesus offers forgiveness and is ready for fellowship in spite of everything, but this requires in fact personal change of the individual church members.

Furthermore, it becomes clear that Jesus is not only aware of the congregations as a whole, but of each individual person. In the letters to the churches in Thyatira and Sardis, criticism is expressed very clearly; but at the same time it is written that there are also church members there who did not allow themselves to be drawn into the misconduct. So Jesus does not generalise: He knows every single person exactly; and he explicitly excludes all those who were not guilty of anything from his threats of punishment.

Finally, Jesus' call to perseverance and patience resounds in all these letters. The word conquering ("overcoming") is found in each of the seven Epistles. In each case, patient adherence to good and resistance to evil have a promise of reward: through true life, through fellowship with God and the Lord Jesus.

Finally, I would like to mention the following. Those seven cities in which there were Christian communities almost 2,000 years ago, which were so important that Jesus had personal letters of praise and admonition sent to them, are today in Turkey, i.e., in a country with a predominantly Muslim religion. Practically nothing remains of those once important centres of early Christian life, except perhaps a few stone witnesses such as ruins of buildings or inscriptions. Whatever happened there in the course of subsequent history - it was obviously not to the advantage of local Christianity.

⁷ We do not learn from all the letters exactly what Jesus is criticising. For example, in two letters the "Nicolaitans" are mentioned in a negative way; from today's perspective, however, it is no longer possible to determine with certainty who these people were or what heresies they spread. Apparently, they not only committed moral as well as spiritual aberrations, but also deliberately dragged other church members into such activities. It should be enough for us to know that Jesus perceives such aberrations and that He detests them, and He will not let the unrepentant go unpunished.

One may ask: Why did God allow the Gospel to be silenced there? I don't know if we will get an answer to this, but the facts should warn us that being a Christian on earth is always contested and endangered. Jesus wrote to the Christian community in Ephesus: *"Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent ... or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent."* Christian churches and congregations come into being, but they can also pass away. It is in the hands of Jesus which of these will happen; but it is also up to the behaviour of the people in those churches or congregations.

Revelation Chapter 4

1 After this I looked, and, behold, a door was opened in heaven: and the first voice which I heard was as it were of a trumpet talking with me; which said, Come up hither, and I will shew thee things which must be hereafter. 2 And immediately I was in the spirit: and, behold, a throne was set in heaven, and one sat on the throne. 3 And he that sat was to look upon like a jasper and a sardine stone: and there was a rainbow round about the throne, in sight like unto an emerald. 4 And round about the throne were four and twenty seats: and upon the seats I saw four and twenty elders sitting, clothed in white raiment; and they had on their heads crowns of gold. 5 And out of the throne proceeded lightnings and thunders and voices: and there were seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God. 6 And before the throne there was a sea of glass like unto crystal: and in the midst of the throne, and round about the throne, were four beasts full of eyes before and behind. 7 And the first beast was like a lion, and the second beast like a calf, and the third beast had a face as a man, and the fourth beast was like a flying eagle. 8 And the four beasts had each of them six wings about him; and they were full of eyes within: and they rest not day and night, saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come. 9 And when those beasts give glory and honour and thanks to him that sat on the throne, who liveth for ever and ever, 10 The four and twenty elders fall down before him that sat on the throne, and worship him that liveth for ever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying, 11 Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created.

With this chapter 4, a change of perspective takes place: After the previous chapters had dealt with the earthly conditions, namely with the Christian congregations on earth, John now gets a first insight into the heavenly spheres. At the centre of these is the throne of God, or God Himself. The description we are given of "the one on the throne", that is, of God, is quite short here and not easy to interpret. John sees someone who looks like jasper and sardius. These are coloured gemstones to which a high value was attached in ancient times. So the person on the throne seems to have had the radiance of noble brilliance, while the throne itself was surrounded by a rainbow that probably flashed and sparkled in the light like a cut emerald. So, all in all, John first noticed a noble and light-filled ambience full of splendour and colour. More details than about the throne holder himself are given about its surroundings: His throne was surrounded by a crystal-like sea, and around it were four strange beings who are twice said to have eyes all over them - perhaps a reference to the fact that nothing escapes God's attention. Their primary task, however, seems to be to praise God without ceasing and to extol his eternal power and holiness.

John saw God's throne surrounded by twenty-four other thrones with as many elders sitting on them. We do not know exactly whether these are human or angelic beings. One possible explanation is that this crowd of elders consists on the one hand of the heavenly rulers of the twelve tribes of the Jews and on the other hand of the twelve apostles of the Lord Jesus. But perhaps twelve of them are special angels, for Jesus Himself once said: *"For I say unto you, That in heaven their angels (namely, the angels of the little ones) do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven."* (Mt. 18:10) In any case, these dignified beings, whoever they may be, are also filled with reverence for God. Before him they prostrate themselves and before him, although crowned heads themselves, they remove their victorious wreaths and thus pay due homage to the eternally ruling Creator.

Finally, a reflection on the significant last sentence in the first verse of chapter four: "And I will show you what must happen *after this*." As already mentioned, the preceding chapters refer to the earthly churches of Jesus: we have been informed that the Lord knows them intimately and gives them praise and admonition as well as encouragement and strengthening. The fourth chapter now opens not only

with a fundamental change of scene, but also with the explicit indication that from now on the visions are about an "after". This "hereafter" is interpreted by some commentators as meaning that from the fourth chapter onwards the history of the Christian churches on earth is concluded; and this is increasingly connected with the idea that Christianity has already been caught up to heaven at the beginning of chapter 4, even if this is not explicitly mentioned in Revelation.

Personally, I think that especially the sixth chapter still describes processes that also concern the church of Jesus on earth, and that the Rapture of *a part of* Christianity only takes place after the sealing according to chapter 7, verse 4. (More details on this below, in my notes on the sixth and seventh chapters).

At first glance, this seems like a contradiction, but it could be resolved by the following thought. (I write the following with inner pain and great caution.) The present state of world-wide Christianity - consisting of the three great "conglomerates" of the Orthodox, the Catholics and the Reformation churches, supplemented by countless other denominations - has moved conspicuously far away from New Testament principles. There is obviously no unity, there is no unifying doctrine, there are no universally accepted church leaders. Basically, the state of organised Christianity today is a total disaster. Certainly, there are individual Christian personalities or even small groups here and there whose lives and teachings are relatively well in line with New Testament principles. But in my impression, these are really isolated cases or - to put it more depressingly - exceptions; the majority of today's churches and congregations must unfortunately be considered to have fallen away to a great extent and to be spiritually decomposed.⁸

Against this background, one could therefore take the view that the epoch of the Christian church on earth *has indeed already ended from a divine point of view*; even though there are still many millions of church members or Christian baptised people.⁹ This would be a possible explanation for the fact that Revelation already speaks of events "after" the age of the church at the beginning of chapter 4, although the Rapture, in my opinion, will almost certainly not take place until after the events of chapter 6.¹⁰ According to this, the world is now in a phase of transition between the already completed age of the church of Jesus on earth and the beginning of the actual final time of judgement. This final epoch will dawn when Jesus appears in power and glory for all to see, and only then will the righteous be caught up to the Lord Jesus.

⁸ In principle, I am not a follower of John Nelson Darby. But his assessment, already expressed in the first half of the 19th century, that the Christian Church was irreparably ruined, unfortunately contains more truth than error in my opinion.

⁹ Our present time is not infrequently referred to as a post-Christian era; that is, a time after the Christian era.

¹⁰ As I will detail below, I see strong arguments that the fourth seal has already been opened, but the events of the sixth seal are still before us.

Revelation Chapter 5

1 And I saw in the right hand of him that sat on the throne a book written within and on the backside, sealed with seven seals. 2 And I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice, Who is worthy to open the book, and to loose the seals thereof? 3 And no man in heaven, nor in earth, neither under the earth, was able to open the book, neither to look thereon. 4 And I wept much, because no man was found worthy to open and to read the book, neither to look thereon. 5 And one of the elders saith unto me, Weep not: behold, the Lion of the tribe of Juda, the Root of David, hath prevailed to open the book, and to loose the seven seals thereof. 6 And I beheld, and, lo, in the midst of the throne and of the four beasts, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent forth into all the earth. 7 And he came and took the book out of the right hand of him that sat upon the throne. 8 And when he had taken the book, the four beasts and four and twenty elders fell down before the Lamb, having every one of them harps, and golden vials full of odours, which are the prayers of saints. 9 And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; 10 And hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth. 11 And I beheld, and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne and the beasts and the elders: and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands; 12 Saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing. 13 And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever. 14 And the four beasts said, Amen. And the four and twenty elders fell down and worshipped him that liveth for ever and ever.

John sees a book (or scroll) in the hands of the one who sits on the heavenly throne. Who else but God could be meant by this? The document in God's hand is sealed, sevenfold. So it seems to be a writing that is subject to a special secrecy. So we are dealing here with divine secrets, and it is logical that not just anyone may reveal their contents, but only a very distinguished person: a person who meets God's holy nature and standard. A mighty angel therefore calls out in all spheres for someone who would be worthy to take this divine writing and read its contents.

At first it seems to John that no one is able to do this, but one of the elders around the throne comforts him and explains: yes, there is one who may take the secrets from God's hand and reveal them. This person, who on the one hand is like a lion and on the other hand appears like a slaughtered lamb - this person is none other than the Lord Jesus. Although he had the power of a lion, he allowed himself to be killed like a lamb on Golgotha, and in trusting in his holy blood many people can come into the holy calling of kings and priests before the living God.¹¹ This "slain lamb," rejected by earthly rulers and priests because of its alleged "blasphemy," is here solemnly invested with a godly status by the heavenly kings and priests who are before God's throne and serve Him: *"Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and praise."* The four miraculous angelic beings, who stand immediately before God, speak the affirmative "Amen" to this, and the twenty-four elders fall down and worship the Lamb.

¹¹ Cf. 1.Petr. 2:9.10a: "But you are ... a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for a possession, that you may proclaim the virtues of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvellous light; who once were "not a people", but are now the people of God."

In the following sixth chapter, John then describes what he saw and experienced as the sealed Scriptures were gradually opened and their hitherto secret contents revealed.

Revelation Chapter 6

1 And I saw when the Lamb opened one of the seals, and I heard, as it were the noise of thunder, one of the four beasts saying, Come and see. 2 And I saw, and behold a white horse: and he that sat on him had a bow; and a crown was given unto him: and he went forth conquering, and to conquer. 3 And when he had opened the second seal, I heard the second beast say, Come and see. 4 And there went out another horse that was red: and power was given to him that sat thereon to take peace from the earth, and that they should kill one another: and there was given unto him a great sword. 5 And when he had opened the third seal, I heard the third beast say, Come and see. And I beheld, and lo a black horse; and he that sat on him had a pair of balances in his hand. 6 And I heard a voice in the midst of the four beasts say, A measure of wheat for a penny, and three measures of barley for a penny; and see thou hurt not the oil and the wine. 7 And when he had opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth beast say, Come and see. 8 And I looked, and behold a pale horse: and his name that sat on him was Death, and Hell followed with him. And power was given unto them over the fourth part of the earth, to kill with sword, and with hunger, and with death, and with the beasts of the earth. 9 And when he had opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held: 10 And they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth? 11 And white robes were given unto every one of them; and it was said unto them, that they should rest yet for a little season, until their fellowservants also and their brethren, that should be killed as they were, should be fulfilled. 12 And I beheld when he had opened the sixth seal, and, lo, there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became as blood; 13 And the stars of heaven fell unto the earth, even as a fig tree casteth her untimely figs, when she is shaken of a mighty wind. 14 And the heaven departed as a scroll when it is rolled together; and every mountain and island were moved out of their places. 15 And the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bondman, and every free man, hid themselves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains; 16 And said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb: 17 For the great day of his wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?

First impressions

When reading this sixth chapter, it quickly becomes clear that the revelation of that secret writing which John saw in God's hand at the beginning of chapter 5 does not augur well for humanity on earth. For we read here of battles, wars, inflation, plagues, death. And also of strange phenomena; such as the souls of the dead calling loudly for vengeance, and of great and wonderful signs in the sky. Finally, at the end of this short chapter, sheer panic and unrestrained horror breaks out among the inhabitants of the earth. They seek shelter in caves and would prefer to be slain by mountains and rocks, because they realise in a flash: Now the day of divine wrath has arrived; now they behold God's face full of fury - and are deeply frightened.

So the sixth chapter of John abruptly puts us at the beginning of the end. I use this strange formulation because we learn something very remarkable in John: The end of our world is not simply a crashing blow after which everything that exists disappears into a nameless darkness. Rather, the judgement of humanity is actually a process whose planned course is revealed to us in the following fourteen chapters.

Before I go into the individual verses, I would like to point out an important principle of biblical prophecy: *Future-oriented statements in the Bible can be fulfilled several times.*¹² It seems to me that this reference is necessary at this point, because especially when reading the present verses 1 to 6, one gets the impression that God's judicial action is described in them, which took place several times, in different places and at different times. One does not have to rummage around in the bloodstained chest of world history to find several wars, famines and pestilences that have killed millions. We can understand these six verses with some justification as a divine announcement of judgement, the fulfilment of which we can see many times in history.

This is different, however, in my opinion, in verses 7 and 8. At first glance, these two verses seem like a summary repetition of the previous verses: *"And when he had opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth beast say, Come and see. And I looked, and behold a pale horse: and his name that sat on him was Death, and Hell followed with him. And power was given unto them over the fourth part of the earth, to kill with sword, and with hunger, and with death, and with the beasts of the earth."*

Here we should note that verse 8 describes an intensification that goes beyond the statements of verses 1 to 6; an intensification that is so concise that it can by no means be hidden.

For when the fourth seal is opened, the deadly horrors take on a dimension that obviously goes beyond the events of the first three seal openings. For here it is now predicted that a quarter of all people on the whole earth will perish through divine punishments such as war, civil war, hate crimes, famine and pestilence.¹³ A quarter of humanity - let's imagine that! I myself lived for many years in Berlin, a city that today probably has almost four million inhabitants. So almost a million people would die there as a result of the catastrophes mentioned - in addition to those who leave this world due to old age (and statistically predictable). That is a very large number! And the same thing is happening worldwide... In the eighth verse of the sixth chapter, a global event with extremely serious consequences is announced.

I assume that verses 7 and 8 describe an extremely dramatic episode in world history that has hardly happened more than once. They could therefore make a dating possible, and thus an orientation in the temporal sequence of the end times. They could even give an answer to the question: Where are we today in the "timetable" of the end-time turmoil? For this reason, I will go into the specifics of the fourth seal in more detail below. In addition, we can say with certainty: Jesus has not yet returned; thus, it is clear that the sixth seal has not yet been opened.

For further understanding it is also very important to understand that at the end of this sixth chapter, and after the sixth seal has been broken, the glory and power of God and the Lord Jesus will become visible to the inhabitants of the earth. I am not able to say in detail how exactly this will happen. In any case, the 14th verse indicates that there will be a fundamental change: *"And the heavens faded away like a book that is rolled up..."* Perhaps one can imagine this as being similar to when, during a theatre performance, the stage set and scenery suddenly disappear and the audience can catch a glimpse of that backstage area that is usually hidden from them. In any case, such signs and wonders will happen on earth that it will become clear to everyone: Jesus, who died like a lamb, was endowed in heaven

¹² This is also called the principle of complementarity. An understandable explanation of this can be found in: Das Geheimnis biblischer Prophetie, in: Der schmale Weg. Vierteljahresschrift Nr. 3/2019, published by: Christlicher Gemeinde-Dienst (CGD), Pforzheim.

¹³ One might object that, strictly speaking, the text of verse 8 does not explicitly state that a quarter of humanity will perish. The Jewish disciple of the Messiah David H. Stern translated the last sentence of this verse as follows: "They were given authority to kill ... a quarter of the world." I do not know what other meaningful interpretation one could give to this statement than that a correspondingly large number of people perish.

with power and glory hardly imaginable --- and with the authority to pass divine judgement. For in the last verse of the sixth chapter it says: "For the great day of their¹⁴ wrath has come. And who is able to stand?" (Rev. 6:17).

Let us note: From chapter 7 of Revelation onwards, it is described how the long-withheld wrath of God is gradually poured out on the sinful people of the earth!

To put it casually, one could say: When the events of chapter 7 and the following begin, then the fun is finally over. If God still has a lot of patience and grace until then, not only for the people who have profoundly and truly converted to Jesus, but also for the sinners, for the disobedient and rebellious, the latter will end at that very moment. After that, life on earth will become *truly* terrible.

The opening of the first four seals

Let us take a closer look at the sixth chapter of Revelation. According to verses 1 to 8, riders on horses of different colours are sent out one after the other. These riders symbolise events that will be brought upon the earth and its inhabitants by God. It seems to me that the meaning of the rider on the first, white horse, is the least easy to understand. Therefore, I will first turn to this phenomenon in a little more detail.

Revelation 6, verses 1 and 2: *"And I beheld as the Lamb opened one of the seven seals, and I heard one of the four living creatures say as with a voice of thunder, Come; and I looked, and behold a white horse, and he that sat on him had a bow; and there was given unto him a crown of victory; and he went forth conquering and to conquer."*

The person on the white horse in verse 2 is an allegory of the antichristian spirit. Now, antichristian spirits are nothing new or surprising in themselves; already Jesus himself as well as the apostles of the early Christian times announced them, and at the same time they warned urgently against them.¹⁵ Let us note that spiritual seduction is mentioned first in this chapter 6: Even before the material judicial action of God comes in the form of war or famine, the white horse appears with the spiritual seducer.¹⁶ And this seducer is shown to us as victorious; i.e. he will succeed in drawing many to his side.

The following verses 3 and 4 describe how a fiery red horse is sent out with the opening of the second seal. From the text of the verses, it is relatively easy to see that the rider on this horse is symbolic of wars and war-like conflicts.

The meaning of verses 5 and 6 is also not too difficult to figure out: The rider on the black horse stands for inflation and the resulting famine that will kill many. It is interesting to read that, according to this prophecy, basic foodstuffs such as wheat and barley will become much more expensive, while the nobler luxury foods - symbolised here in oil and wine - will remain affordable. We know enough of this from history! How often have the rich indulged in pleasure while the poor were deprived of their daily bread.

Let us move on to the next two verses. At first glance, verses 7 and 8 seem like a summary repetition of the previous verses: *"And when it opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth living*

¹⁴ These are two persons of the triune God, namely God the Father and the Lamb on the throne, i.e. Jesus, the Son of God.

¹⁵ Cf. Mt. 24,4,5; 1Jn. 2,18; 1Jn. 4,1; 2Thess. 2,1-2 etc.

¹⁶ We also read something comparable in the 24th chapter of Matthew, as well as in the parallel passages of the evangelists Luke and Mark. The Lord Jesus also began that prophetic end-time discourse with an urgent warning against spiritual deception (Mt 24:4,5), which would be the prelude to the ensuing turmoil.

creature say, Come; and I looked, and behold, a pale horse, and he that sat on it, whose name (is) "Death"; and Hades followed him. And power was given unto them over the fourth part of the earth, to kill with the sword, and with hunger, and with death¹⁷ and by the wild beasts¹⁸ of the earth."

If one reads the sequence of verses 1 to 8 and considers the history of mankind - a history in which spiritual seductions, terrible slaughters, deadly famines and natural disasters have occurred again and again, resulting in numerous deaths - then one might at first assume a kind of ongoing divine judgement. And this idea is certainly not entirely wrong. Nevertheless, we should note that verses 7 and 8 describe an intensification that goes beyond the statements of verses 1 to 6; an intensification that is so concise that it cannot be (or have been) hidden.

For when the fourth seal is opened, the deadly horrors take on a dimension that obviously goes beyond the events of the first three seal openings. For it is now mentioned here that *a quarter of all people* on the whole earth will perish through the previously mentioned punishments such as war, civil war, hate crimes, famines and plagues. It is inconceivable to me that such a dramatic event in world history can happen unnoticed and as if "in the corner".

Can we date the events of the fourth seal?

Whenever I read verses 7 and 8 of the sixth chapter in Revelation, I involuntarily had to think of the two world wars of the 20th century. This may have something to do with my personal history: I was born in East Berlin in 1967. These two wars played a central role in the history lessons of my childhood, and in the cityscape of my hometown, many of the consequences of the war could still be seen in the 1970s and 80s: soot-blackened building facades, bullet holes, undeveloped plots with remains of foundation walls, even ruins here and there. Even the most painful scar - the division by wall and barbed wire - was an indirect consequence of that war. Even the demise of the state of Prussia, which always haunted the GDR like the undead, was closely linked to these two world-historical events. In other words, the shocks and collapses of those two wars formed something like the constant background noise of my childhood and youth, especially since the history of my family was also very concretely affected by them.

However, an initial calculation quickly shows that the total number of deaths in the two world wars, as enormous as the human losses were, was nowhere near a quarter of the world's population. Nevertheless, I took this as a starting point for further research; especially since the deliberate verse 8 also mentions other causes of death, such as epidemics, famines and hate crimes.

The assumption that the fourth seal was fulfilled by the era of the two world wars is also supported by the observation that there were striking events of spiritual seduction preceding it in time. The white rider with the bow, who according to Revelation 6, verses 1 and 2 went out victorious, corresponds exactly to the antichristian spirit in the late 19th century. The symbolism with which we are shown that spirit is strikingly consistent with the events surrounding people such as Friedrich Nietzsche, Richard Wagner, the theologian David Friedrich Strauss, Baron de Coubertin, and so on. They were the authors of numerous anti-Christian works in philosophy, art, theology and sport. They prepared in the late 19th century that de-Christianisation without which the atrocities in the subsequent 20th century would be inconceivable. These men mentioned - they are only a few examples; there were many more of their kind - were successful and famous; and that is what the crown symbolises. But the person on the white

¹⁷ The Elberfelder Bible translation explains in a footnote that this probably refers to diseases or epidemics.

¹⁸ According to David H. Stern's commentary on the Jewish New Testament, the wild animals stand for hatred or hate crimes. I interpret this to mean, for example, the Nazi mass murder of the Jews (Holocaust) and the "purges" and other atrocities committed by the Soviet communists against their own people.

horse is also armed, with a bow. This is a deadly weapon that is effective from a distance and can be used to attack from a hiding place or ambush, for example. In contrast to a sword, which is only capable of killing at close range and is thus usually clearly visible before it is used, the bow is a more concealed, indirect tool of attack. This corresponds well to the approach of the anti-Christian spirit, for the work of such people as Nietzsche, for example, was done under the pretext of doing something good for humanity. The criticism Nietzsche expressed of Christianity was packaged as a call for betterment, and moreover it was published in the name of science. Nietzsche, after all, worked as a philosopher, and philosophy was a scientific discipline with a high reputation at the time. In essence, however, the teachings disseminated by Nietzsche are so radically opposed to Christian doctrine that we are actually not dealing with - possibly justified - criticism, but with a complete denial of the truth, even if this is cleverly disguised.¹⁹

To give a second example: In the work of the composer Richard Wagner, the anti-Christian spirit is expressed by the fact that ancient Germanic gods are often glorified. This glorification of idols is undoubtedly opposed to the Christian faith and leads away from it; at the same time, it comes in the guise of great musical artistry. Wagner is still a celebrated and highly esteemed composer today; for example, the annual Wagner Festival in Bayreuth is a social event of the first order. One could say somewhat casually: the entire elite of Germany (and beyond) pays homage to Wagner there; anyone who wants to count for something has to show up in Bayreuth.

In such famous and celebrated persons as Nietzsche and Wagner, the anti-Christian spirit went forth to conquer, and conquer it did; and its victory continues to this day among such people as do not believe the truth. What was outstanding about them was not the fact of spiritual seduction per se; what was outstanding, however, was the extent and the abandon with which fundamental Christian values were dismantled and rejected in Europe in the second half of the 19th century. Since most of the great powers were located in Europe at the time, it should not be surprising that these processes had the same effect worldwide, to the extent that a quarter of all humanity lost their lives in them.

First, I considered whether this quarter of humanity would perish within a very short period of time - say: within a week or a month. This would undoubtedly be very dramatic and completely unmissable.²⁰ However, such a rapid mass death would have extreme consequences for the survivors. The orderly disposal of so many corpses would hardly be feasible, and the abrupt removal of such a high proportion of productive people would lead to such a profound global financial and economic crisis that the survival of humanity as a whole would appear questionable.²¹ This, however, was not the content of that announcement to the prophet John, and therefore I assume that these striking events would probably rather be spread over a longer period of time. After some thought and prayer, I came to the conclusion that I should look at the approximate life span of a human being - let's say 80 years.

This led me to the following hypothesis: in the period between 1880 and 1960, during the approximate duration of a human life, so many people died from war, civil war, hate crimes,

¹⁹ The Swiss atheists once emphasised Nietzsche's anti-Christian work in a magazine article with the following words: "The philosopher of the "Ueberschensch" carried out the destruction of religion with the greatest acumen and the most passionate energy..." (in: Liberation - Journal for Critical Thinking. No. 3/1955, p. 102)

²⁰ And even if this idea seems rather improbable - with God it would not be impossible.

²¹ Let us consider that the last severe financial crisis in 2008 was triggered by the fact that only locally - namely in the USA - a number of unclearly collateralised loans became conspicuous. This limited event brought the world financial system to the brink of collapse. Only extreme measures by many national banks prevented its collapse. If we now imagine that from one day to the next about a quarter of all global loans would no longer be serviced, then it seems inconceivable that the financial system would survive such. The consequence would undoubtedly be global anarchy on the highest scale.

epidemics and famine that it totalled about a quarter of the average world population at the time.

1880 to 1960: A quarter of humanity worldwide was wiped out

Before I present my further arguments, I would like to briefly explore the following question: Objectively speaking, was the epoch of the two world wars really so special, so extraordinary, that it might at least hypothetically be regarded as the fulfilment of the prophetic words from Rev. 6,8? Purely subjectively, in my personal perception, this is how it appeared; but that says nothing about whether it is really so. Against the historical uniqueness of the World War era, one could object that there had already been historical phases before that in which very many people died within a relatively short time. I would like to mention only two well-known examples here. For example, during the plague epidemic - also called the Black Death - between 1346 and 1353, about 25 million people are said to have died in Europe; this corresponds to about one third of the European population at that time.²² Another example is the so-called Thirty Years' War from 1618 to 1648, which also led to the death of about one third of all people in what is now Germany.

However, for various reasons, these two events do not correspond to the complex picture of Rev. 6,8. The plague epidemic in the 14th century was indeed an international event that caused many deaths on several continents, but it was "only" a disease event, and it did not take place globally. The war events of 1618 to 1648, on the other hand, were accompanied by famines and epidemics, but they were clearly regionally limited; the focus of their impact was on the German-speaking areas of Central Europe. Events like these two catastrophes - and unfortunately there were many more of them - could therefore be seen as a fulfilment of verses 3 to 6, but not of verse 7 or 8.

The era from 1880 onwards, on the other hand, was special for various reasons. Inventions such as the steam engine, the internal combustion engine, electricity and telecommunications greatly advanced globalisation. Technical advances and industrialisation led to the great powers not only fighting each other on their actual ancestral territories, but also entering into worldwide competition. The consequence of this were the two wars from 1914 to 1918 and from 1939 to 1945, both of which were extremely costly. Because a large number of peoples and states around the world were involved, historians refer to them as world wars; in fact, the first two of their kind. In these two terrible events, a new quality of the well-known phenomenon of "war" became objectively apparent. The epidemic called "Spanish flu" in the years 1918 to 1920 also led to numerous deaths on all inhabited continents, totalling several million; some estimates put the total at around 100 million. In the epoch I have just outlined, we therefore actually find the times of various global catastrophes with an extremely large number of deaths.

Moreover, the period between 1880 and 1960 also saw extraordinary hate crimes on a very large scale. Many people really did act like "wild animals" against each other: they erupted into senseless, groundless, and countless acts of murder out of the very lowest instincts. On the one hand, the mass murder of the Jews initiated by the Nazis should be mentioned here; on the other hand, however, the genocide-like crimes committed by communist rulers such as Stalin or Mao against their own population should also be mentioned. It is a fact that European historiography has paid relatively little attention to the hate crimes committed by communist dictators, at least in terms of the number of people killed. On the one hand, this has objective reasons, because the mega-killers in the East naturally did all they could to cover up their own crimes. Moreover, Stalin, for example, was even an

²² However, there are considerable uncertainties about the exact proportion who died, and there were significant regional differences in mortality.

ally of the West for several years, namely in the fight against Hitler, and therefore for many years it was not necessarily opportune, even in the West, to look too closely at Stalinist crimes. Therefore, research has been directed towards estimates. However, such investigations quickly lead to death figures that are shockingly high. In some cases, mass murder was also mixed with other catastrophes; for example, in Maoist China, where the misguided policy of the "Great Leap" in the 1950s led to a severe famine with millions of deaths.

I think that my brief account above makes one thing clear: the era around the two world wars, together with a certain period before and after, was unique in world historical terms so far, and it might be difficult to find a comparable era. Even the collapse of the Roman Empire, although of course also of great consequence, was by comparison a rather regional event.

In the following table I have compiled the number of people killed as a result of striking historical events in the period from 1880 to 1960.²³

Table 1: Fatalities of some historical events in the period between 1880 and 1960

Event	Number of people killed
Colonial war in the Belgian Congo ("Congo atrocities", 1888 - 1908)	at least 10 million
World War I (1914 - 1918)	17 million (military and civilian victims)
World War II (1939 - 1945)	70 million (military and civilian victims and murdered Jews)
Korean War (1950 - 1953)	4.5 million (military and civilian victims)
Chinese Communism under Mao	70 million (including famine, excluding war deaths)
Soviet Russian Communism under Lenin and Stalin (1917 - 1953)	62 million (without war deaths)
Spanish flu (1918-1920)	approx. 50 million (some estimates go up to 100 million)
Various famines worldwide (1880 to 1960)	At least 47 million (not counting the starvation deaths in China under Mao)
5th and 6th cholera epidemics (1881 - 1896 and 1899 - 1923) and other years	more than 15 million
Tuberculosis (1880 to 1960)	approx. 26 million in Northern and Western Europe alone
Other epidemics and pandemics (1880 to 1960)	at least 20 million (without tuberculosis, without Spanish flu)

These above-mentioned events alone, with their well-documented numbers of deceased, led to **at least 391.5 million deaths** in the period of about 80 years, i.e., during one human age. It should be

²³ Sources are listed separately at the end of this paper.

borne in mind that the total number of people who died in this way is likely to be considerably higher, for the following reasons.

- (1) The statistics for certain countries and regions of the world are almost certainly incomplete, especially with regard to Africa, China, India and other Asian regions. As an example, the cholera epidemics are mentioned: A relevant publication of the World Health Organisation WHO mentions exact figures for the deaths caused by cholera in India only for the years 1900 to 1954; this adds up to more than 14.3 million deaths - excluding the years 1880-1899 as well as 1955 to 1960 and excluding the rest of the world. The figure of 15 million deaths given above is therefore a very conservative estimate; in fact, it was probably considerably more.
- (2) Deaths as a result of colonialism are only given in the above table for the case of the well-documented crimes in the Belgian Congo; namely 10 million. Another source, which however offers very extensive material that I could not evaluate within the framework of this writing, gives a figure of 50 million deaths as a result of colonialism. In any case I assume that the colonial efforts in the period under consideration here very probably resulted in significantly more victims than those included in the above table.
- (3) The tuberculosis deaths in the above table are based on the population of the countries in Northern and Western Europe, because only for these are reliable sources available; however, we know that this disease also occurs in other countries.²⁴ For this reason, the total number of people worldwide who died of tuberculosis was almost certainly considerably higher; it could well be double or triple the figure given in the table.
- (4) Malaria deaths and deaths due to tropical infectious diseases, such as dengue fever, yellow fever, sleeping sickness, etc., are not included because no reliable statistics are available. because no reliable statistics are available for them.
- (5) Furthermore, dozens of local wars have occurred in the era under consideration, with a total death toll believed to be in the millions.
- (6) I have also not taken into account natural disasters such as earthquakes, tsunamis, volcanic eruptions and floods. These events are not explicitly mentioned in Rev. 6,1-8; however, they are also mentioned in Jesus' end-time discourse according to Matthew, chapter 24, as typical omens of the approaching end-time. The number of victims for such events worldwide in the period of eighty years under consideration can easily add up to several million.

Now the above data on deaths must be put in relation to the population of the earth at that time. In 1880, the world population was approx. 1,400 million; in 1955, approx. 2,600 million.²⁵ The mean value calculated from these two key data is 2,000 million. For my hypothesis mentioned above, this would mean that in the intervening period, a quarter of these, i.e., about 500 million people, lost their lives as a result of wars, civil wars, hate crimes, hunger and epidemics.

Taking into account the figures given above for deaths from significant historical events - at least 391 million - and considering the reasons why the actual number was probably considerably higher, the following conclusion can be drawn.

It seems plausible to me that in the period between 1880 and 1960, about a quarter of the world's population at that time actually died as a result of wars and civil wars, hate crimes such as genocides and the Holocaust, famine, epidemics (i.e., communicable infectious diseases) and natural disasters.

²⁴ Today, tuberculosis is practically only rampant outside the developed world. There, it still causes more than 1 million deaths a year, although knowledge about its prevention and treatment has progressed considerably.

²⁵ <https://www.bpb.de/shop/zeitschriften/izpb/55882/entwicklung-der-weltbevoelkerung/> (retrieved 03.05.2022)

Now we could consider this circumstance closed with an appropriately honourable remembrance of the many who have come around and sit back and relax. However, after a further look at the book of Revelation, we should be rather worried. For if it is indeed the case that the events described in Revelation, chapter 6, verses 1 to 8, have already been concluded for a long time, then it follows with compelling logic that *the further end-time events are much closer to us than many of us want to admit!*

Therefore, in the following I would like to take a closer look at the coming events of the end times. I will begin by looking at the first end time, which took place with the conquest and destruction of the city of Jerusalem by the troops of the Roman Empire in 70 AD. These events are linked to the final end times of the whole world in that Jesus predicted both events in a single prophetic speech to his disciples. Valuable insights for the coming end of the world can be gained from the consideration of the already fulfilled prediction about Jerusalem.

The First End Times: The Fall of Jerusalem in the Year 70

Jesus himself spoke to his disciples about the end times. The Gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke contain corresponding records. These accounts are similar to each other, but also have a few differences. I find Luke's account the most trustworthy because, according to Luke's own words, he did a lot of research for the writing of his report. Therefore, in the following I refer mainly to the text we find in the 21st chapter of Luke's Gospel.

With regard to these descriptions of the end times, it should first be noted that Jesus was speaking to Jewish contemporaries, and that the impressive splendour and size of the Jerusalem Temple gave rise to this. The words of the Lord Jesus refer superficially to the future of the temple and to the fall of the city of Jerusalem, but they do not stop there. For on that occasion the Lord referred to *two different* end times by teaching: First the Jewish people will be judged, with Jerusalem and its temple being destroyed. This was the obvious message to his Jewish followers, and it described the end times for Jerusalem. After that, Jesus announced a phase that belongs to the rest of the nations - this refers to the present time, when the Jews are still scattered in many ways and the Gospel is accepted mainly by the non-Jews - and only at the end of this present era comes the end of the world.²⁶ Jesus' urgent admonitions to be vigilant against the signs of the times certainly apply to both events!

The accuracy of Jesus' warning to stay away from Jerusalem in that time of distress, or to flee from it without being forced, becomes clear from the descriptions of a contemporary historian. Flavius Josephus, a writer of Jewish origin, experienced the so-called Jewish War of the years 66 to 70 C.E. himself and wrote a book about it.²⁷ He writes that so many Jewish people died in the war against the Romans mainly because they had done the exact opposite - they had streamed into the city from outside although the wars had already been in progress for a long time and the Roman troops were already close to Jerusalem.²⁸

Incidentally, the false prophets, who seduced many, are also witnesses to the fall of Jerusalem. In the words of Flavius Josephus: "In general, there were many such prophets at that time, who were instigated by the tyrants and sent among the people in order to encourage them to steadfastly trust

²⁶ Luk. 21:23b.24: "For there shall be great distress in the land, and wrath upon this people. 24 And they (i.e., the Jews) shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations: and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled. "Only then does Jesus describe His return and the coming end of the world from verse 25 onwards.

²⁷ Flavius Josephus: Jewish War (JK). The German translation is available as a free resource here on the Internet: https://de.wikisource.org/wiki/Juedischer_Krieg

²⁸ Cf. Flavius Josephus: Jewish War. VI,420.421

in God's help, and in this way to ensure that the people did not defect too much, and that those who were already beyond all fear and apprehension would at least be kept back in the city by hope. "(JK: VI,286)

These false prophets preached the exact opposite of what Jesus had recommended for salvation to do: Jesus had strongly advised to flee, but the false counsellors called on the people to stay. In retrospect, it becomes clear that Jesus was right. For even at the time when the Romans had already committed the "abomination of desolation" by carrying their idols into the fallen Jewish sanctuary and offering sacrifices to them,²⁹ it was possible to flee Jerusalem and thereby remain alive. This is clear from the historian's notes. Josephus writes that even after the conquest of the Temple, a "flood of defectors" escaped from Jerusalem, which had been closed around, and were released into freedom by the Roman troops; at least as far as they were citizens of Jerusalem. According to Flavius Josephus, about 40,000 people saved themselves in this way - and to a certain extent at the very last minute. Of those who remained in the enclosed city, however, hardly any survived the horrific slaughter that followed its storming. Josephus describes how the Roman soldiers obsessively beat the survivors and even dug up the earth to find the hiding places in the catacombs below Jerusalem.

The terrible horror of Jerusalem's "last days" is summed up in the one sentence of the contemporary chronicler and eyewitness: The city of Jerusalem had "endured (...) so many sufferings during the duration of her siege (...) that the same measure of happiness, distributed over the whole time of her existence, would certainly (...) have made her enviable in the eyes of men. "(JK: VI,408) If the end of Jerusalem was so miserable, who can think that the end of the whole world would be less terrible?

The contemplation of the end of Jerusalem in the year 70 should urgently sensitise us to listen carefully to the words and instructions of Jesus. For just as He not only prophesied the judgement on the Jewish people but also pointed out a way of salvation, He also wants to show a way of preservation from the horrors of the final end times for the whole world.

The end times will be terrible - but salvation is possible

Let us return in our consideration to the Revelation of John. I have shown above, by means of a historical analysis, that in my opinion some essential events of that prediction have already occurred and been fulfilled. And this concerns the first four opened seals according to the 6th chapter of Revelation. Therefore, I would urgently advise you to look closely at the following events.

In Revelation 6, verses 9 to 11, a dialogue is described that we people on earth probably cannot perceive at all. When the fifth seal is opened, the souls of those previously killed for the sake of Jesus ask when the final judgement will finally come. They are told that there will first be a further phase of hatred and murder of Christians; but they are also told that it will only be a short time until the final judgement. This further phase of hatred and murder is a reference to the coming time of great tribulation; it is only hinted at in this passage; it will be described in more detail in the various following chapters.

Verses 12 to 14 describe events that prepare for the return of the Lord Jesus: A great earthquake is announced; the sun will turn black and the moon red like blood; the stars will fall to the earth and the sky will disappear.

²⁹ Cf. Flavius Josephus: Jewish War. VI,316. This abomination was foretold in various places in the OT and NT; especially Mt.24:15 as well as Dan.9:27 and 11:31.

And a little later (verses 15 to 17), all people – the great and powerful as well as citizens and slaves - become very afraid and wish to hide under mountains and rocks, because suddenly they realise that the day of Jesus' divine final judgement has now come. Or to be more precise: that the final judgement is now *beginning*. For in fact, it will not take place in an ordinary 24-hour day, but over a longer period of time, during which a cascade of increasing horrors will befall the earth.

Revelation Chapter 7

1 And after these things I saw four angels standing on the four corners of the earth, holding the four winds of the earth, that the wind should not blow on the earth, nor on the sea, nor on any tree. 2 And I saw another angel ascending from the east, having the seal of the living God: and he cried with a loud voice to the four angels, to whom it was given to hurt the earth and the sea, 3 Saying, Hurt not the earth, neither the sea, nor the trees, till we have sealed the servants of our God in their foreheads. 4 And I heard the number of them which were sealed: and there were sealed an hundred and forty and four thousand of all the tribes of the children of Israel. 5 Of the tribe of Juda were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Reuben were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Gad were sealed twelve thousand. 6 Of the tribe of Aser were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Nephtalim were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Manasses were sealed twelve thousand. 7 Of the tribe of Simeon were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Levi were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Issachar were sealed twelve thousand. 8 Of the tribe of Zabulon were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Joseph were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Benjamin were sealed twelve thousand. 9 After this I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands; 10 And cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb. 11 And all the angels stood round about the throne, and about the elders and the four beasts, and fell before the throne on their faces, and worshipped God, 12 Saying, Amen: Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honour, and power, and might, be unto our God for ever and ever. Amen. 13 And one of the elders answered, saying unto me, What are these which are arrayed in white robes? and whence came they? 14 And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest. And he said to me, These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. 15 Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple: and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them. 16 They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. 17 For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.

At the beginning of the seventh chapter an event is described which is the *key to salvation from the end temporal turmoil*. I therefore repeat again: From this chapter onwards, the wrathful judgement of God on the inhabitants of the earth is spoken of, and the authority to do so was given to Jesus, the crucified and risen Son of God! Now it is important to understand that in the first verses of chapter 7 a separation of people is described; and indeed a separation for salvation. For in the third verse John hears a powerful angel saying, "*Before any harm is done to the earth, nor to the sea, nor to the trees, these counted out people are to be sealed*"; and by doing so, these specially marked out people are taken out of the judgment action *before* it begins. Now, in these verses 1 to 8 there is at first only talk of people from the twelve tribes of Israel, and we must ask ourselves whether this is to be interpreted literally or figuratively.

Let us note two things. First, the apostle Paul tirelessly taught that there is *no* distinction between Jews and Gentiles in the Church of Jesus. One could almost say that this was one of his core themes; he unfolds it in Romans 3:22-24 and 10:12,13; Ephesians 2:11-18; Galatians 2:11-16 etc. In the eleventh chapter of Romans, Paul explains that the Christ-followers from the other nations have been grafted into the noble olive tree of divine Israel, i.e., they now organically belong to the Israel of God.

I would like to supplement this with a statement by the Israelite Paul, who is not lacking in clarity and who literally says: "For not he is a Jew who is outwardly so, nor is the outward circumcision in the flesh

Be cut dung; but he is a Jew who is inwardly so, and circumcision of the heart, in the spirit, not in the letter. Its praise comes not from men but from God." (Rom. 2:28.29) Accordingly, being Jewish in the divine sense is not based on being a bodily descendant of Jacob or on being ritually cut. Rather, it depends on the inner commitment of a person; on his or her willingness to trustingly submit to the Lord Jesus and to seek and do His will.

Now the verses Rev. 7:1-8 are exactly about a divine action: God sends his angels to spare people from his judgments. Who will be spared? Surely the one whom God praises because he has acted in a pleasing way. Therefore, I would like to state with boldness and certainty that the mention of those saved from the twelve tribes of Israel is to be understood in a spiritual sense. That means that this manageable number of 144,000 people³⁰ will include people who, in the bodily sense, come from *all* peoples and nations worldwide. They will be people who were so closely connected with Jesus in their earthly life that they are truly recognised as His own, as the Israel of God. As a reward for their efforts and for their trust, they will enjoy the privilege of escaping all the terrifying horrors that will befall the earth and its inhabitants.

That this is so is also confirmed by the 14th chapter of Revelation. According to verses 1 to 5 there, John saw these 144,000 chosen ones again, this time singing before the throne of God. Only to them is it given to perform a very special song of praise, for they are described as irreproachable and undefiled; and they follow Jesus, the Lamb, wherever it goes. We should note that John receives this show just *before* an angel proclaims to all the rest of the peoples on earth, "Fear God and give glory to him, for the hour of his judgement has come! "But the 144,000 are taken out of judgement, for they have obviously already been caught up to heaven."³¹

We should note that the number of sealed and saved people is given very precisely. This is particularly noteworthy in comparison with the following verses 9 to 17 of chapter 7, where we also read of people standing before the throne of the Lamb, i.e., before the throne of the Lord Jesus, and praising and worshipping Him there. This certainly means that it is also about saved people. It is said about them that they are such a great multitude that no one can count them. Now this is a striking contrast: first a precisely determined number, and then a huge, uncountable multitude. The statement can only be that in the first salvation, which takes place *before* the final judgement, a relatively small, manageable number of people will be set apart. The many times larger number will only be saved later - *after the* terrible judgement on earth has already begun. The choice of words in Revelation suggests that this second great multitude will find their way to the Lord Jesus out of the "time of great tribulation".

On the one hand, it is comforting that even out of that phase of great horrors many will still find their way to saving faith and liberating confession. But on the other hand, we should realise that this will be a salvation from great, even from inconceivably hard tribulation! The people who belong to the second group will encounter many sufferings such as hunger, thirst and scorching heat (climate change!), and the tears caused by these will only be wiped away for them in heaven.

³⁰ The number of 144,000 according to verses 4 to 8 is, in my opinion, meant symbolically. This number results from the multiplication of 12 times 12,000. In the Bible, the number twelve often stands for the full number; think of the twelve tribes of the Israelites or the twelve apostles of Jesus. The 144,000 symbolises the perfect full number, so to speak. It may indeed be more than 144,000 saved; nevertheless, it is obviously a counted multitude, in contrast to the innumerable multitude mentioned afterwards.

³¹ Rev. 9:4 mentions sealed ones who are on earth *during* the divine judgement. We are not told why they are there. It is conceivable that they have returned for the purpose of evangelism - after all, the name of the Lord Jesus must still be proclaimed on earth during the tribulation period. At the same time, Rev. 9:4 makes it quite clear that these sealed ones will also be preserved from divine wrath punishments on earth! Their status as beloved of God protects and saves them; no matter where they are.

On the other hand, the people who are recognised by Jesus as His own, set apart and saved before the beginning of this terrible time are much better off; they are spared having to suffer through that terrible time on earth. What the apostle Paul wrote in his first letter to the Christians in Thessalonica applies to them: "We, the living who are left, will be caught up in the clouds to meet the Lord". (1.Thess. 4:17)

In Jesus' end-time discourse according to the Gospel of Luke, the reader is explicitly advised: **"Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man!"** (Luke 21:36) Actually, it should not need this advice at all. For if we really hear the seriousness with which Jesus warns his listeners of these end-time horrors, also according to the other Gospels, then we could actually come up with the idea ourselves to ask God again and again to spare us from this ultimate catastrophe. In my opinion, above all we need constant prayer to the Lord Jesus in order to recognise better and better the will of God for our lives, and that we do not let ourselves be discouraged from doing this will. For even if our spirit is willing - in our natural being we remain weak and contestable. No man will be saved by his own will or strength; only God is able to do this. (Luke 18:25.26)

That salvation is possible is also confirmed in various other passages in the Bible. In his first letter to the Thessalonians, the Apostle Paul states: "Jesus saves us from the wrath to come. " (1Thess. 1:10) We also read something comparable in the prophet Joel in the Old Testament. In direct reference to the divine final judgement ("before the day of the Lord comes, the great and terrible", so at the end of Joel 3:4) it says there: "And it shall come to pass: Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved." (Joel 3:5a)

Summary over chapters 6 and 7

There are strong signs and evidence that the end-time events are already well advanced. I believe that the fourth seal has already been opened according to chapter 6 of Revelation. The associated events wiped out the lives of a quarter of the world's population in the striking period of horror between 1880 and 1960. But traumatising as these events were, they were only the prelude to the actual final act on earth. This finale will begin when the sixth seal is opened in heaven and the realisation takes hold on earth, under signs and wonders, that the wrathful judgements of God and the Lord Jesus are now inevitably imminent. This final act is now obviously very close - even if the exact day and hour are not known to anyone.

When the Lord Jesus becomes visible to everyone, which makes His great power suddenly recognisable, His final judgement on all people who then live on earth will begin. A time will then begin which is called the time of the great tribulation or the great distress.

The seventh chapter wants to impress upon us that there are two separate groups of the saved: Some come to Jesus before the end-time horrors begin; others, on the other hand, will be subjected to the sufferings of the final catastrophes. Let man choose for himself to which group he wants to belong. No human being necessarily must go through or suffer from that worst phase of earthly horrors. Jesus will save those who have faithfully and sincerely adhered to Him before the beginning of that horrible time of terror from this act of punishment, trial and judgement. The key to this salvation is constant prayer!

Furthermore, the visible appearance of the Lord Jesus does not yet signify the final end of the world. Rather, it is the prelude to the actual final judgement, which is described to us beginning with the following eighth chapter. Even during this period, salvation to eternal life will still be possible if a

person acknowledges Jesus as Lord and Son of God - but only at the price of fearful tribulations and trials of suffering.

Revelation Chapter 8

1 And when he had opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven about the space of half an hour. 2 And I saw the seven angels which stood before God; and to them were given seven trumpets. 3 And another angel came and stood at the altar, having a golden censer; and there was given unto him much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne. 4 And the smoke of the incense, which came with the prayers of the saints, ascended up before God out of the angel's hand. 5 And the angel took the censer, and filled it with fire of the altar, and cast it into the earth: and there were voices, and thunderings, and lightnings, and an earthquake. 6 And the seven angels which had the seven trumpets prepared themselves to sound. 7 The first angel sounded, and there followed hail and fire mingled with blood, and they were cast upon the earth: and the third part of trees was burnt up, and all green grass was burnt up. 8 And the second angel sounded, and as it were a great mountain burning with fire was cast into the sea: and the third part of the sea became blood; 9 And the third part of the creatures which were in the sea, and had life, died; and the third part of the ships were destroyed. 10 And the third angel sounded, and there fell a great star from heaven, burning as it were a lamp, and it fell upon the third part of the rivers, and upon the fountains of waters; 11 And the name of the star is called Wormwood: and the third part of the waters became wormwood; and many men died of the waters, because they were made bitter. 12 And the fourth angel sounded, and the third part of the sun was smitten, and the third part of the moon, and the third part of the stars; so as the third part of them was darkened, and the day shone not for a third part of it, and the night likewise. 13 And I beheld, and heard an angel flying through the midst of heaven, saying with a loud voice, Woe, woe, woe, to the inhabitants of the earth by reason of the other voices of the trumpet of the three angels, which are yet to sound!

The opening of the seventh seal initiates the actual divine final judgement. The fact that a special phase now begins is emphasised by the silence that falls in heaven. The previous glimpses of the heavenly world granted to the seer John were, after all, filled with great liveliness: Praise was sung and music was played before the heavenly throne; worship was offered without interruption to the Lord of all lords; lightning, voices and thunder could be heard. But now --- silence; for half an hour. It is the proverbial calm before the storm.

Then an angel sends up prayers of the saints as a fragrance to God. These may be prayers that believers have addressed to God out of affliction, and who are now remembered in judgment. When we read further about the coming divine punishments of wrath, we should consider the following: God is of great patience. After all, almost 2,000 years have passed since the execution of the Lord Jesus on the cross. God is still waiting for each and every one to repent. He has the Good News proclaimed around the world; He invites us to eternal life with never-ending grace and goodness. But one day the measure will be full, and the day of reckoning is here. The beginning of the eighth chapter of Revelation shows us exactly that moment which may soon become reality.

From the eighth verse of this chapter onwards, we get brief descriptions of those terrible events. At the sounding of the first four trumpets, nature is massively damaged. At first glance, one might perceive this as nothing more than a symbolic judgement. But let us consider that as a result of these events, the natural foundations of human life will also be greatly reduced. First, we read of burnt land, burnt trees, burnt meadows and pastures. It is pointless to speculate about which phenomena will cause these effects; whether they will be man-made ecological catastrophes or natural disasters or rather supernatural influences. Let us rather be clear about what the consequences will be: agriculture will be massively affected on a global scale because one third of the fertile zones will no longer produce crops. Food will become very scarce worldwide! With the second trumpet, the world's oceans will be

struck, so that a third of all marine animals will die and many ships will be destroyed. Thus, after agriculture has been affected, fishing will also be severely reduced and, in addition, global trade will be massively impeded. Locally, there may still be surpluses of certain foods, but these will hardly reach the hungry elsewhere. This will further exacerbate the global food crisis. In a third catastrophe, an additional third of the global freshwater resources will become unusable; many people will then die from spoiled drinking water. Finally, the fourth angel's trumpet will cause the sun and moon to shine much less brightly. A gloomy, depressing mood will spread worldwide, leading to an additional paralysis of human drive and enterprise. Beyond this psychological effect, the reduction in sunlight will also have another very painful effect on the production of food on Earth. Less sunlight means reduced plant growth - thus hunger and poverty will increase even more worldwide, because the crop yields on the then still usable cultivable land will collapse markedly.

Let us briefly summarise: The first four punishments of wrath will severely damage the earthly foundations of life so that there will be a severe shortage of food worldwide. Famines on an unprecedented scale will afflict the earth; many people on all continents will suffer and many will perish miserably. This will be aggravated by a lack of drinking water, which will lead to many more deaths.

Now, some readers may say to themselves: "We in the 'West', in the highly developed countries, will get through those challenging times with our sophisticated technology, logistics and organisation. We will know how to help ourselves, and it won't be quite so bad for us after all. We will have to limit ourselves, but the really big suffering and death will happen more in India or Africa."

Maybe that's true; I don't know. In any case, I would not advise anyone to lull themselves into too much security. But even so: The first four trumpets are only the prelude to the judgement. In the last verse of chapter eight, a supernatural being, described here as a soaring eagle, cries out a threefold "Woe!" over the whole earth. For much worse is yet to come, as we already read in the following 9th chapter.

Revelation 9th chapter

1 And the fifth angel sounded, and I saw a star fall from heaven unto the earth: and to him was given the key of the bottomless pit. 2 And he opened the bottomless pit; and there arose a smoke out of the pit, as the smoke of a great furnace; and the sun and the air were darkened by reason of the smoke of the pit. 3 And there came out of the smoke locusts upon the earth: and unto them was given power, as the scorpions of the earth have power. 4 And it was commanded them that they should not hurt the grass of the earth, neither any green thing, neither any tree; but only those men which have not the seal of God in their foreheads. 5 And to them it was given that they should not kill them, but that they should be tormented five months: and their torment was as the torment of a scorpion, when he striketh a man. 6 And in those days shall men seek death, and shall not find it; and shall desire to die, and death shall flee from them. 7 And the shapes of the locusts were like unto horses prepared unto battle; and on their heads were as it were crowns like gold, and their faces were as the faces of men. 8 And they had hair as the hair of women, and their teeth were as the teeth of lions. 9 And they had breastplates, as it were breastplates of iron; and the sound of their wings was as the sound of chariots of many horses running to battle. 10 And they had tails like unto scorpions, and there were stings in their tails: and their power was to hurt men five months. 11 And they had a king over them, which is the angel of the bottomless pit, whose name in the Hebrew tongue is Abaddon, but in the Greek tongue hath his name Apollyon. 12 One woe is past; and, behold, there come two woes more hereafter. 13 And the sixth angel sounded, and I heard a voice from the four horns of the golden altar which is before God, 14 Saying to the sixth angel which had the trumpet, Loose the four angels which are bound in the great river Euphrates. 15 And the four angels were loosed, which were prepared for an hour, and a day, and a month, and a year, for to slay the third part of men. 16 And the number of the army of the horsemen were two hundred thousand thousand: and I heard the number of them. 17 And thus I saw the horses in the vision, and them that sat on them, having breastplates of fire, and of jacinth, and brimstone: and the heads of the horses were as the heads of lions; and out of their mouths issued fire and smoke and brimstone. 18 By these three was the third part of men killed, by the fire, and by the smoke, and by the brimstone, which issued out of their mouths. 19 For their power is in their mouth, and in their tails: for their tails were like unto serpents, and had heads, and with them they do hurt. 20 And the rest of the men which were not killed by these plagues yet repented not of the works of their hands, that they should not worship devils, and idols of gold, and silver, and brass, and stone, and of wood: which neither can see, nor hear, nor walk: 21 Neither repented they of their murders, nor of their sorceries, nor of their fornication, nor of their thefts.

With the fifth trumpet of judgement, an event will occur that will directly damage the health of many people; and in an extremely painful way. The text of Revelation describes that a plague of locusts will occur worldwide. These insects will have the strange property of being able to sting people like scorpions.

The consequence will be that the inhabitants of the earth will be tormented by these strange beings for five months.³² In the fourth verse of this chapter we learn that all people will be tormented in this way - except those who bear the seal of God on their foreheads. This divine marking is already described at the beginning of the seventh chapter of Revelation. I had explained that these sealed ones will be taken out of judgment by being caught up to meet Jesus in heaven. Now we read here in the

³² It has been proven by scorpion researchers that scorpions can actually inflict almost unbearable pain through stings without killing a human being in the process. In 2017, the reputable German broadcaster Deutsche Welle published an interview on the subject with the telling title "The pain is unbearable". (<https://dw.com/de/von-einem-skorpion-gestochen-der-schmerz-ist-unerträglich/a-40151962>; retrieved 29.05.2022)

ninth chapter that at least some of them will still (or again) be on earth. We are not told the reason for this, but I assume that they will be there because in some way they must still be called to repentance towards the Lord Jesus. For we have read the prophecy that out of the sorrowful time of judgement there will still be a great many, indeed an innumerable number of people who will turn back to God.³³ And for this purpose, that is, with the commission to evangelise, some of the sealed and saved may return to earth. These sealed ones are named according to verse 4 as the only people who will *not be* harmed by the scorpion-like locusts!

For all those who wonder whether such bizarre creatures do not rather belong to the realm of science fiction novels or fantasy films, allow me to make the following comment. The world of animals and insects always offers fascinating surprises even to experts. I am convinced that we by no means know all the creatures that already exist today in some biotope of this world in secret, and some of which could suddenly multiply under some conditions. In addition, secret bio- and genetic engineering experiments are being carried out in quite a few laboratories in this world, the aims of which would frighten us if we knew them. I myself am a natural scientist and consider it absolutely conceivable that such horrible plagues as locusts with scorpion-like stinging tools could occur without the visible intervention of an angel (even if I am at the same time convinced that ultimately God's work would be behind it).

Apart from this, it must of course be considered that the locust-like creatures are to be understood rather symbolically. The seer John was shown these strange and aggressive little animals as if under a magnifying glass, and he perceived quite unusual details:

- the shapes of the locusts resembled horses prepared for battle;
- on their heads was something that seemed to him like golden victory wreaths;
- their faces were like human faces;
- they had hair like women's hair;
- their teeth were like those of lions;
- they wore what appeared to be iron armour.

Was this all just exuberant fantasy? With the following photo I would like to give a bit of an idea that in the realm of insects very strange forms do appear, which are amazingly similar to individual perceptions of the prophet John. Sometimes it just depends on the right angle of view. In the following photograph by British nature photographer Levon Biss, the blue beetle from the *Scarabaeidae* family seems to have a thoroughly human-like face, and a shimmering metallic carapace to boot. With a little imagination, one might even recognise something like a wreath on its head, peeking out to the left and right of the "eye" part.

³³ Cf. Rev. 7,9-14



Coprophanaeus lancifer (Amazonian Purple Warrior Scarab). Photograph by Levon Biss
(<http://microsculpture.net/amazonian-purple-warrior-scarab.html>; retrieved 30.05.2022)

Ultimately, the question of whether what John has seen will now more or less literally appear is beside the point. In any case, an enormous plague will pour down on the earth, which will drive many people to the brink of despair and trigger to wish themselves to be dead.

When this extremely painful plague will have finally subsided, another terrible event is already approaching the earth. When the sixth angel trumpets, a strange army of 200 million will be sent out over the whole earth. These beings are depicted to us as horses with mouths like lions and tails like snakes. Led by four specially prepared angels, they will kill a very large number of people. A *third of* all people die from the effects of "fire, smoke and brimstone" coming from the lion-like mouths of those beings. Many of the survivors are tormented by the snake-like tails.

Again, I admit: I do not know how these beings - symbolically described as horses - will actually become visible in the world. But let us remember that horses with coloured riders on them already appear in chapter 6 of Revelation, where they parable various kinds of death such as wars, famines and pestilences. And let us be clear that precisely such events with mass deaths have already become reality, for example, in the two world wars and in various worldwide epidemics. Therefore, I have no

doubt that the coloured horsemen in Revelation 9, verses 16 to 19, will also find their tragic realisation in further mass deaths.

Although I do not know exactly what the horses in chapter nine stand for, I venture a scenario here of what the mass death and plagues by these 200 million "mounted" *could possibly* look like.

Let us first imagine the state the world will be in after the fifth trumpet: Severe environmental and health catastrophes will have probably killed millions of people within a few years or decades. Those who have not died from them and are still alive will have gone through terrible suffering and have lost friends, relatives and neighbours under the most painful circumstances. It is to be assumed that on the whole earth no human being - apart from the fortunate sealed ones - will exist who has remained untouched by these events. Countless children will grow up as orphans; the general care for them will collapse in the chaotic turmoil of that time and many of them will make their way on the streets or as "child soldiers". As a result of such mass suffering and death, there will be an unimaginable brutalisation and moral disinhibition. Ethical standards will be massively shifted compared to today's moderate Western world. Solidarity and charity will then be very rare; instead, the character of most people will probably be characterised by a brutal and selfish will to survive.

In this situation, there might then be a kind of generalised self-arming. Massacres and shootings, which we hear about now and then from everyday life in the US, the Mexican drug war or gang crime in cities like Berlin and Malmö, could be part of the terrible new "normality" in that completely unhinged world. In their desperate search for survival, the threshold for armed robbery and murder will then be very low for many people. Individual gunmen will flock to gangs; anarchy and gang warfare on an unprecedented scale will spread. Fire, smoke and brimstone, in this sense, could be the hallmarks of the mass use of private firearms, to which countless people will gradually fall victim.³⁴ Two hundred million gang members, each of whom kills an average of ten other people: that makes a rough estimate of two billion dead and could thus well wipe out a third of humanity that is still alive at that time. That sounds horrific, but unfortunately not entirely unrealistic.

The snake-like tails of the horses could be symbolic of the almost diabolical deceitfulness and unpredictability of the people at that time: Through unrestrained cheating, theft, looting, rape and every other kind of violent crime and lawbreaking, the armed gangs will make the lives of the rest of the people very dismal.

As I said - this is just a scenario that comes to mind. Perhaps it will play out differently. In any case, the horrors of the sixth angel's trumpet will wipe out a third of all human life, and the remaining humanity will be in a state of widespread anarchy and moral decay. Nevertheless, a general conversion to God will not take place.

Before the further events of judgement are described by the signal of the seventh trumpet, there is first an insertion in the form of the 10th chapter as well as in verses 1 to 14 of the 11th chapter.

³⁴ And those who have no firearms resort to machetes, axes, clubs or knives. The tragic genocide in Rwanda in 1994 proves how horrifically effective even such "archaic" weapons can be: Within about three months, they were used to kill presumably close to one million people, and many more were seriously injured and maimed. (https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/V%C3%B6lker_mord_in_Ruanda; retrieved 29.05.2022)

Revelation 10th Chapter

1 And I saw another mighty angel come down from heaven, clothed with a cloud: and a rainbow was upon his head, and his face was as it were the sun, and his feet as pillars of fire: 2 And he had in his hand a little book open: and he set his right foot upon the sea, and his left foot on the earth, 3 And cried with a loud voice, as when a lion roareth: and when he had cried, seven thunders uttered their voices. 4 And when the seven thunders had uttered their voices, I was about to write: and I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Seal up those things which the seven thunders uttered, and write them not. 5 And the angel which I saw stand upon the sea and upon the earth lifted up his hand to heaven, 6 And swore by him that liveth for ever and ever, who created heaven, and the things that therein are, and the earth, and the things that therein are, and the sea, and the things which are therein, that there should be time no longer: 7 But in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he shall begin to sound, the mystery of God should be finished, as he hath declared to his servants the prophets. 8 And the voice which I heard from heaven spake unto me again, and said, Go and take the little book which is open in the hand of the angel which standeth upon the sea and upon the earth. 9 And I went unto the angel, and said unto him, Give me the little book. And he said unto me, Take it, and eat it up; and it shall make thy belly bitter, but it shall be in thy mouth sweet as honey. 10 And I took the little book out of the angel's hand, and ate it up; and it was in my mouth sweet as honey: and as soon as I had eaten it, my belly was bitter. 11 And he said unto me, Thou must prophesy again before many peoples, and nations, and tongues, and kings.

This intermediate chapter 10 is similar to the insertion that chapter 7 represents before the opening of the seventh seal. Before the Revelation proceeds to the *really* serious events, it presents the possibility of salvation to the reader through the inserted seventh chapter. It was obviously important to the Holy Spirit to describe this possible way out before He showed the prophet John the actual action of judgement. At the same time, it draws our attention to the two different groups of the saved - namely, the smaller group of the "144,000" who will be caught up to heaven *before the* beginning of the judgment, and the much larger group who will obtain their eternal salvation only *afterwards*, after the beginning of the tribulation period. This is very important information, which is why it precedes the descriptions of the actual judgments.

Chapter 10 also wants to tell us something important before Revelation escalates from what is undoubtedly already very serious to even more painful. To understand this, we should note that the events of judgement come to a head in drama throughout the book of Revelation. Consider this: the first real judgment event begins after the first trumpet at the beginning of chapter eight. In it, a massive worldwide food crisis is announced, with one third of all agricultural land becoming unusable. Now such an event is undoubtedly very serious, but for individuals there can still be hope that they will get through it with a "black eye", so to speak. After all, two-thirds of the arable land can still produce yields, and fishing and worldwide shipping still appear to be intact. So one can imagine that the supply situation will be globally strained, but not yet catastrophic across the board. With the next trumpet, fishing and long-distance trade across the world's oceans will then also be affected, further escalating the crisis, etc. So the drama of the end-time global crisis will unfold gradually, and with a bit of luck a person will die (ideally, having previously recognised and acknowledged Jesus as Lord) before things get *really* bad.

It may sound a little strange, but in the gradual intensification there is a certain chance for every human being: *Perhaps* he or she does not have to go through the whole time of suffering but escapes the intensifications of evil by leaving early.

Before the events reach their absolute climax and captivate the reader, the Holy Spirit wants to tell us some important points in chapter 10. They are obviously so important that we should not miss them in the description of the final drama.

I summarise these as follows:

- Verse 1: The climax of the horrors - which is at the same time the absolute low point of the entire history of mankind and which will occur from the seventh angel's trumpet onwards - is the satanic terror regime of the two "beasts" according to chapter 13. Although this marks the beginning of a truly horrific phase of the entire history of mankind, in which the devil is given more power over the whole earth than ever before, we are not to be deceived: Those events are also known to God! For the prophecy about this is provided to John by a mighty angel who comes down from heaven. That means: God Himself will direct and nothing escapes His knowledge - not even during that penultimate uprising of fanatical evil.
- Verses 2 and 10: There are a number of significant things about the end-time events that are revealed to us in John's prophecy - this is what the opened booklet stands for.
- Verses 3 and 4: But there are also some facts that we will not know - this is what the sealed messages of the seven thunders stand for, which will not be handed down to us. Beyond the events foretold to us, there will also be surprises in those end times.
- Verses 6 and 7: The opportunity described above through the gradual and, so to speak, "slowed down" unfolding of the final judgement is over from this point on: According to verses 6 and 7 of the 10th chapter, with the sounding of the seventh angel's trumpet every time limit has expired and every postponement has been forfeited. The judgement of all evil and the ungodly, which has been announced to God's prophets since time immemorial, will from that point on run swiftly and inevitably towards its completion.
- Verses 8 to 10: The booklet with the prophecies about the final culmination of the final judgement seems sweet and bitter to John at the same time. I think this is to tell us the following: The sweetness is the expression that that divine judgement is fully just and even forms the prerequisite for a new, better world to be brought forth. This is the pleasant aspect, and therefore this judgment was proclaimed to all the prophets as good news; cf. verse 7. The unpleasant, "bitter" aspect is that the final judgment will be a profoundly terrible thing. For in spite of God's wrath punishments having already expired, by which many human lives will have been extinguished by that time, many people will still be on earth. (I assume that their total number will still be far more than a billion). And all these people will soon be subjected to the most brutal, ruthless, deceitful system of government and religion; worse than all the horrors that have ever existed on earth before. This is truly bitter.³⁵

At this point I would like to make a very important remark with regard to verses 6 and 7, i.e., with regard to the expired deadline. Generally speaking, the book of Revelation of John announces very bad things. And every person who has a little heart and empathy should ask himself: Does it really have to come to this? Does God's judgement of wrath really have to come upon people with such tremendous acts of punishment? Is all this really inevitable?

The question is good and right, and it deserves a good answer. If we read the Old Testament prophetic books carefully - I would like to refer especially to the books of Isaiah, Jeremiah and Jonah - we find the following. In principle, God is almost always ready to avert his wrathful judgements and to show mercy. The prerequisite for this is that people sincerely repent and respect God's commandments from

³⁵ Compare also Ezk 2,9.10: There another prophet is in a similar situation; he is handed a divine writing to eat. There it is also explained what is written on it: "And there were written thereon lamentations and groanings and cries of woe."

the heart (and not only outwardly). This offer of grace is proclaimed especially in the person of the Lord Jesus and in the Good News throughout the whole earth, and it has been accepted by many.

Therefore, one can say: In principle, the final judgements shown to John in his great vision would also be avoidable. This would require that all people turn to Jesus with their whole heart and follow his teachings with all seriousness and strength and ability. I would go so far as to say that it would still be possible up to the events of the sixth trumpet for God to stop His holy judgment if people behaved accordingly. I do not want to judge here how likely such a scenario is - but it is possible and conceivable.

However, I also understand from these verses 6 and 7 that once events have progressed to the seventh trumpet, there is no stopping them. Once the devil will be allowed to establish his kingdom and power unrestrictedly on the whole earth, then the consequences will continue unalterably until their end - exactly as the Revelation book describes it!

After the conclusion of the 10th chapter, there is again a short insertion of 14 verses, namely the beginning of the 11th chapter. The first verses of chapter 11 show us events in a very specific place in the world, namely Jerusalem. The things that will happen there still belong to the second "Woe!" and bring this to its conclusion (Rev. 11:14).

Revelation 11th chapter

1 And there was given me a reed like unto a rod: and the angel stood, saying, Rise, and measure the temple of God, and the altar, and them that worship therein. 2 But the court which is without the temple leave out, and measure it not; for it is given unto the Gentiles: and the holy city shall they tread under foot forty and two months. 3 And I will give power unto my two witnesses, and they shall prophesy a thousand two hundred and threescore days, clothed in sackcloth. 4 These are the two olive trees, and the two candlesticks standing before the God of the earth. 5 And if any man will hurt them, fire proceedeth out of their mouth, and devoureth their enemies: and if any man will hurt them, he must in this manner be killed. 6 These have power to shut heaven, that it rain not in the days of their prophecy: and have power over waters to turn them to blood, and to smite the earth with all plagues, as often as they will. 7 And when they shall have finished their testimony, the beast that ascendeth out of the bottomless pit shall make war against them, and shall overcome them, and kill them. 8 And their dead bodies shall lie in the street of the great city, which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also our Lord was crucified. 9 And they of the people and kindreds and tongues and nations shall see their dead bodies three days and an half, and shall not suffer their dead bodies to be put in graves. 10 And they that dwell upon the earth shall rejoice over them, and make merry, and shall send gifts one to another; because these two prophets tormented them that dwelt on the earth. 11 And after three days and an half the Spirit of life from God entered into them, and they stood upon their feet; and great fear fell upon them which saw them. 12 And they heard a great voice from heaven saying unto them, Come up hither. And they ascended up to heaven in a cloud; and their enemies beheld them. 13 And the same hour was there a great earthquake, and the tenth part of the city fell, and in the earthquake were slain of men seven thousand: and the remnant were affrighted, and gave glory to the God of heaven. 14 The second woe is past; and, behold, the third woe cometh quickly.

15 And the seventh angel sounded; and there were great voices in heaven, saying, The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever. 16 And the four and twenty elders, which sat before God on their seats, fell upon their faces, and worshipped God, 17 Saying, We give thee thanks, O Lord God Almighty, which art, and wast, and art to come; because thou hast taken to thee thy great power, and hast reigned. 18 And the nations were angry, and thy wrath is come, and the time of the dead, that they should be judged, and that thou shouldest give reward unto thy servants the prophets, and to the saints, and them that fear thy name, small and great; and shouldest destroy them which destroy the earth. 19 And the temple of God was opened in heaven, and there was seen in his temple the ark of his testament: and there were lightnings, and voices, and thunderings, and an earthquake, and great hail.

Verses 1 to 14 of this chapter appear as an insertion in the general historical sequence of the final judgement, which is called by the seven angels' trumpets. These verses deal specifically with the fate of "carnal" Israel, i.e., those descendants of the twelve sons of Jacob who had not found Jesus before the beginning of the end times and were consequently left on earth for the end time turmoil.

The measurement in verses 1 and 2 is a parable for a precise inventory that God is taking here. Before His further judicial action begins, He will gain a precise insight into who are His worshippers in the true sanctuary and who are only superficially (in the "outer court") attached to Him.³⁶ These "outer court" Israelites will be exposed to renewed domination by gentiles. So while Jerusalem is again ruled by

³⁶ The statements in the first two verses of the eleventh chapter of Revelation are not necessarily to be interpreted as an indication that there will actually be another temple in Jerusalem. The mention of the temple in these passages could be meant as a parable.

foreign powers, powerful prophets appear there. These will be endowed with great authority from God to speak his word. For a limited period of time they will preach and teach, and they will have the ability to destroy their enemies and adversaries with mighty acts of power. By the actions of these two prophets we clearly recognise that the time of grace on earth has expired. For they act very differently from what Jesus commanded the Christian Church to do: in them we see not a trace of love of enemies, but judicial action. These prophets, who are active in Jerusalem in chapter 11, are similar to the men of God of the Old Testament, especially Moses and Elijah.

So, in those days, earthly Jerusalem once again becomes a divine place. One can imagine countless microphones and cameras recording the miraculous words and deeds of the two men of God and transmitting them to the whole world. The whole world will be watching Jerusalem. After their appointed time, however, an earthly ruler described as a "beast from the abyss" and endowed with diabolical-supernatural power will overcome and kill these two.³⁷ People all over the world will rejoice because they think that with the passing away of the two heavenly messengers the plagues have come to an end. What a mistake! But after a few days God will revive them and they will ascend straight to heaven. Imagine that: While the cameras are still irreverently showing their two unburied corpses, life will come to them again. They rise and a cloud takes them away from the earth! The world public will be there live, and the amazement will be almost boundless.³⁸ A destructive earthquake will occur in Jerusalem, killing about 7,000 people.

It is very remarkable that the words of these men of God, which will be accompanied by extraordinary deeds of power, will not bring about a general change towards a general fear of God. It is terrible that the hearts of some people are so hardened that even forceful words and astonishing miracles do not lead them to repentance! However, this is similar to the spiritual darkness in Egypt in Moses' time, and also to the hardening of large parts of Judaism during the time of the earthly ministry of the Lord Jesus. In those times, too, great miracles of God took place before the eyes of many people, and yet many refused to give God the glory, or did so only superficially. The resurrection of the two who were killed will indeed bring about a certain rethinking here, because it is completely obvious that God is working miraculously on them. However, it is to be feared that this too will not last long, for many people in Egypt in Moses' time were just as superficial, and just as many Israelites during Jesus' life on earth.

From the 15th verse onwards, the further progress of the general final judgement is described. The scene of the vision changes from earthly Jerusalem to heaven. The angel with the seventh trumpet appears. This seventh trumpet announces the final assumption of power by the Lord Jesus as well as the final judicial action of God. The God-fearing, from the greatest to the smallest, are promised their reward, while the wicked, who corrupt the whole earth, are announced their just punishment.

It is remarkable that at that moment in heaven God's seizure of power is praised and extolled. At first glance, this is surprising: Wasn't God or isn't God always the Lord over all and everything anyway? And who would know this better than those beings who are around Him in heaven?

The meaning of the proclamation of power in this 11th chapter is the following. Over a long period of time, God has often let mercy go before justice. In His unfathomable and unswerving patience, He has

³⁷ In my opinion it is exactly the same "beast" as in chapters 13 and 17. It fits that the murder of the two prophets in Jerusalem marks the conclusion of the second "Woe!". When the satanic ruler has come to power, the elimination of the two prophets will possibly be one of his first acts. With this, the third "Woe!" dawns.

³⁸ It is remarkable that the reputation of the satanically inspired "beast" is not permanently damaged by the resurrection and ascension of the two prophets. One would think that this event should make it clear to everyone that there is an even greater power above the "beast". But it must be remembered that this false miracle worker receives his seductive spiritual power from "right above". Those who are not ordained by God for salvation will not be able to resist the sweet poison of seduction despite the miracle of the resurrection of the two prophets. Cf. 2Thess. 2:8-12.

left many wickedness's and sins unpunished. And God has done this to such an extent that many wise and God-fearing people have reached the limits of their understanding. The Bible contains several passages in which people express their lack of understanding as to why God allows so much evil without intervening with judgement.³⁹ After all, in the time between Jesus' appearance and the beginning of his judgement, it was God's explicit command that even ungodly people should be blessed with peace and mercy.

So, in a certain sense, it was the case for a long time that God actually did not use His judging authority and power - or at least only to a limited extent. With the seventh trumpet, however, this period of divine patience has now definitely come to an end. For now it is finally made clear: Only those people who are already in the Book of Life will be able to resist the emerging satanic system of government on earth to the extent that they will not commit the unforgivable sacrilege of false worship. All others will *have to* tread the path of lies and resistance against God with terrible consequence, which will ultimately end for them in the lake of fire, i.e., in the second and final death. God can no longer be mocked, and the wicked will reap the terrible consequences of their wickedness without being able to do anything about it.

This is the meaning of God's proclamation of power in this passage: God now gives free rein to His final judgement on the wrath and turmoil of the ungodly inhabitants of the earth. Just as the righteous man Lot was tormented by the misdeeds of the inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah, so the godly have been burdened and depressed at all times and in all places by the ungodliness of their fellow men. Therefore, there is something liberating about the divine act of judgement - as terrible as its effects will be.

While the seventh trumpet is already blown here, in the second part of chapter 11, and the praise of God's redeeming power breaks through afterwards, the actual course of the seventh trumpet events on earth is only described from the beginning of chapter 13. In chapter 12, this assumption of power by Jesus, which at the same time means the removal of Satan from power, is explained in more detail.

³⁹ cf. Hi. 21:7-15; Jer. 12:1.2; Hab. 2-4; Ps. 73:3-12 etc.

Revelation 12th Chapter

1 And there appeared a great wonder in heaven; a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars: 2 And she being with child cried, travailing in birth, and pained to be delivered. 3 And there appeared another wonder in heaven; and behold a great red dragon, having seven heads and ten horns, and seven crowns upon his heads. 4 And his tail drew the third part of the stars of heaven, and did cast them to the earth: and the dragon stood before the woman which was ready to be delivered, for to devour her child as soon as it was born. 5 And she brought forth a man child, who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron: and her child was caught up unto God, and to his throne. 6 And the woman fled into the wilderness, where she hath a place prepared of God, that they should feed her there a thousand two hundred and threescore days. 7 And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels, 8 And prevailed not; neither was their place found any more in heaven. 9 And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him. 10 And I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night. 11 And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death. 12 Therefore rejoice, ye heavens, and ye that dwell in them. Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and of the sea! for the devil is come down unto you, having great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time. 13 And when the dragon saw that he was cast unto the earth, he persecuted the woman which brought forth the man child. 14 And to the woman were given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness, into her place, where she is nourished for a time, and times, and half a time, from the face of the serpent. 15 And the serpent cast out of his mouth water as a flood after the woman, that he might cause her to be carried away of the flood. 16 And the earth helped the woman, and the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed up the flood which the dragon cast out of his mouth. 17 And the dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.

The 12th chapter is again an insertion and offers a brief summary of the redemptive journey of humanity through Jesus Christ. The logic of this interpolated chapter is the following in its essential features:

- Verses 1 to 5: The approaching birth of the Lord Jesus, who is of divine gender (therefore his mother is also endowed with the characteristics of heaven), the devil tries to stop; but in vain. Jesus survives all the devil's attempts and is finally caught up to God's throne.
- Verses 10 and 11: Here we are reminded, very briefly, that the dominion over all humanity, which the devil had gained by means of his deception of Adam and Eve, was ended by the death of Jesus on the cross. The shed blood of the Son of God frees every human being who believes and confesses it from the power of Satan.
- Verses 7 to 12: After the devil has been driven out of heaven by the superiority of the good angels,⁴⁰ he can only work on earth. Satan's main activity, namely that he appeared before God as the accuser of the saints, was thus stopped.

⁴⁰ Luke 10:18: "But Jesus said to them: I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven. "; likewise in John 12:31.

- Verse 17: Since he can no longer exercise his opposition to truth and life (both of which are personified by Jesus) in heaven, he operates on earth as a fierce persecutor of Christian believers.⁴¹

This twelfth chapter is a summary of the events concerning the birth of the Lord Jesus, his act of deliverance on the cross and the history of the Christian church. They clearly show the devil (i.e., the fiery red dragon) in his actual element; namely, eagerly endeavouring to devour the male child, who on the one hand will rule all the world (Jesus as the ruler of the world) and, moreover, is able to liberate all the world (namely, through his death on the cross). As we know from the Gospels, the devil tried to do this several times: in the infanticide of Bethlehem; in his temptation of the Lord Jesus ("Throw yourself down from the battlements of the temple!"); and finally in the murder of the Lord Jesus, in which he was executed like a criminal by the united godlessness of the leaders of the Jews and the world power Rome. But God did not leave Jesus in death but caused Him to be resurrected and then caught up to the throne of God. A power struggle also took place in heaven, in which the devil was defeated and as a result his right of residence in the heavenly places finally ended; he was thrown out of there. This was a cause for celebration and rejoicing up in heaven, but at the same time a cause for serious concern down here on earth.

The woman is the true divine Israel (cf. the dream of Jacob's son Joseph in Gen. 37:9). The mother of the Lord, Mary (Miriam), is, so to speak, a personification of this divine Israel: a pure young woman who was descended from the Israelites because of her physical origin. She found special favour with God and as a result was chosen to give birth to the Saviour on earth. It is important to realise that we do not have to think here primarily of a distinction between the old and the new covenant, but of a *continuity*. For let us consider the mother of Jesus herself: She was a Jewish woman who undoubtedly kept the Mosaic Law, as far as that is at all possible for a human being. Above all, however, she trusted God, who gave her a promise that, humanly speaking, was impossible to fulfil. Mary did not understand all the details of it at first, but she gave God the glory anyway. Later she belonged to the Christian early church (Acts 1:14) and in this respect embodies the continuity between the old and the new covenant. The fact that the new people of God then explicitly also accepted people from other peoples and nations, and that those non-Jewish believers even soon made up the numerical majority, does not change the fact that Christianity is fundamentally about a *continuation*; albeit on a qualitatively much higher level.

The old theological question of whether the woman in chapter 12 is identified as either the Jewish people or Mary or the Christian Church can be answered in this way: This woman represents the *Israel of God*. This Israel of God is personified in a special way in Mary, the mother of Jesus. Everyone who trusts God belongs to His people - whether before the revelation of Jesus as Messiah or after.

Let us look briefly at a detail of verse 4. There John saw the devil cast a third of the stars from heaven to earth in connection with the birth of the Lord Jesus. Such a "shower of stars" is strangely not recorded anywhere in the Gospels; the only notable star in it is the one that points the magi from the East to Bethlehem. It can therefore be assumed that this "rain of stars" is to be understood symbolically. But what does it mean?

In the Holy Scriptures, stars often symbolise powers. These can be, for example, angels, princes, chiefs - or also spirits.⁴² When we read the Gospels, we notice that during the lifetime of the Lord Jesus, a very large number of evil spirits were on earth and were up to mischief. For the Lord was, so to speak,

⁴¹ Cf. 1Petr 5:8: "The devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour."

⁴² https://de.wikisource.org/wiki/Christliche_Symbolik/Sterne; cf. also the star at the birth of the Lord Jesus as well as Rev. 1:20.

constantly busy casting such spirits out of people.⁴³ Now the Old Testament scriptures, which are quite extensive and contain many complaints, do not contain any reports of a comparable abundance of such evil spirits that had previously plagued the Jewish-Israelite people. To this extent, this seems to have been the case especially during the time of Jesus' ministry on earth. The vision of the stars cast down to earth, shortly before the earthly birth of the Lord, would offer a possible explanation for this, if we interpret the stars as evil spirit beings. It would also fit that they are cast down by the devil. For it seems plausible that Satan had authority over the evil spirits and could cast them away from heaven if he so wished.

Verse 17 then describes the true church being persecuted and attacked by Satan. The 1,260 days could mean years; some commentators interpret this as a prediction of the period of time during which the church of true believers in Jesus was persecuted by the Roman papacy.

⁴³ In the Gospels we only get detailed descriptions of individual cases of demon exorcisms; many such events are only briefly outlined there. In any case, the last verse of John's Gospel gives the impression that such deeds occurred in incomprehensible multitude: "But there are also many other things which Jesus did; if these were all written down one by one, it seems to me that even the world would not contain the written books." (John 21:25)

Revelation 13th chapter

1 And I stood upon the sand of the sea, and saw a beast rise up out of the sea, having seven heads and ten horns, and upon his horns ten crowns, and upon his heads the name of blasphemy. 2 And the beast which I saw was like unto a leopard, and his feet were as the feet of a bear, and his mouth as the mouth of a lion: and the dragon gave him his power, and his seat, and great authority. 3 And I saw one of his heads as it were wounded to death; and his deadly wound was healed: and all the world wondered after the beast. 4 And they worshipped the dragon which gave power unto the beast: and they worshipped the beast, saying, Who is like unto the beast? who is able to make war with him? 5 And there was given unto him a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies; and power was given unto him to continue forty and two months. 6 And he opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme his name, and his tabernacle, and them that dwell in heaven. 7 And it was given unto him to make war with the saints, and to overcome them: and power was given him over all kindreds, and tongues, and nations. 8 And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. 9 If any man have an ear, let him hear. 10 He that leadeth into captivity shall go into captivity: he that killeth with the sword must be killed with the sword. Here is the patience and the faith of the saints. 11 And I beheld another beast coming up out of the earth; and he had two horns like a lamb, and he spake as a dragon. 12 And he exerciseth all the power of the first beast before him, and causeth the earth and them which dwell therein to worship the first beast, whose deadly wound was healed. 13 And he doeth great wonders, so that he maketh fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men, 14 And deceiveth them that dwell on the earth by the means of those miracles which he had power to do in the sight of the beast; saying to them that dwell on the earth, that they should make an image to the beast, which had the wound by a sword, and did live. 15 And he had power to give life unto the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak, and cause that as many as would not worship the image of the beast should be killed. 16 And he causeth all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond, to receive a mark in their right hand, or in their foreheads: 17 And that no man might buy or sell, save he that had the mark, or the name of the beast, or the number of his name. 18 Here is wisdom. Let him that hath understanding count the number of the beast: for it is the number of a man; and his number is Six hundred threescore and six.

This is a difficult chapter. It describes how Satan finally establishes a profoundly anti-Christian and anti-divine regime of terror throughout the earth.⁴⁴ In this chapter, three beings are described to us, each of which has fearsome power and wickedness. It is quite clear, in the context of chapter 11, that the author of the activities in this chapter is Satan. He is the dragon of verse 2b, who, however, will not ostensibly operate himself, but will place his power at the disposal of other beings and rulers.

First, there is a beast that rises from the sea. In the Revelation, the sea usually stands as a symbol for the mass of peoples and nations. So out of the multitudes of the earth will emerge a being that will have a predatory character, for it is described as a mixture of panther, bear and lion. The being will thus be equally swift, powerful and domineering; without pity and without mercy; excessive in its urge for prey and power. At the same time, symbols of superior kingship are attributed to him: ten horns adorned with diadems and seven heads showing names of blasphemy (against God and Christ respectively).

⁴⁴ The fact that God allows him to do this is part of the eschatological judgement on the unrepentant part of humanity. The worldwide seduction by Satan is the climax of the end-time tribulations, at the same time it initiates the final destruction of the adversary.

Some commentators see in this being a successor to the ancient Roman emperors. I am somewhat sceptical about this. It is true that the Roman Empire fell, and to that extent one could indeed marvel at its resurrection in our modern times. But would that be enough to give its leader adoration?

In any case, this first beast stands for a very powerful person who, however, will not work alone. On the one hand, we see seven heads with him. This means that in some way the first beast will embody a majority of people; this could mean, for example, a succession of rulers in a powerful office, or a body of leaders with a prominent individual at the head. It is also supported by someone who is described as another animal. Indeed, this second person will be like a lamb; will thus appear at first sight to be a peaceable, even downright weak person; but in connection with a powerful speaking ability "like a dragon" (verse 11b). That is why many commentators call him the Antichrist; he will appear as a kind of Jesus-imitator. This person, who is gifted with impressive natural as well as supernatural abilities, will draw all attention to the first beast as a kind of prophet; especially to his resurrection from death, after one of his heads was mortally wounded.

With regard to the character of the second beast, I have to think of Joseph Goebbels, Hitler's chief propagandist. Goebbels was outwardly a rather slight man who had a fine academic education up to and including a doctorate, as well as brilliant rhetorical skills. He could flatter as well as denounce and was also able to argue with apparent logic. If Hitler was the one who tended to stir up the masses in the beer tent, Goebbels also excelled in front of the middle class, the educated and intellectuals.

The German Wikipedia describes his work as follows: "Through the combination of demagogic rhetoric, planned choreographed mass events and effective use of modern technology for propaganda purposes...Joseph Goebbels succeeded in indoctrinating large sections of the German people for National Socialism as well as defaming Jews and Communists. Through anti-Semitic propaganda and actions such as the November pogroms of 1938, he ideologically prepared the...extermination of Jews and other minorities and is thus considered one of the decisive precursors of the Holocaust.... His infamous Sports Palace speech...in which he called on the population for "total war" exemplifies the manipulation of the population."

In a similar way, the false end-time Christ will probably also serve the predator-like ruler; in comparison with Goebbels, however, supplemented by supernatural abilities. For this reason, I am rather sceptical about interpreting this 13th chapter of Revelation as a kind of "new Rome". It is certainly true that the cruelty of persecution under the two "beasts" will be similar to that under certain Roman emperors. But overall, I would expect the appearance of that coming totalitarian dictatorship to be modern; it will probably use digital technologies and a contemporary style of propaganda.

Both "beasts" will receive their power from Satan himself, and in their cooperation they will establish a worldwide dominion from which there will be no escape. Through their regime of terror they will force all people on earth to worship the image of the first beast. Those who refuse to do so will face the death penalty or imprisonment, or at best will be forced into a niche existence beyond the normal economic cycle ("no buying, no selling").

In this 13th chapter, a reign over the whole earth is announced, in which ruthless brutality and cunning seduction will mix extremely effectively, and from which one can only be saved by divine assistance. This is why verse 8 says: No one will be able to resist these satanic deeds of power except those who are inscribed by God in the book of life. Through human will alone, neither resistance nor escape will be possible!

Now there may be people who doubt that such a global reign of terror can be established. Won't there be some kind of resistance? To all those who doubt that such a seizure of power is possible, I would like to remind you of two things.

One is the Nazi takeover of Germany in the 1930s; the second is the global events surrounding the Covid epidemic in the 2020s.

The story surrounding Hitler and the Nazis is interesting because it shows how quickly a democracy, even in a country with a centuries-long Christian and humanist tradition, can slip into a diabolical dictatorship. The processes of that time were quite complex and there is not enough space here to recount them in detail. But I would like to briefly summarise the essential facts. Germany was among the defeated powers of the First World War. In addition to high losses of people and goods, it was therefore obliged to pay substantial financial reparations. In addition, there was a demoralisation of the population and a disintegration of the established order as a result of the abdication of all German princely houses, including the Hohenzollern Emperor Wilhelm II, within a short period of time in 1918. The new democratic leadership structures established themselves in an unstable environment. For example, extreme economic upheavals occurred, such as the hyperinflation in 1923 and the world economic crisis triggered by the crash of the New York Stock Exchange in October 1929. Mass impoverishment and numerous collapses of companies and banks were the result. Large sections of the population in Germany were starving and starving without the established parties being able to provide effective relief. In this demoralising environment, Hitler's party, the NSDAP, did rise rapidly to become the political force with the largest number of voters in Germany. But it should be emphasised that at no time was it able to win an absolute majority in democratic elections. At the time of its highest electoral favourability, namely in the vote for the German Reichstag in July 1932, the NSDAP received about 37% of all electoral votes, i.e., only a little more than one third. In the following ballot in November 1932, approval even dropped slightly to only about 33 %. It therefore took a complex sequence of political missteps in Germany for Hitler to rise to the top of the executive power and then ruthlessly establish the totalitarian tyranny of the Nazis. Presumably, the German political elite would never have paved the way to power for Hitler if they had been aware of the horrific events that would unfold. But a disastrous chain of misjudgements and wrong actions, the story of which reads like a political thriller, led to exactly that.

Ask yourself whether Hitler's rise was in accordance with human logic: an Austrian-born private who, within fifteen years, overran and outwitted Germany's entire political and economic elite; who was hailed as a "saviour" figure among the people of Goethe, Schiller, Bach, Beethoven, Schubert and Hegel, and then set up one of the most brutal reigns in all of European history. Personally, I do not find this logical at all. If I did not know it happened, I would hardly accept it as true. Nevertheless, it did happen, and it can happen again.

Let us also take a look at what was happening around the world with the Covid 19 epidemic. This infectious disease spread relatively rapidly globally from 2020 onwards and led to some spectacular overloads of clinics and national health systems. As a result, civil, economic and religious liberties were massively restricted - and in some cases completely suspended - in all democratic countries of the world, including the USA, on the grounds of disease control. Bans on going out, contact bans, assembly bans, travel bans, work bans, shopping bans - the list of bans is too long to reproduce here in full. In addition, many citizens were obliged to be vaccinated several times; either directly or indirectly. Even though there are certainly certain reasons for this de facto compulsion - it nevertheless represents a profound encroachment on the right to personal bodily integrity and is in this respect nevertheless very questionable.

I cannot discuss the reasonableness and proportionality of all these measures at this point, but just wish to remind us: in practically all democratic countries, they were decided by the parliaments, implemented by governments and authorities, and in many cases also approved by various courts! Let us be honest: Have not many of us in the West more than once said: "I would never have thought such a thing possible in our country! "

Let us now consider that the establishment of the satanically inspired end-time dictatorship will take place in a global environment where much more dramatic things will have happened before than Covid-19! Revelation chapters 8 and 9 speak of very severe environmental and health disasters that will cause mass suffering and death worldwide. I hate to write this, but those coming events will make today's climate change and Covid-19 look like child's play.

That is to say: The Beast and the Antichrist according to the 13th chapter will emerge in a hard-beaten world; in a world that will have lost all its supposed certainties to a much greater extent than was the case in the Covid years of 2020 to 2022, or in the 1930s in Germany. And these two vile figures will appear much more seductive than any seducer before, for their work will be accompanied by strong supernatural phenomena. The interplay of panic and confusion throughout the earth on the one hand, and overwhelming signs of power from the diabolical duo on the other, will pave the way for them to achieve an unparalleled abundance of power. The brief review of history should therefore cure us of any illusion: That diabolical system will certainly come to power when the time comes - even if this may seem improbable to us from today's perspective.

Finally, I would like to point out that I am convinced that future events are described in this 13th chapter. I do not share the widespread interpretation that this is primarily about the completed history of the persecution of Christians in the Roman Empire. Of course, it is true that various Revelation 13-type regimes already existed. Certain Roman emperors belong to it, also tyrants like Stalin, the North Korean Kim dynasty as well as Hitler and Goebbels, and so on. Nevertheless - and this is what is special! - at the end of time, a regime will be put in place which, on the one hand, will be unrestrictedly globally effective and from which, on the other hand, there will really be no escape, presumably supported by modern technologies, because all loopholes will have been eliminated. One only has to inform oneself about the complete surveillance that is already possible today through modern digital systems; and this does not even include the latest inventions, such as quantum computers.

Moreover, the supernatural component of seduction will be even more pronounced in that end-time system of rule than was ever the case before. A speaking image has not been handed down from the time of the Roman emperors, who allowed themselves to be worshipped like gods, nor from any other bloodthirsty anti-Christian dictatorship.

Now I have to make a connection to a later chapter of Revelation. This is because the brutal beast from chapter 13 is mentioned again in almost the same words, namely in chapter 17. This is shown in the following tabular comparison.

Table 2: Comparison of the characteristics of the "beasts" in chapters 13 and 17 of Revelation

<i>Characteristics of the first beast in chapter 13</i>	<i>Marks of the beast in Chapter 17</i>
it emerges from the sea (v. 1)	it emerges from the abyss (v. 8)
it has ten horns and seven heads, and on its horns ten diadems, and on its heads names of blasphemy (v. 1)	it is full of blasphemous names and has seven heads and ten horns (v. 3)
	its seven heads mean seven hills, but also seven kings; it is itself both an eighth king and one of the seven, and goes to destruction (and this presumably as a result of the war it wages against God/Jesus, as described in more detail in chapter 19)

it is mortally wounded; but this wound is miraculously healed, which contributes to the great amazement of many people (v. 3)	it was there before, had disappeared and reappears, to the great amazement of many people (v. 8)
it receives its power from the dragon, i.e., from the devil (v. 4)	it is scarlet, similar to the dragon/devil according to ch. 12, v. 3
it seduces, together with the devil himself and with the help of the false prophet (i.e., the second beast from ch. 13), the political leaders of the earth to a war against God (cf. ch. 16:13.14), but is defeated in it by Jesus (cf. ch. 19:11-20)	it will wage war against Jesus (v. 14)

The seven heads and ten horns are the same for both beasts, as are the names of the blasphemy. This characterisation makes them similar to the devil, for seven heads and ten horns is also the dragon in chapter 12 verse 3, which is there explicitly identified as the devil. This similarity of description underlines that this beast is endowed with the authority of the devil himself; that these two are in a sense related.

For me, the characteristics of the two "beasts" in Revelation 13 and 17 are so similar that I assume that both texts are about the same person. In my commentary on chapter 17, I go into more detail about how chapters 13, 17, 18 and 19 are interconnected in terms of content.

Revelation 14th and 15th Chapters

1 And I looked, and, lo, a Lamb stood on the mount Sion, and with him an hundred forty and four thousand, having his Father's name written in their foreheads. 2 And I heard a voice from heaven, as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of a great thunder: and I heard the voice of harpers harping with their harps: 3 And they sung as it were a new song before the throne, and before the four beasts, and the elders: and no man could learn that song but the hundred and forty and four thousand, which were redeemed from the earth. 4 These are they which were not defiled with women; for they are virgins. These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth. These were redeemed from among men, being the firstfruits unto God and to the Lamb. 5 And in their mouth was found no guile: for they are without fault before the throne of God. 6 And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people, 7 Saying with a loud voice, Fear God, and give glory to him; for the hour of his judgment is come: and worship him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters. 8 And there followed another angel, saying, Babylon is fallen, is fallen, that great city, because she made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication. 9 And the third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, If any man worship the beast and his image, and receive his mark in his forehead, or in his hand, 10 The same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation; and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb: 11 And the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever: and they have no rest day nor night, who worship the beast and his image, and whosoever receiveth the mark of his name. 12 Here is the patience of the saints: here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus. 13 And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them. 14 And I looked, and behold a white cloud, and upon the cloud one sat like unto the Son of man, having on his head a golden crown, and in his hand a sharp sickle. 15 And another angel came out of the temple, crying with a loud voice to him that sat on the cloud, Thrust in thy sickle, and reap: for the time is come for thee to reap; for the harvest of the earth is ripe. 16 And he that sat on the cloud thrust in his sickle on the earth; and the earth was reaped. 17 And another angel came out of the temple which is in heaven, he also having a sharp sickle. 18 And another angel came out from the altar, which had power over fire; and cried with a loud cry to him that had the sharp sickle, saying, Thrust in thy sharp sickle, and gather the clusters of the vine of the earth; for her grapes are fully ripe. 19 And the angel thrust in his sickle into the earth, and gathered the vine of the earth, and cast it into the great winepress of the wrath of God. 20 And the winepress was trodden without the city, and blood came out of the winepress, even unto the horse bridles, by the space of a thousand and six hundred furlongs.

Revelation 15th chapter

1 And I saw another sign in heaven, great and marvellous, seven angels having the seven last plagues; for in them is filled up the wrath of God. 2 And I saw as it were a sea of glass mingled with fire: and them that had gotten the victory over the beast, and over his image, and over his mark, and over the number of his name, stand on the sea of glass, having the harps of God. 3 And they sing the song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints. 4 Who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name? for thou only art holy: for all nations shall come and worship before thee; for thy judgments are made manifest. 5 And after that I looked, and, behold, the temple of the tabernacle of the testimony in heaven was opened: 6 And the seven angels came out of the temple, having the seven plagues, clothed in pure and white linen, and having their breasts girded with golden girdles. 7 And one of the four beasts gave unto the seven angels seven golden vials full of the wrath of God, who liveth for

ever and ever. 8 And the temple was filled with smoke from the glory of God, and from his power; and no man was able to enter into the temple, till the seven plagues of the seven angels were fulfilled.

Chapters 14 and 15 summarize the entire end-time event. In the opening verses 1 to 5 of chapter 14, we again encounter the 144,000 blessed ones whom we see as saved before the throne of God. They are honoured to perform there a unique song of praise and worship (which is why the content of that song is not mentioned in the text of Revelation). As already explained in the notes to chapter 7, they have apparently been granted the grace of being spared from the wrathful judgement which the angel announces to all the rest of the people on earth according to the following verses 6 and 7.

In analogy to chapter 7, these 144,000 "first saved" are clearly distinguished from those people who only enter heaven as overcomers from the time of judgement. These, named in chapter 15 verse 2 as overcomers over the beast and its signs, sing a different song; its wording is given to us in verse 3 and 4. That these latter are only later in heaven is also clear from the fact that they are mentioned here in direct connection with the *last* seven plagues. This means that at the moment they appear before the throne of God, various end-time judgments must have already poured down on the earth.

In chapter 14, verses 6 to 13, we are once again reminded of the key points of God's end-time judicial action:

- Worship belongs to the Creator-God alone; even and especially in times of judgement (verse 7).
- Babylon, the "figurehead" of the anti-divine power on earth, is destroyed (verse 8).
- Whoever worships the adversary of God and the Lamb by taking the mark of the beast or of his image, there is no mercy for him (verses 9 to 11).
- Those who may still come to the fear of God in those end times and recognise that Jesus is the Saviour must show extraordinary patience and perseverance (verse 12). For the tribulations of that end-time judgment will be so great that those who are finally allowed to die are to be counted fortunate; at least provided they keep their faith in the Lord until death (verse 13). This is another serious admonition to strive with all one's might to be preserved from that epoch of the Great Tribulation and to belong to those saved beforehand!

From verse 14 to the end, the final judgement is described in striking parables as a harvest action, with a special emphasis on the bloody winepress. The disciples of Jesus heard these parables in a similar way, partly from the Master himself (Mt. 13:30) and partly from John the Baptist (Mt. 3:12). In the OT, comparable visions are described by the prophets Jeremiah and Joel (Jer. 25:30, 31; Joel 3:12).

In chapter 15, the last seven plagues are announced. And as already mentioned above, the late redeemed are also shown here once again: They will be saved, but they will only come up to God out of the terrible tribulation period!

It is worth noting that the angels come directly from the temple with the final plagues of judgement. Therefore, there is no doubt that they really execute God's holy and righteous judgement (verses 6 and 7). As terrible as these final plagues will be - they are based neither on an error nor on an oversight. This is also stated in the following chapter, in verses 5 and 7 of chapter 16.

Revelation Chapter 16

1 And I heard a great voice out of the temple saying to the seven angels, Go your ways, and pour out the vials of the wrath of God upon the earth. 2 And the first went, and poured out his vial upon the earth; and there fell a noisome and grievous sore upon the men which had the mark of the beast, and upon them which worshipped his image. 3 And the second angel poured out his vial upon the sea; and it became as the blood of a dead man: and every living soul died in the sea. 4 And the third angel poured out his vial upon the rivers and fountains of waters; and they became blood. 5 And I heard the angel of the waters say, Thou art righteous, O Lord, which art, and wast, and shalt be, because thou hast judged thus. 6 For they have shed the blood of saints and prophets, and thou hast given them blood to drink; for they are worthy. 7 And I heard another out of the altar say, Even so, Lord God Almighty, true and righteous are thy judgments. 8 And the fourth angel poured out his vial upon the sun; and power was given unto him to scorch men with fire. 9 And men were scorched with great heat, and blasphemed the name of God, which hath power over these plagues: and they repented not to give him glory. 10 And the fifth angel poured out his vial upon the seat of the beast; and his kingdom was full of darkness; and they gnawed their tongues for pain, 11 And blasphemed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores, and repented not of their deeds. 12 And the sixth angel poured out his vial upon the great river Euphrates; and the water thereof was dried up, that the way of the kings of the east might be prepared. 13 And I saw three unclean spirits like frogs come out of the mouth of the dragon, and out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet. 14 For they are the spirits of devils, working miracles, which go forth unto the kings of the earth and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty. 15 Behold, I come as a thief. Blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame. 16 And he gathered them together into a place called in the Hebrew tongue Armageddon. 17 And the seventh angel poured out his vial into the air; and there came a great voice out of the temple of heaven, from the throne, saying, It is done. 18 And there were voices, and thunders, and lightnings; and there was a great earthquake, such as was not since men were upon the earth, so mighty an earthquake, and so great. 19 And the great city was divided into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell: and great Babylon came in remembrance before God, to give unto her the cup of the wine of the fierceness of his wrath. 20 And every island fled away, and the mountains were not found. 21 And there fell upon men a great hail out of heaven, every stone about the weight of a talent: and men blasphemed God because of the plague of the hail; for the plague thereof was exceeding great.

The 16th chapter describes further end-time judgements. They were announced in the 15th chapter as the last seven plagues and illustrated as seven bowls, all brimming with the righteous and holy wrath of God. The pouring out of these vessels will trigger the corresponding judgments on earth.

The first bowl of wrath will cause all those people who could not resist the seductive art of the satanic dictator of chapter 13 and had accepted his sign or worshipped his image to get a malignant ulcer. The second punishment will be that the water in all the seas will turn into blood and that all living creatures will perish in it. One may debate whether this transformation is to be taken literally or symbolically, for instance in that an ecological catastrophe will lead to the mass reproduction of red algae or other living creatures. In the end, it doesn't matter, because the effect will be catastrophic because fisheries are a major source of human life. The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) estimates that today between 660 and 820 million people are directly or indirectly economically dependent on fishing.⁴⁵ In many developing countries, fish is the only affordable and relatively readily available source of animal protein. In some parts of the world, for example Bangladesh, Cambodia or

⁴⁵ <https://worldoceanreview.com/de/wor-2/fisch-und-mensch/> (retrieved: 04.06.2022)

Ghana, fish provides a significant share of total animal protein, according to FAO data. World trade is also likely to be severely affected, as it seems questionable whether shipping can be maintained in the usual way in such seas. Even the popular beach holidays will then suddenly turn into a horror trip.

Afterwards, the fresh water in the streams and springs will also be turned into blood and thus become undrinkable. A mixture of disgust and agonising thirst will plague all the inhabitants of the earth. The pouring out of the fourth bowl will cause the sun's radiation intensity to increase greatly. The result will be a dramatic heat wave that will afflict vast areas of the earth. The fifth wrath bowl judgement will cause exceedingly severe pain to all who had worshipped the "beast".

The sixth bowl of wrath is said to prepare for the final battle of Armageddon by drying up the river Euphrates. In my opinion, the mention of the Euphrates in this passage is to be understood in a figurative sense just as the name of the city of Babylon. The Euphrates was of existential importance to the ancient city of Babylon, and its conquest by the Persian king Cyrus was accomplished, according to Herodotus, by diverting this river for a short time. The Persian troops then entered the city through the dried-up riverbed and overwhelmed the Assyrian defenders. In terms of the end times, this could mean that the then ruling power system, i.e., especially the super-rich moneyed elite, will be "cut off" from their life stream. If we now ask ourselves what the "water of life" consists of for the super-rich, then we must state: it is above all the fear of those in power of financial crises and loss of power if no more additional credit would be available. The political elites' fear of losing their position of power is comparable to an addiction: just as a junkie needs the next "fix" again and again to survive, governments fever for ever new loans to keep themselves in power. Their fear of liquidity drying-up is so great that they will let their financiers get away with practically anything as long as they keep handing over new money.

I therefore interpret the sixth bowl of wrath in such a way that, under the influence of God, there will be a change of thinking at a certain point in time: Suddenly, the global financial elite will no longer be under the special protection of the powerful states, and so the hitherto impossible will become possible; namely, a devastating attack on New York (and in parallel also on other banking cities worldwide), which will remain without sufficient retaliation.⁴⁶ Perhaps these events are triggered by the gradual decline of power in the United States, which is already evident today in certain areas of society there. In any case, the "hail of centimetres" in verse 21 could be understood as a hail of bombs falling on many cities during that attack. Besides New York, the modern Babylon, many other important centres of human civilisation will be swept into the abyss, as verse 19 says. And the earthquake in verse 18 could also be interpreted in a figurative sense, namely as a world political upheaval, as a result of which a profound shift of power from the G7⁴⁷ to a group of aggressive small states - probably led by Russia - will take place within a short period of time.

As detailed in the following chapters of Revelation, the destruction of "Babylon" will be closely related to the final battle, which will be against God Himself. So also here: According to verses 13 and 14, the sixth bowl of wrath leads to devilish spirits organising a rebellion against the heavenly power itself. However, before this is carried out, "Babylon" is first attacked; thus, with the seventh bowl of divine

⁴⁶ Although the super-rich undoubtedly do not only have friends in Washington, D.C. and the other capitals of the G7, normally any attacker on a financial centre like New York City has to expect a very harsh retaliation; he is practically acting as a suicide. So too in the case of Osama bin Laden. Through his bloody terrorist attack on the World Trade Center, he triggered the *War on Terror*; a war that consumed the unimaginable sum of an estimated 8,000 billion dollars (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/War_on_terror; 04.06.2022). Bin Laden himself was tracked down and shot dead by US special forces in Pakistan ten years after 9/11. However, at the end of times this maxim of sure-fire retribution will no longer be valid due to complex social changes and power shifts.

⁴⁷ I describe the role of the G7 states in the end times in detail in my commentary on the 17th chapter of Revelation.

wrath. The victory over the supposedly indestructible elite of the super-rich will completely blind the alliance of the attackers; especially as they are under the influence of satanic spirits. In their delusion, they will then think that their own cunning and strength have brought them this victory. They fail to realise that they were only successful because God made it possible for them; because God chose them to execute His judgement. In their exorbitant self-conceit, after the destruction of "Babylon" they will proceed to further deeds, by which, however, they will be lured to their own downfall. At least that is how it is hinted at in chapter 17 and then presented in more detail in chapter 19.

It is remarkable that in this 16th chapter with verse 15 there is a mental insertion, namely a repeated admonition to watchfulness. I think that this insertion is primarily addressed to those people who will live in those end times. For, strange as it may sound, there will still be isolated people on earth who will have resisted the satanic end-time regime. By taking refuge in a fragile and meagre existence on the fringes of society, for example by retreating to inaccessible and miserable areas in Africa or South America, they will have survived until then. The worst plagues from heaven have passed them by because they are not worshippers of the satanic dictator.

Suddenly, strange news will reach their ears: Somewhere in the world, troops are gathering for a decisive war, probably touted as some kind of global war of liberation. Perhaps mercenaries are being recruited for it. Perhaps the world dictator will even promise such people, immersed in jungle and desert, immunity from punishment and protection from prosecution if only they somehow get involved in the latest uprisings. Perhaps the super-rich will also raise a kind of private army and will offer tempting payments, because they perceive that they are unprotected and at risk.

To those people who until then had been able to stay out of the end-time turmoil by making significant personal sacrifices, verse 15 gives the urgent advice: Do not be deceived at the last minute! Stay away from the two end-time great wars - the "beast" against "Babylon" and the "beast" against God. Only in this way they can be saved.

Revelation Chapter 17

1 And there came one of the seven angels which had the seven vials, and talked with me, saying unto me, Come hither; I will shew unto thee the judgment of the great whore that sitteth upon many waters: 2 With whom the kings of the earth have committed fornication, and the inhabitants of the earth have been made drunk with the wine of her fornication. 3 So he carried me away in the spirit into the wilderness: and I saw a woman sit upon a scarlet coloured beast, full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns. 4 And the woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet colour, and decked with gold and precious stones and pearls, having a golden cup in her hand full of abominations and filthiness of her fornication: 5 And upon her forehead was a name written, MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH. 6 And I saw the woman drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus: and when I saw her, I wondered with great admiration. 7 And the angel said unto me, Wherefore didst thou marvel? I will tell thee the mystery of the woman, and of the beast that carrieth her, which hath the seven heads and ten horns. 8 The beast that thou sawest was, and is not; and shall ascend out of the bottomless pit, and go into perdition: and they that dwell on the earth shall wonder, whose names were not written in the book of life from the foundation of the world, when they behold the beast that was, and is not, and yet is. 9 And here is the mind which hath wisdom. The seven heads are seven mountains, on which the woman sitteth. 10 And there are seven kings: five are fallen, and one is, and the other is not yet come; and when he cometh, he must continue a short space. 11 And the beast that was, and is not, even he is the eighth, and is of the seven, and goeth into perdition. 12 And the ten horns which thou sawest are ten kings, which have received no kingdom as yet; but receive power as kings one hour with the beast. 13 These have one mind, and shall give their power and strength unto the beast. 14 These shall make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them: for he is Lord of lords, and King of kings: and they that are with him are called, and chosen, and faithful. 15 And he saith unto me, The waters which thou sawest, where the whore sitteth, are peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues. 16 And the ten horns which thou sawest upon the beast, these shall hate the whore, and shall make her desolate and naked, and shall eat her flesh, and burn her with fire. 17 For God hath put in their hearts to fulfil his will, and to agree, and give their kingdom unto the beast, until the words of God shall be fulfilled. 18 And the woman which thou sawest is that great city, which reigneth over the kings of the earth.

G7, Russia and the super-rich

In order to understand the end-time events, it is important to see various chapters in context; especially chapters 13, 17, 18 and 19, for in them partly identical events and conditions are described from different perspectives.

As I mentioned above in my notes on chapter 13, the description of the first "animal" there is so similar to the description of the "animal" in chapter 17 that I assume that both chapters are basically about the same being. However, different aspects are illuminated.

Chapter 13 is mainly about the how and why such a terrible being comes to power. We are told that an evil and at the same time powerful spiritual being, Satan, is the author of it. Thus, it is about the spiritual (one could also say: about the religious or quasi-religious) aspect of the end times, and how this anti-divine exercise of power will affect the earth.

In chapter 17, on the other hand, it is shown that this anti-divine power system has a close connection to another being. This other being is described as a female figure who wears very expensive, luxurious clothes and is showered with gold, precious stones and pearls. She is described as Babylon and the

"mother of fornication and of all abominations on earth" (verses 3 to 5). Therefore, in this chapter, and even more extensively in the following 18th chapter, the focus is thus on the economic circumstances of the end-time system of power.

Already now, however, it must be emphasised that ultimately all these beings or powers will perish: First the whore Babylon will be killed by the "beast" and his allies - as it is described in detail in chapter 18 - and then the "beast" itself will meet its demise, which is described in more detail in the last third of chapter 19.

Let us take a closer look at this seven-headed "animal". An animal usually symbolises a worldly power; compare the animal symbolism in heraldry: lions, bears, eagles and other feared animals are often used on the coats of arms of countries, states or noble houses.

Revelation 17:9 explicitly states: The seven heads of the beast are seven mountains and are seven kings. That is, this beast symbolises a majority of powers that make common cause.

Now it is striking that today there is a powerful group of states known as the Group of Seven, or G7 for short: It "is an ... association of the most important industrialised nations of the Western world at the time of its founding" and in 2022 generates about 45 percent of the world's gross national income.⁴⁸

The G7 thus unites the seven richest and at the same time most powerful countries in the world. Together they own almost half of the world's wealth. It is well known that this wealth is distributed very unevenly: a small group of super-rich benefit disproportionately from the increase in value, as the Canadian author Chrystia Freeland noted in her book *"Plutocrats. The Rise of the New Global Super-Rich and the Fall of Everyone Else"*.⁴⁹

In terms of power, the G7 benefit both from *hard power*, such as military strength and technological advantage, but also from *soft power*, i.e., their general reputation based on market economy, democracy, relative political stability and mass prosperity.

I would like to emphasise that the seven-headed "beast" in John's vision does not mean the countries as such, but that it primarily embodies their rulers or their power-exercising system in its entirety.⁵⁰ Now John sees this female figure sitting on top of the rulers of the G7: She is luxuriously dressed and adorned with gold, precious stones and pearls and she is described as the "mother of fornication and of all abominations on earth". According to this description, she is something of a mixture of arch-capitalism with immorality and debauchery. This is the super-rich elite. I will answer the question of what this elitist class has to do with the blood of Jesus' witnesses (verse 6) at the very end of this section.

It goes on to say about the seven (verse 10):

- Five of them have fallen,
- One is,

⁴⁸ <https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/G7> (retrieved 01.03.2022); the G7 consists of: Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the United Kingdom and the United States.

⁴⁹ "The key messages of Freeland's book are that the world economy and capitalism have fundamentally changed over the last 30 years, with the emergence of a new, highly globalised class: the super-rich. Ten per cent of US citizens currently receive half of all national income. In 2011, 84,700 ultra-rich individuals were counted worldwide. " (https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Die_Superreichen, retrieved 30.06.2022)

⁵⁰ One should not be confused by the fact that the Revelation literally speaks of kings. In fact, of the G7 countries today, only the United Kingdom is ruled by a monarch. In my view, however, there is nothing to prevent us from interpreting the mention of kings as a symbol for the powers that exercise power, regardless of the concrete form of state or government.

- The other (seventh) has not yet come, and when he comes he must stay a short time.

The following interpretation fits this: "Fallen" are the G7 states Germany, France, Italy, the United Kingdom and Japan. For these five nations were (more or less) great empires with supra-regional or international charisma, but after the Second World War they sank to middle powers under the hegemony of the USA; they are therefore already past their best days. One "is" - that is undoubtedly the USA which at the present time is the undisputed leading power and only superpower, even if it is already showing clear signs of wear and tear. As the coming power, only Canada remains; this is consistent with the fact that this country is currently the smallest member of the G7 in terms of population and wealth and has not been a world power in the real sense, neither in the past nor in the present. Canada is, so to speak, the coming "king". Because of its vast area and sparse population, this country does indeed have huge potential. It is plausible that advancing global warming will greatly benefit this northern country; and if one continues to think about the much-predicted decline of the USA, it is quite conceivable that neighbouring Canada will benefit greatly.

Further, the beast on which the "harlot mother" sits is described as follows: It is an eighth mountain or king, which is (like) one of the seven, and doomed to destruction (verse 11). The eighth king means Russia: This huge eastern empire was temporarily included in the G7 from 1998 and thus treated as one of the seven; but was excluded again in 2014 after the Crimean invasion.⁵¹

In the thinking of our time, a principled opposition between the West and Russia is often assumed, but this seems to me to be wrong. Capitalism is hardly philanthropic, for the only beneficiaries are the capitalists themselves. To capitalism, everything is a commodity, even people; and their only purpose is the multiplication of money. Greed for money is a behaviour that does not meet with God's approval at all. Jesus taught: You cannot serve two masters; either you serve Mammon, that is, the god of money, or you serve the Father in heaven, the true invisible Lord.

The apostle Paul noted two important things about greed for money:

- "For the root of all evil is the greed for money, and some who have given themselves over to it have strayed from the faith and are wearing themselves out with many agonising pains. " (1Tim. 6:10)
- Interestingly, his description of the "last days" begins with a remark about money: "Moreover, Timothy, know that in the last days of the world hard times will come. For men will love only themselves and their money. " (2Tim.3:1-2)

In terms of greed for wealth and power, there is little difference between Russia and the G7; what sets Russia apart is, at most, its even more pronounced penchant for unrestrained cruelty. According to Russian custom, greed may appear cruder and more unsophisticated there than in the West, but its essence is the same everywhere. In a sense, Russia embodies the quintessence of all that is anti-divine: immeasurable greed (for power) coupled with unrestrained cruelty. So it has a certain logic that it was precisely the Russian sphere of influence that became the scene of a historically unique attack on the Christian faith: The Soviet Russian rulers devised and organised the greatest persecution of Christians in the entire history of the world from 1917 onwards.⁵² In this sense, Russia, or more precisely: the power and money elite of this giant country, represents the most powerful embodiment of an anti-

⁵¹ One might get the idea that the country of the eighth king, who is also one of the seven, is China. But in fact, despite its rapid growth in recent decades, China is statistically still a poor country. If one calculates the Chinese GDP per capita according to purchasing power parity, China only ranks 86th worldwide; cf.: <https://www.ipg-journal.de/regionen/asien/artikel/die-zwei-seiten-des-chinesischen-wirtschaftswachstums-5184/> (retrieved 01.03.2022)

⁵² <https://www.kath.net/news/18207> (retrieved 01.03.2022)

divine empire; it is, so to speak, the "beast in itself", although at the same time it is only one "beast" among several.

With regard to this beast, it is further said that it was there once before, then disappeared and is now there again (verse 8). This statement is consistent with Russia being seen in part as a kind of "third Rome"⁵³, or alternatively as a "remake" of the defunct Soviet empire.

It is important to note that Russia is not as different as we Westerners like to think. Unfortunately, it is a fact that the Russian ideology of the law of the strongest is much more similar to Western capitalism than some in the West would like to admit. And it is precisely Russia's super-rich who are in a variety of relationships with the Western financial system; indeed, they form a partly hidden network with the elites of the G7, i.e., with the elites of the richest Western countries.

And let us beware of overestimating Christianity in the rich Western states. God alone knows and counts how much sin, treachery and deceit have piled up in the "Christian" West. For example, the rulers of the West have opened the door wide to Islam in recent decades. The reasons for this varied in detail but were by no means honourable. In summary, it can be said that the Islamisation in Western Europe as a result of the mass immigration of Muslims is predominantly the consequence of unscrupulous greed for money: partly it occurred as a late consequence of imperialism and colonialism, and partly it served the import of cheap labour to promote the profits of big business.

How little Western big business acts in any Christian or even generally humane way has been shown in the last twenty years by the rampant relocation of companies and jobs to China and other Asian countries. Hardly any large Western company has hesitated to reduce its production costs by downsizing or closing its factories in Europe or the USA and instead setting up new factories in China. In the process, it was accepted that the political, social and ecological conditions in China are at least questionable and, in many cases, clearly inhumane. The bosses shrugged off the social consequences of this mass relocation, which is euphemistically called structural change. The billions and billions for unemployment benefits, retraining measures, reorganisation, relocation of other companies, etc. were largely socialised, i.e., passed on to the taxpayers. The depressing human consequences that resulted from abruptly failed professional careers, such as broken marriages and families, drug and alcohol abuse, crime, neglect and homelessness, can still be studied today in many major cities of the G7.

These events also clearly show how much the rulers of the large, industrialised countries protect and support the economic and financial elite: without diverse political decisions in the interests of the banks and corporations, this maximisation of profits for the few would hardly have been possible. An instructive example of the amorality of Western politicians is the former German Chancellor Gerhard Schröder. He was elected to office as head of the German government on the ticket of the German Social Democracy, which is traditionally seen as representing the lower strata of society and is close to the trade unions. Yet it was Schröder who, as head of government, initiated and carried out a significant reduction in social benefits for the unemployed; one would have to look long and hard for a comparable betrayal of the interests of ordinary people in Germany, in my opinion. As a result, wage pressure rose sharply in many sectors and many precarious jobs in the low-wage sector were created. Schröder sweetened his own retirement as a well-paid lobbyist for the state-owned Russian oil and gas industry. Not even the Russian leadership's brutal war of aggression on Ukraine made him distance himself from his friend Vladimir Putin. Schröder was by no means acting alone or in isolation, but in

⁵³ <https://www.br.de/kultur/putins-ideologie-hinter-dem-ukraine-krieg-100.html> (retrieved 03.03.2022); <http://ieg-ego.eu/de/threads/modelle-und-stereotypen/modell-antike/edgar-hoesch-die-idee-der-translatio-imperii-im-moskauer-russland> (03.03.2022); <https://www.deutschlandfunknova.de/beitrag/gro%C3%9Ff%C3%BCr-iwan-iii---moskau-als-drittes-rom> (13.05.2022)

the best possible agreement with large parts of his party. It is telling and shameful how long his powerful party friends went easy on him; with the blessing of the SPD grandees, the Schröder clan was still blithely lobbying for its Russian state business partners when it had already become obvious from their dealings with political opponents such as Litvinenko, Nawalny, etc. that Putin's predatory regime had thrown all consideration overboard.

It is also remarkable that hardly any major Western corporation gave up its profitable business in Putin's Russia. Despite the obvious restrictions on freedom and human rights, they held on to them, and only Russia's open war of aggression on Ukraine induced a rethink. Especially since the sanctions imposed made it very difficult to transfer profits from Russia to the parent companies in the West.

One could list many more examples of how the politically powerful in the big Western countries let themselves be used by the "whore" of finance capital so that the latter could wallow in fabulous wealth and at the same time indulge in its libidinous licentiousness. The combination of wealth and debauchery is vividly personified in the American investment banker Jeffrey Epstein. Epstein, who as a financier on New York's Wall Street rose from humble beginnings to become a multi-millionaire within a few decades, was charged several times with numerous acts of sexual debauchery, including abuse of minors, and died under questionable circumstances in a detention centre in 2019. Epstein's entanglements with various other persons from the nobility and the moneyed aristocracy are conspicuous; his widely ramified network of relationships included such prominent names as the billionaire Bill Gates and Prince Andrew from the British royal family.⁵⁴

The corrupt woman who is introduced at the beginning of chapter 17 as sitting on the beast, and who is prophesied towards the end of the same chapter that she will be killed and destroyed by this beast, - it is said of her in the last verse of chapter 17 that she has exercised dominion over all the rulers of the world. This description fits very well with the interpretation that she is the global money elite. In fact, almost all governments worldwide are dependent on the big banks or the global financial system. The reason for this is that practically all governments in the world are indebted to a greater or lesser extent to the private banks and super-rich individuals.

This is particularly true for the G7 countries, as the following list of government debt in relation to gross domestic product (GDP) shows⁵⁵ (as of 2021):

- Japan: 264 %
- Italy: 158 %
- USA: 134 %
- France: 119 %
- Canada: 115 %
- United Kingdom: 112 %
- Germany: 72 %

To explain: Japan's debt-to-GDP ratio of 264% means that the country's entire economy would have to work for more than two and a half years and give up all the proceeds to the Japanese government's creditors in order to pay off the national debt in full.

At this point I would like to give some additional data to illustrate the situation. Since the situation in the USA is quite transparent, I will refer to the conditions there in the following. The total public debt in the US in mid-2020 was a gigantic \$20,570 billion (in words: twenty thousand five hundred and

⁵⁴ https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jeffrey_Epstein (retrieved 03.03.2022)

⁵⁵ Source: https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Liste_der_L%C3%A4nder_nach_Staatsschuldenquote (retrieved 03.06.2022)

seventy billion); most of this is accounted for by the central government. The US government paid more than \$550 billion in interest on its national debt in 2021.⁵⁶

Now it is an exciting question: To whom does the American state owe this unimaginable amount of money? The ownership structure is not exactly easy to analyse in detail; however, the US news portal CNBC published a quite detailed report about it in 2012.⁵⁷ According to the report, the biggest money lenders included:

- Wealthy individuals, corporations, brokers and dealers - summarised in CNBC's report as "Saving Bonds & Investors" (total \$1,102 billion)
- various investment funds such as money market funds and mutual funds (total approx. \$800 billion)
- Commercial banks, savings banks and credit institutions, so-called "Depository Institutions" (total 286 billion dollars)
- Insurance companies (total \$253 billion)
- a group of Caribbean banking centres based in the Bahamas, Bermuda, Cayman Islands, Netherlands Antilles, Panama and the British Virgin Islands (total \$225 billion)

Together, these private investors provided more than \$2,500 billion to finance the US budget. While it is true that individual foreign states such as China and Japan, as well as US Social Security, also hold large shares of the US national debt, it is clear: wealthy individuals, investment companies and banks are lending their money to the US central government on a very large scale, and they are earning many billions from the interest due. It should be noted that the figures given above are ten years old; since then, the US national debt has continued to grow strongly and, accordingly, the sums of money lent are likely to be considerably higher again today.

It would be going too far here to discuss the reasons for this debt in detail; however, the fact that too many people in the western industrialised countries have too little knowledge of finance and national economics to assess the dangers that emanate from a highly indebted state power is probably not insignificant. This leads to the effect that many citizens in the industrial nations only take the debt level of their nation into account to a lesser extent when deciding whether to vote; the majority of them allow themselves to be convinced by certain election promises, even if their financing will only be possible through even greater debt. Both politicians and their financiers are familiar with this mechanism of power, and the dependence of politics on the rich elites is correspondingly high. To put it somewhat casually: Anyone who wants to reach a high state office in the G7 today must in principle be prepared to increase the already existing mountain of public debt even further by taking out more loans. The beneficiaries of this public debt orgy are wealthy individuals; because money is usually lent at interest.⁵⁸ The provision of private wealth for the financing of public debt can take place in various ways, as we saw above with the example of the USA: either directly or indirectly through various investment vehicles such as funds and investment companies, in the form of banks, companies, trusts, etc. The increase in value for the private wealthy is usually achieved through interest. The increase in value for the private "investors" is also expressed in different ways, either directly as interest credits or indirectly in the form of rising share or fund prices, as dividends or in the form of other distributions.

⁵⁶ Source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/National_debt_of_the_United_States (retrieved 03.06.2022)

⁵⁷ Source: <https://www.cnbc.com/2012/01/31/The-Biggest-Holders-of-US-Government-Debt.html> (retrieved 03.06.2022)

⁵⁸ The comparatively short period of the last few years, when governments were able to borrow money at negative interest rates, will probably go down in history as an interesting but marginal episode. After all, many banks have made splendid profits, and rising inflation will do the rest.

However, at the end of chapter 17, interestingly enough, the whore who is shown as dominating the beast at the beginning is killed by the beast and the ten short-term kings. I interpret this to mean that Russia and some of its associated smaller powers (I am thinking here of North Korea, Iran and Syria, for example) will eventually turn against the global financial elite. This could happen, for example, through a military strike against New York by attacking and destroying it. Possibly, in parallel, some other major banking cities such as London, Paris, Tokyo and Frankfurt will also be affected. As a result of such a concerted military action, the global monetary system and the dominant financial elite would be largely eliminated.

However, this victory of the Eastern Great Power and its ten satellites will be short-lived. For after this victory they will exalt themselves to such an extent that they will even wage war against God Himself; but in doing so they will suffer total defeat. (I explain more about this below in connection with the 19th chapter).

This should be borne in mind by all who ask whether God Himself is a Marxist. No, He is not. For the Marxist, in his godless presumption, thinks that he will emerge from his revolt against greedy capitalism as the permanent, even eternal victor. But the Bible shows the exact opposite: this victory will be short-lived, for God does not appreciate that bloodthirsty monster of vengeance. When it has carried out what God has ordained it to do in His complete sovereignty, it will itself be judged and completely wiped out (ch. 19:11-21).

Digression: Book of Daniel, Chapter 8

The eighth chapter of the Old Testament book of Daniel contains an end-time prophecy that some commentators want to shelve as settled. They assume that these predictions were completely fulfilled by the history of antiquity, specifically by the rise of the Medio-Persian Empire and its subsequent destruction by the Greek king Alexander the Great.

Although on the one hand this is certainly true, on the other hand one should also consider the following biblical wisdom: "That which was is that which will be again. And that which was done is that which will be done again. And there is nothing new under the sun. Is there a thing of which one says, "Behold, this is new"? It has long been for the ages that were before us. "(Eccl. 1:9,10)

From this point of view, I would like to show here that the events according to "Daniel 8", although on the one hand fulfilled long ago, also describe very accurately the more recent world political developments right up to our own day.⁵⁹

In short, Daniel 8 predicts the following: There will be a great eastern empire (the "ram") which will first successfully expand into the three other directions by means of force. This great power will then be attacked and destroyed from the west by a "goat". The empire symbolised by the goat will be very great for a while, but eventually its power will also disintegrate, and four empires will arise in its place. Ultimately, these four powers will pass into a decay from which will emerge a final regime that is incomparably brutal and totally hostile to God.

Let us take Russia as the eastern empire. It is true that Russia expanded very successfully over several centuries to the south (Central Asia and the Caucasus), to the east (Eastern Europe) and also to the north (Siberia, the Baltic, the North Sea). For some, the northern expansion may be surprising, as we usually think of Russia with its Siberian possessions as a northern country. However, it has only been bordering the Baltic Sea since the 18th century: "After Russia had conquered the hitherto Swedish Livonia and Estonia, it replaced ... Sweden as the predominant major Baltic Sea power in 1721",⁶⁰ and,

⁵⁹ Think here again of the possibility of multiple fulfilment (complementarity).

⁶⁰ https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Geschichte_Russlands (retrieved 30.05.2022)

appropriately enough, after the so-called Great Northern War. Significant northern expansion also took place after the Second World War, in the shape of the so-called Soviet Northern Fleet. From the 1950s onwards, nuclear-powered submarines became an important pillar of Soviet naval policy. Most of these powerful combat ships were assigned to the Northern Fleet, which thus became the most important of the four Soviet Russian fleets.⁶¹

The Russian empire reached its greatest extent after the end of the Second World War. By then it had expanded westwards into Central Europe, southwards into the steppes of Central Asia, and northwards it dominated large parts of the North Sea through its nuclear-powered submarines and icebreakers.

In the Cold War and in the economic competition against the bloc of the West, which was under the leadership of the USA, the Soviet empire could not survive. From 1986 onwards, a process of disintegration began that led to a collapse. The fourteen so-called Soviet republics, which together with Russia had formed the Soviet Russian Union (USSR) and were dominated from Moscow, left the union. The Central and Eastern European alliance system of Soviet Russia, based on the so-called Warsaw Pact and the CMEA,⁶² also disintegrated completely; all of Russia's European vassal states gradually gained state independence from 1986 onwards. Russia itself was on the verge of national bankruptcy and fell into a phase of political weakness and economic chaos. Although Russia itself remained highly armed militarily, it was nevertheless in a state of striking disintegration. "In Russia, overall economic production declined year after year from 1990 to 1996. During this period, Russia's overall gross domestic product (GDP) decreased by about 40%.... As recently as 2010, Russian industrial output was still only 83.8 per cent of its 1991 level, according to the statistics office - in the vehicle manufacturing sector, output was as low as 49.6 per cent." The life expectancy of Russians decreased markedly within a few years. The pictures of drowned nuclear submarines went around the world. During a stopover at Odessa airport in 1996, I myself noticed a vast area of abandoned combat helicopters, apparently left to their own devices - an unforgettable image and at the same time a fitting parable for the former Soviet military power, which was now completely on the ground.

Russian President Vladimir Putin has called the disintegration of the Soviet Union a "pan-national tragedy of enormous proportions" and "the greatest geopolitical catastrophe of the 20th century".⁶³ Even if one must certainly allow for a certain amount of self-pity in Putin's words - the disintegration of the Soviet Union and the entire Eastern Bloc undoubtedly had an epochal dimension.

The victory of the West in the Cold War, which was primarily a victory of the leading power, the USA, was perceived as so dominant that for more than two decades there was only talk of a single global "superpower". It seemed as if America - together with its allies - had won something like a total victory. The "goat" had triumphed over the "ram" and was left alone as the dominant world power. Nothing demonstrates America's victory as impressively as the fact that practically all of Russia's former Eastern European forced allies have now joined the Western defence community, NATO. Russia had to watch impotently as all its satellite states were incorporated into the power bloc of its main military adversary.

Today, however, more than 30 years after the collapse of the Soviet empire, there are signs that a so-called multipolar world is developing. In it, four major power blocs exist side by side. These blocs are grouped around the following centres:

- USA (for whom their Pacific alliances are now at least as important as their European allies)

⁶¹ https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nordflotte#Die_Nordflotte_im_Kalten_Krieg (retrieved 30.05.2022)

⁶² CMEA stood for "Council for Mutual Economic Assistance"; it was a kind of "EU of the Eastern Bloc" under Soviet dominance.

⁶³ https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zerfall_der_Sowjetunion (retrieved 30.05.2022)

- EU (which is still heavily dependent on the USA militarily, but has long since gone its own way politically and is therefore at least partly in rivalry with the USA)
- Russia (which is trying by all means and not entirely unsuccessfully to restore its old supremacy)
- China (which has gained a lot of weight with its long-term economic growth strategy and tries to profit with cunning from the weaknesses of all other players)

In the eighth chapter of the Book of Daniel, such a power quadrupole is described, out of which the satanic end-time regime will emerge. Thus, today's power-political constellation in our world, which corresponds to the course of events in the eighth chapter of the Book of Daniel, can be understood as a further confirmation that we are now very close to the final end times.

The financial elite and their debt to Christians

In the sixth verse of chapter 17 - and likewise in Revelation 18:24⁶⁴ - it is said that the Babylonian whoremonger we have identified as the global layer of the super-rich are guilty of the blood of prophets and saints. This may seem strange at first glance, for is it not the rich Western countries that exemplify the freedom of religion?

But let us remember that Babylon specifically means New York City, and there especially the system of high finance and the super-rich with their worldwide connections. It is a proven fact that the US money and power system is closely linked to the Chinese state. The People's Republic of China is one of the largest creditors of the USA.⁶⁵ In 2019, the Chinese state was the largest foreign creditor to the United States, with around 17 per cent. But this same Chinese state is one of the most brutal persecutors of worldwide Christianity!

So let us face it: the US has its global superpower supremacy substantially financed by a government that is one of the world's leading persecutors of Christians, and which also supports other oppressive regimes like those in North Korea and Vietnam! These are facts known to no one better than the leading financiers in New York City and the elite politicians of the US capital Washington. The majority of these are very educated people; they truly cannot excuse themselves by saying that they do not know what they are doing.

If the US elites were really serious about global human rights, they would probably stop accepting money from China; from a country that has obviously been trampling on human rights and freedoms for decades. Moreover, it seems pretty clear to me that the global money elite is involved in financing almost every war and injustice that happens anywhere in the world. I maintain that as soon as the UN imposes a trade embargo on any country in the world for human rights reasons, someone in a skyscraper in New York, London, Tokyo or Frankfurt starts thinking about how to circumvent this ban for profit.

The same applies, of course, to the business and government leaders in the rest of the G7 countries. Each of them knows that their profitable business with countries like China and Iran is ethically more than questionable; that on the one hand they support an inhuman regime and on the other hand they take jobs away from their own population.

Networking with the 13th chapter

Let us now take another look back at the events in Chapter 13. As I have already described, the first beast there is probably identical to the beast in Chapter 17 discussed here. This leads to the - at first

⁶⁴ "And in it was found the blood of prophets and saints, and of all those who were slain on the earth. "

⁶⁵ <https://www.handelszeitung.ch/konjunktur/wenn-china-die-zahne-fletscht> (retrieved 20.05.2022)

glance perhaps shocking - conclusion that the G7 will be the main carrier of the brutal anti-Christian system of rule that will shape the end times. Some may be surprised at this, for are not the Western countries the heirs of the so-called "Christian West"? Aren't the G7 countries, the vast majority of which (with the exception of Japan) have been influenced by Christian ideas for centuries, and do not numerous large churches still exist on their territory?

Well, all this is true; but it is also true that the de-Christianisation of the West is proceeding at almost breath-taking speed. Let us also consider, as already mentioned at chapter 13, with what alacrity the parliaments and governments of all Western countries have imposed extensive coercive measures in connection with the Covid epidemic. The freedoms we are familiar with - including religious freedom - which for centuries were considered the hallmark of the West, were unceremoniously suspended; driven by the conviction of those in power that this was unavoidable in order to combat the pandemic. And let us not forget one thing: By the time the satanic system of rule is installed according to chapter 13, the most energetic and committed Christians will have already left the earth! Even in the once Christian regions of the world, spiritual derangement will be almost unimaginable. The churches that may still exist then will be spiritually empty and powerless, and alongside them a kind of "new paganism" will have firmly established itself.

Let us put ourselves once again in the future situation of the world at the beginning of chapter 13. Divine plagues of unparalleled ferocity and drama will have struck the world with unmitigated severity. All people - small and great, poor and rich, leaders and led - will then be in an unprecedented state of panic, despair and perplexity. Against this background, I can easily imagine that the governments and parliaments of the G7 will adopt and enforce coercive measures that are unimaginable today. Seduced by diabolical lies, the only effective way of fighting back - namely repentance and conversion to God in the name of the Lord Jesus - will be made punishable. Instead, a false, anti-divine cult is made compulsory for the entire population and enforced by means of draconian punishments. All this will happen because of the tragic delusion of the governing bodies of the G7, who hope that that idolatry, which in reality means worship of Satan, will bring the world the hoped-for salvation.

At the beginning, Russia will also be involved in this system of government. Possibly Russia will even have a key role in it; for example, in the sense that their already particularly unscrupulous troops (perhaps together with other gunmen from the Caucasus and Central Asia, perhaps even including China) will take on a kind of worldwide "police function". Such Russian-led militias then do the "dirty work" of enforcing satanic rule in many places around the world.

Since the satanic system is primarily designed to resist the true God and his messenger Jesus, not much else changes for the time being. Business life continues as before. Banks lend money at interest; businesses are founded and compete; there will be rich and poor as at all times before. The market economy remains untouched and the redistribution of wealth from the bottom to the top continues unhindered. The global financial elite that already exists today will continue to indulge in pomp and debauchery; not only will they not oppose the vicious power system, but they will supply it with liquidity and in the process continue to increase in wealth themselves. Only internal tensions will then lead to one of the supporting powers, probably Russia, breaking away and wiping out the system of the super-rich.

Summary Chapter 17

In today's power structures of this world, with the Group of Seven (G7), with the temporary dominance of the United States after the defeat of Soviet communism and with the subsequent establishment of four regions of power (analogous to the prophetic Book of Daniel, Chapter 8), we already find relationships laid out that are similar to those that, according to the Bible, immediately precede the end times or will exist in those end times.

The super-rich financial elite, profiting from the power of the G7 - partly in conjunction with Russia - and behaving in a completely cavalier manner, is already a reality. Then, during the reign of the Antichrist, the global financial metropolis of New York is devastated by a massive military strike carried out by a Russian-led alliance. This will completely eliminate the global network of the super-rich and America's status as a leading great power will end for good.

Not long afterwards, the victorious alliance "Russia plus 10" will go into a final war, which will be directed in particular against Israel and Jerusalem. In that confrontation, the Lord Jesus will totally defeat all the powers and forces opposed to Him.

Revelation Chapter 18

1 And after these things I saw another angel come down from heaven, having great power; and the earth was lightened with his glory. 2 And he cried mightily with a strong voice, saying, Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and is become the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird. 3 For all nations have drunk of the wine of the wrath of her fornication, and the kings of the earth have committed fornication with her, and the merchants of the earth are waxed rich through the abundance of her delicacies. 4 And I heard another voice from heaven, saying, Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues. 5 For her sins have reached unto heaven, and God hath remembered her iniquities. 6 Reward her even as she rewarded you, and double unto her double according to her works: in the cup which she hath filled fill to her double. 7 How much she hath glorified herself, and lived deliciously, so much torment and sorrow give her: for she saith in her heart, I sit a queen, and am no widow, and shall see no sorrow. 8 Therefore shall her plagues come in one day, death, and mourning, and famine; and she shall be utterly burned with fire: for strong is the Lord God who judgeth her. 9 And the kings of the earth, who have committed fornication and lived deliciously with her, shall bewail her, and lament for her, when they shall see the smoke of her burning, 10 Standing afar off for the fear of her torment, saying, Alas, alas, that great city Babylon, that mighty city! for in one hour is thy judgment come. 11 And the merchants of the earth shall weep and mourn over her; for no man buyeth their merchandise any more: 12 The merchandise of gold, and silver, and precious stones, and of pearls, and fine linen, and purple, and silk, and scarlet, and all thyine wood, and all manner vessels of ivory, and all manner vessels of most precious wood, and of brass, and iron, and marble, 13 And cinnamon, and odours, and ointments, and frankincense, and wine, and oil, and fine flour, and wheat, and beasts, and sheep, and horses, and chariots, and slaves, and souls of men. 14 And the fruits that thy soul lusted after are departed from thee, and all things which were dainty and goodly are departed from thee, and thou shalt find them no more at all. 15 The merchants of these things, which were made rich by her, shall stand afar off for the fear of her torment, weeping and wailing, 16 And saying, Alas, alas, that great city, that was clothed in fine linen, and purple, and scarlet, and decked with gold, and precious stones, and pearls! 17 For in one hour so great riches is come to nought. And every shipmaster, and all the company in ships, and sailors, and as many as trade by sea, stood afar off, 18 And cried when they saw the smoke of her burning, saying, What city is like unto this great city! 19 And they cast dust on their heads, and cried, weeping and wailing, saying, Alas, alas, that great city, wherein were made rich all that had ships in the sea by reason of her costliness! for in one hour is she made desolate. 20 Rejoice over her, thou heaven, and ye holy apostles and prophets; for God hath avenged you on her. 21 And a mighty angel took up a stone like a great millstone, and cast it into the sea, saying, Thus with violence shall that great city Babylon be thrown down, and shall be found no more at all. 22 And the voice of harpers, and musicians, and of pipers, and trumpeters, shall be heard no more at all in thee; and no craftsman, of whatsoever craft he be, shall be found any more in thee; and the sound of a millstone shall be heard no more at all in thee; 23 And the light of a candle shall shine no more at all in thee; and the voice of the bridegroom and of the bride shall be heard no more at all in thee: for thy merchants were the great men of the earth; for by thy sorceries were all nations deceived. 24 And in her was found the blood of prophets, and of saints, and of all that were slain upon the earth.

The 18th chapter of Revelation is a longer text, but it largely speaks for itself. It describes the fall of "Babylon" in impressive images and parables. As explained earlier, this does not refer to the ancient city of Babylon, but to the global financial centres of our world, and in particular to New York City.⁶⁶

It should be emphasised that in this 18th chapter, the sins of "Babylon" such as opulence, luxury, self-satisfaction and arrogance are spoken of in detail; only relatively little - almost as if in passing - is mentioned of their misdeeds against the Christian faith and the Christian religion.

This is a strong warning for all those who think that without actual and direct sins against "the church" God cannot judge them. What a mistake! On the one hand, greed, avarice and gluttony are in themselves repulsive in God's eyes. And how could it be otherwise? He sent His Son Jesus into this world as a poor man; indeed, in Jesus God made Himself poor for our sake! How could He approve of the intoxicating materialism that has become common among the super-rich in Manhattan and elsewhere?

And furthermore, high finance, especially American high finance, is very much guilty of the blood of many people - Christians and non-Christians alike - through its worldwide involvement with regimes of injustice and acts of violence of all kinds. This is expressed in the 24th verse: *"And in her was found the blood of prophets, and of saints, and of all them that were slain upon the earth."* I have already explained how true this statement is in the previous chapter.

It is remarkable that although the judgement itself is carried out by the devilish "beast" and his ten smaller allies (verse 16), according to the above verses 8b and 20b (corresponding also to Rev. 17:17 and Rev. 19:1-5), the will of God is very well expressed in it. The multiple repetition of the announcement that the system of the money people will be destroyed according to the will of God underlines the seriousness and reliability of this message. No one should have any doubt that this will happen. God hates this system of usury and haggling; He deeply dislikes it when people accumulate countless treasures and precious things for themselves and never think of thanking the Giver of all these good gifts and honouring Him by sharing with the poor.

⁶⁶ A detailed explanation of why New York City corresponds excellently to the biblical predictions of the fall of "Babylon" can be found in the English-language article "Babylon The Great - New York City - The Seat Of Satan" by Thomas H. Cavin (<https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/babylon-great-new-york-city-cardinal-thomas-h-cavin>; retrieved 03.06.2022).

Revelation Chapter 19

1 And after these things I heard a great voice of much people in heaven, saying, Alleluia; Salvation, and glory, and honour, and power, unto the Lord our God: 2 For true and righteous are his judgments: for he hath judged the great whore, which did corrupt the earth with her fornication, and hath avenged the blood of his servants at her hand. 3 And again they said, Alleluia. And her smoke rose up for ever and ever. 4 And the four and twenty elders and the four beasts fell down and worshipped God that sat on the throne, saying, Amen; Alleluia. 5 And a voice came out of the throne, saying, Praise our God, all ye his servants, and ye that fear him, both small and great.

6 And I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings, saying, Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth. 7 Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready. 8 And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints. 9 And he saith unto me, Write, Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb. And he saith unto me, These are the true sayings of God. 10 And I fell at his feet to worship him. And he said unto me, See thou do it not: I am thy fellowservant, and of thy brethren that have the testimony of Jesus: worship God: for the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy. 11 And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war. 12 His eyes were as a flame of fire, and on his head were many crowns; and he had a name written, that no man knew, but he himself. 13 And he was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood: and his name is called The Word of God. 14 And the armies which were in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean. 15 And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron: and he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. 16 And he hath on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS. 17 And I saw an angel standing in the sun; and he cried with a loud voice, saying to all the fowls that fly in the midst of heaven, Come and gather yourselves together unto the supper of the great God; 18 That ye may eat the flesh of kings, and the flesh of captains, and the flesh of mighty men, and the flesh of horses, and of them that sit on them, and the flesh of all men, both free and bond, both small and great. 19 And I saw the beast, and the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against him that sat on the horse, and against his army. 20 And the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet that wrought miracles before him, with which he deceived them that had received the mark of the beast, and them that worshipped his image. These both were cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone. 21 And the remnant were slain with the sword of him that sat upon the horse, which sword proceeded out of his mouth: and all the fowls were filled with their flesh.

The first five verses of this chapter actually still belong factually to the previous 18th chapter; they are something like the concluding commentary on the judgement of the insatiable and selfish nature of human beings, as it comes to light in a special way in the international money elite. The smashing of the anti-divine system "Babylon" is therefore hailed in heaven as a just punishment, and worship is offered to God for it.

In verse 6, there is once again something that seems like an echo of chapter 11, verse 17: in a certain sense, the judgment that is taking place represents God's seizure of power. After He has watched the ungodly goings-on on earth with remarkable long-suffering and patience - always in the hope of reason and repentance among men - the hour of His righteous wrath has now come. After God has renounced His great power for a long time by only partially exercising His divine office of judgement, He now

leaves no doubt as to who the legitimate ruler over heaven *and* earth is. All presumptuous and godless beings who staged themselves in such a pompous and intoxicating manner in "Babylon" are destroyed.

At the same time, a further step of reward for the holy people is initiated, for now the wedding bells, so to speak, are ringing in heaven. The marriage of the Lamb is a picture of the fact that those people whom the Lord Jesus truly recognises as His own may enter into an even closer, indeed an indissoluble union with Him (verses 7 to 9). The being - be it an angel or a spirit - that speaks to him in this vision, delivers true words of God to the prophet John, as it expressly emphasises. John then wants to worship this being; presumably because he equates the bearer of the message with its author. But the being rejects this and says: "Worship God - not me! As a messenger I am only a servant like yourself and like all others who appear as witnesses for Jesus."

The last statement of verse 10, that the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy, could in my opinion also be paraphrased as follows: "John, do not be surprised that such great visions are granted to you as at this very moment; visions that are quite expressly from God Himself! For people like you, who steadfastly proclaim the name of Jesus as the Son of God, have a spirit from God; and in such a spirit also extremely remarkable visions may be seen." This is analogous to the announcement of the Old Testament prophet Joel that in the "last days" special gifts will come upon young and old, upon the servants and handmaids of God, because the Spirit of God will be poured out upon them.⁶⁷

Verses 11 to 21 then describe a war waged by Jesus himself and his heavenly troops. Jesus, who was crucified in weakness, is shown to us here as an extremely powerful ruler and commander. The battle He wages is a battle in righteousness, even if it is a bloody campaign. His enemies are led by the "beast" that we already know from chapters 13 and 17; and also present is the false prophet who already appeared in chapter 13 as a spiritual deceiver and false miracle worker. Under the influence of demonic spirits, these two arch-villains have been able to incite quite a few other national leaders of the world; these must be at least the ten state leaders ("kings") who have already allied themselves with the predatory world ruler for the destruction of New York.

Especially impressive is the fact that these earthly rulers, under the influence of lying spirits, will set out to wage war against the heavenly ruler Jesus (so in verse 19, and analogously also in Rev. 16:13.14 and Rev. 17:14). Now this is a strange thing! It is one thing to persecute and war against the followers of Jesus on earth; but it is another to wage war against the heavenly One Himself. The idea that men will be so presumptuous as to even contemplate such a revolt seems at first to be strange and insane. However, we should realise that it is precisely devilish spirits that attract people to this war. Now it is probably part of the devil's nature that he aims to dispute God's throne and glory. When people are filled with a devilish spirit, they are not afraid of any presumption. It is interesting to note that Jesus Himself, during His first sojourn on earth, accuses His persecutors of the very same behaviour; namely, that they would mistreat and kill Him in full awareness of His divine mission. This is what the parable of the wicked husbandmen is about (Mt. 21:33-39). The persecutors at that time acted with the same lofty aim as the warmongers in this 19th chapter of Revelation. In their terrible delusion they think they can take the place of Jesus: "This is the heir. If we kill him, then everything will be ours!"

According to various indications, this battle is to take place in the Holy Land. Possibly the satanic dictator will aim at conquering the city of Jerusalem after he has successfully suppressed and killed all the confessors of Jesus (Rev 13:7-10, 15). The violent entry into the Holy City would be, so to speak, the crowning of his anti-divine rule, in that after the destruction of every Christian confession on earth, he would also conquer the capital of the ancient people of God.

⁶⁷ Joel 3:1.2. - The apostle Peter quoted these verses in his "sermon on Pentecost" (Acts 2:17 ff.) as a reason why such unusual things happened at that time when Jesus' disciples gathered together.

Now Jesus is also the King of the Jews, and therefore Jerusalem is first and foremost *His* city. This applies in principle in all times, even if it was not always visible. But it is especially true in the end times when all things will come to their final fulfilment. In that situation in which a great earthly army under diabolical influence attacks the city of Jerusalem, Jesus will therefore counterattack supernaturally, i.e., with the full power of His heavenly reign. In doing so, He will defeat and completely destroy the assembled army of the rebels. The two satanic oppressors, the "beast" and the false prophet, will be thrown alive into a lake of fire. As the following 20th chapter then shows, the work of Satan thus also comes to a halt for a long and peaceful period of time - the Scriptures speak of a thousand years.

Revelation Chapter 20

1 And I saw an angel come down from heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. 2 And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years, 3 And cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal upon him, that he should deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years should be fulfilled: and after that he must be loosed a little season. 4 And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years. 5 But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection. 6 Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years. 7 And when the thousand years are expired, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison, 8 And shall go out to deceive the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle: the number of whom is as the sand of the sea. 9 And they went up on the breadth of the earth, and compassed the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city: and fire came down from God out of heaven, and devoured them. 10 And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever. 11 And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. 12 And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. 13 And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works. 14 And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. 15 And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.

The end-time battle according to chapter 19 resulted in a total defeat of the rebels. They were overpowered and killed by the Lord Christ. Judgment and sentence was passed on their leaders, namely the beast and the false prophet, who had been the essential leaders on earth since the events of chapter 13: they were thrown into a lake of fire where they must repent of their iniquity against God through never-ending torment.

Strangely enough, the one who had instigated and authorised these two beings to do their vile deeds, namely the devil himself, first gets away with a kind of long-term imprisonment: a powerful angel of God will bind him and throw him into a dungeon (verses 1 to 3). There the devil must remain locked up for a long time - it is given as one thousand years. Meanwhile, the Lord Jesus will rule the earth as a powerful king. During this period, a first resurrection from the dead takes place. Now who are those who will live and reign with Christ during this epoch? They are those whose lives have been forcibly taken because they have confessed the Lord Jesus. On the one hand, they are those whose souls had already raised their voices in Revelation 6, verses 9 to 11, asking how long it will be before God avenges their deaths. And it will be those who were killed as followers of Jesus during the great tribulation. All these victims of anti-divine tyranny will now be brought back to life and receive power and office as priests of God together with the Lord Jesus.

It is interesting to note that this Millennial Kingdom will still be established on the *old* earth. The world will not have ended yet, even though some of the end-time horrors will have almost felt like it. After great tribulations and temptations, after terrible wars, famines, pestilences and other plagues, a long

era of peace will then dawn, for the deceiver of all peoples and nations, the devil, will be thrown into prison. Jesus will reign as divine King and in righteousness over all people who will then live on earth.

Revelation gives little detail about this phase of human history at this point. Are we allowed or supposed to imagine things for ourselves here? For me it is quite conceivable that Jesus will establish His kingly rule in Jerusalem and that several Old Testament prophecies about Jerusalem as the newly risen world centre of power will then find their fulfilment.⁶⁸

This epoch will last long, but it will not be eternal. Once more the old earth must be filled with war cries. For the devil must be released once more after a long time, and then he will continue exactly where he left off: he will incite nations and their leaders to renewed rebellion against God and against the holy city.

This raises the difficult question of why God provides for this. Why does He not condemn His adversary earlier, at about the same moment that He consigns the beast and the false prophet to their final fate in the lake of fire? A possible answer can be found in the Old Testament passage Ezekiel 28, verses 12b to 15. Many commentators see in this hymn a reference to the devil: According to it, he was created as a particularly powerful and exquisite spirit being, full of grace and beauty, and called to special closeness and intimacy with God. However, he was cast out of his original calling because of his haughty self-conceit. Nevertheless, God will have loved this extraordinary creature - and perhaps He wants to give him one last chance with the thousand-year captivity to come to his senses and repent of his sinful rebellion against God. But, as the Holy Spirit revealed to John, the devil will neither repent nor turn back; he will not submit to God, but continue to sin, which is why he will eventually face the just punishment in the lake of fire.

But let us consider another aspect. Let us consider that Jesus will reign on earth for a long time with many signs of divine dignity. On the whole, people will not be in a bad way; especially in comparison with the preceding time of judgement. Nevertheless, as soon as the released devil resumes his rebellious activities, some of them will be ready to rise up against God's kingship. It is frightening what unteachability, what suicidal arrogance dwells in the hearts of some people. At the same time, beware of suspecting such abysses only in the hearts of others. Those who are wise pray with David: "Search me, O God, and know my heart. Examine me and know my thoughts ... and guide me in the eternal way! " (Ps. 139:23,24)

Only then does the final judgement of all people follow. The living and the dead must appear before God's judgement seat. Here it will be shown that all the deeds of men are recorded in books, both good and evil. But besides this there is a special book, namely the book of life. And only those who are recorded in this book will be justified before God;⁶⁹ for there is no human being about whom nothing negative is recorded in the other books. All people would have to be condemned by God because of their imperfect works. But by trusting in the Lord Jesus, indeed by His election alone, our names can be inscribed in the book of life, and thereby we are not subject to God's judgement, but are saved by His grace.⁷⁰ Hallelujah!

⁶⁸ for example, Zech. 14:16-19

⁶⁹ cf. Luke 10:20; Rev. 21:27

⁷⁰ cf. Rom. 3:23.24

Revelation Chapters 21 and 22

1 And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea. 2 And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. 3 And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God. 4 And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away. 5 And he that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new. And he said unto me, Write: for these words are true and faithful. 6 And he said unto me, It is done. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely. 7 He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son. 8 But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death. 9 And there came unto me one of the seven angels which had the seven vials full of the seven last plagues, and talked with me, saying, Come hither, I will shew thee the bride, the Lamb's wife. 10 And he carried me away in the spirit to a great and high mountain, and shewed me that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God, 11 Having the glory of God: and her light was like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper stone, clear as crystal; 12 And had a wall great and high, and had twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels, and names written thereon, which are the names of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel: 13 On the east three gates; on the north three gates; on the south three gates; and on the west three gates. 14 And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and in them the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb. 15 And he that talked with me had a golden reed to measure the city, and the gates thereof, and the wall thereof. 16 And the city lieth foursquare, and the length is as large as the breadth: and he measured the city with the reed, twelve thousand furlongs. The length and the breadth and the height of it are equal. 17 And he measured the wall thereof, an hundred and forty and four cubits, according to the measure of a man, that is, of the angel. 18 And the building of the wall of it was of jasper: and the city was pure gold, like unto clear glass. 19 And the foundations of the wall of the city were garnished with all manner of precious stones. The first foundation was jasper; the second, sapphire; the third, a chalcedony; the fourth, an emerald; 20 The fifth, sardonyx; the sixth, sardius; the seventh, chrysolite; the eighth, beryl; the ninth, a topaz; the tenth, a chrysoprasus; the eleventh, a jacinth; the twelfth, an amethyst. 21 And the twelve gates were twelve pearls; every several gate was of one pearl: and the street of the city was pure gold, as it were transparent glass. 22 And I saw no temple therein: for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it. 23 And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof. 24 And the nations of them which are saved shall walk in the light of it: and the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honour into it. 25 And the gates of it shall not be shut at all by day: for there shall be no night there. 26 And they shall bring the glory and honour of the nations into it. 27 And there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie: but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life.

1 And he shewed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb. 2 In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, was there the tree of life, which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. 3 And there shall be no more curse: but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it; and his servants shall serve him: 4 And they shall see his face; and his name shall be in their foreheads. 5 And there shall be no night there; and they need no candle, neither light of the sun; for the Lord God giveth them light: and they shall reign for ever and ever. 6 And he said unto me,

These sayings are faithful and true: and the Lord God of the holy prophets sent his angel to shew unto his servants the things which must shortly be done. 7 Behold, I come quickly: blessed is he that keepeth the sayings of the prophecy of this book. 8 And I John saw these things, and heard them. And when I had heard and seen, I fell down to worship before the feet of the angel which shewed me these things. 9 Then saith he unto me, See thou do it not: for I am thy fellowservant, and of thy brethren the prophets, and of them which keep the sayings of this book: worship God. 10 And he saith unto me, Seal not the sayings of the prophecy of this book: for the time is at hand. 11 He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still: and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still. 12 And, behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be. 13 I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last. 14 Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city. 15 For without are dogs, and sorcerers, and whoremongers, and murderers, and idolaters, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie. 16 I Jesus have sent mine angel to testify unto you these things in the churches. I am the root and the offspring of David, and the bright and morning star. 17 And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely. 18 For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: 19 And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book. 20 He which testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly. Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus. 21 The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.

Finally, in the last two chapters, up to and including the fifth verse of chapter 22, we are introduced to the new world, and especially to the new Jerusalem with its splendour and glory. I do not want to comment much on these words of Revelation; the text of this wonderful vision works best by itself.

Therefore, only a few brief remarks: Unlike the first Jerusalem, the new City of God will not be man-made, but will come from God Himself; and like a beautiful and adorned bride, it will be given to the Lord Jesus. Saved people from all nations will come to it to bring it gifts and honour.

How unforgotten (and unrepentant) with God is the election of Jacob/Israel is shown by the fact that the twelve gates of the New Jerusalem are named after the twelve sons of Jacob - despite all their sin. Equally unforgotten are the twelve apostles of the Lord Jesus, whose names are engraved on the foundation stones of the city wall. Through this, eternal honour is bestowed on those men who were the first to be called to proclaim the wonderful message of salvation to the whole world.

I conclude my comments on the New Jerusalem by pointing out the many similarities that John's vision shares with certain predictions of the prophet Ezekiel; one should read independently the 47th and 48th chapters of the book of Ezekiel.

The conclusion of Chapter 22 offers us a series of reminders, which I briefly summarise:

- Again, it is emphasised that the communications in Revelation are from God Himself, or from the Lord Jesus as a person of the one Godhead. (Verses 6 and 16)
- Our worship is to belong to God alone; no angel or other being - however powerful he or she may be - is worthy of it. (Verse 9)
- The communications of the Revelation to John are not secret knowledge but are to be open ("unsealed") to everyone. (Verse 10)

- At the same time, however, no one may be forced to accept their truth: those who prefer to continue in their wrongdoing despite all warnings, let them do so; those, on the other hand, who are on the path of righteousness, let them continue on it. Let everyone be aware that Jesus will reward each person accordingly. (Verses 11 and 12)
- Jesus himself invites us again to eternal life: Whoever wants to, let him take of the water of life - free of charge! (Verse 17)
- The events of Revelation do not describe a distant future, but an imminent event. (Verses 6, 10, 12 and 20)⁷¹
- Verses 18 and 19 underline the extraordinary importance of this book. For no other NT scripture concludes with such a stern warning against any alteration of its contents!

I wholeheartedly endorse the last verse of the entire book: The grace of the Lord Jesus be with all!

⁷¹ It would take us too far to explain in detail at this point the subject of the so-called "near expectation", which is continually found in the NT. Very briefly, I would just like to point out that for many of the prophecies in the Revelation of John, multiple fulfilment is possible: some of the announced divine acts of judgement will not be carried out once and for all, but can happen several times and in different places.

List of sources for Table 1 (in the commentary above Chapter 6)

(Internet links were each retrieved in approx. May 2022)

Congo Atrocities: <https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kongogr%C3%A4uel>

Genocides and colonialism in general: <https://www.hawaii.edu/powerkills/20TH.HTM>

30-year war: https://de.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dreißigjähriger_Krieg

World War 1: https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Erster_Weltkrieg

World War 2: <https://de.statista.com/statistik/daten/studie/1055110/umfrage/zahl-der-toten-nach-staaten-im-zweiten-weltkrieg/>

Spanish flu 1919/1920: <https://www.aerzteblatt.de/archiv/197155/Spanische-Grippe-Ein-Virus-Millionen-Tote>

Deaths caused by Soviet Russian communism: <https://www.hawaii.edu/powerkills/NOTE4.HTM>

Deaths caused by Chinese communism:

<https://www.hawaii.edu/powerkills/NOTE2.HTM>

<https://www.welt.de/geschichte/article201213624/70-Jahre-VR-China-Die-Kosten-fuer-Maos-Sieg-70-Millionen-Tote.html>

Deaths from famine: https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Liste_von_Hungersn%C3%B6ten

Deaths from epidemics and pandemics:

https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Liste_von_Epidemien_und_Pandemien

Tuberculosis:

Loddenkemper, R. et al: Tuberculosis - Historical development, status quo and outlook; in: Pneumologie 2010; 64: 567-572 (<https://www.thieme-connect.com/products/ejournals/pdf/10.1055/s-0030-1255623.pdf>).

Robert Koch: Epidemiology of Tuberculosis. Lecture at the Academy of Sciences in Berlin, 7 April 1910 (<https://edoc.rki.de/bitstream/handle/176904/5172/636-649.pdf>).

Estimate concerning tuberculosis: In Germany, the tuberculosis mortality rate decreased between 1880 and 1960 from slightly more than 30 to about 3 per 10,000, whereby during the two world wars a short-term increase in mortality rates was observed. I roughly calculate a linear progression; this results in an average of 17.5 deaths per 10,000 inhabitants per year during the period under consideration. Transferred to the average population in Northern and Western Europe of 185 million, this results in 323,750 deaths annually, or a total of 25.9 million deaths in 80 years - in Western and Northern Europe alone!

Cholera:

World Health Organization: Monograph No. 43 - Cholera. Geneva 1959.

https://de.wikibrief.org/wiki/Cholera_outbreaks_and_pandemics

Plague ("Black Death") in the 14th century: <https://www.mpg.de/18239537/0210-wisy-black-death-mortality-not-as-widespread-as-long-thought-9347732-x>

World population statistics:

<https://m.bpb.de/izpb/55882/entwicklung-der-weltbevoelkerung>

<http://instatis.de/tabellen/weltregionen-1.htm>