

The progress of the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ

- Churches persecuted
- Trumpets of warning
- Mighty conflict
- Bowls of anger

Who is going to win in this age?

- Everything in Revelation 1-16 leads us to expect that our Lord Jesus Christ is destined to be triumphant, even in this gospel age

Jesus' five enemies

- Satan
- Pagan government
- False religion
- Worldly indulgence
- Men and women who hate God
- Rev 17-20 shows the defeat of these five enemies

Each of the sections of the book of Revelation up to Revelation 16:21 have shown us one particular aspect of the progress of the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. The Lord Jesus Christ is head of the churches (chapters 1–3). He goes out to spread his gospel, conquering and planning further conquering. As he does so, the churches experience various kinds of suffering and persecution^{□1}. Trumpets of warning are sounded in the ears of the world^{□2}. A mighty conflict is taking place between the dragon and the Christ-child, that is, between Satan and the Lord Jesus Christ^{□3}. Bowls of God's anger are poured out upon the world^{□4}.

Now in the sixth, seventh and eighth sections of the book of Revelation^{□1}, the question is being asked more than ever: who is going to win this mighty spiritual battle, the dragon or the child, the devil or the Lord Jesus Christ? Of course the Christian knows the answer even without reading the rest of Revelation! Of course, our Lord Jesus Christ will win the battle. Satan will be defeated. But we must ask the question more precisely: who is going to win in this age? In the time of the preaching of the gospel, the age in which we now live, who will win?

We might guess that the answer is still the same. In chapters 1–3, the Christians are told to overcome. Promises are given to overcomers. Surely this means that Jesus will be an overcomer as well!

In chapters 4–7, Jesus goes out planning to do some further conquering. So we might guess that in this gospel-age he will be the conqueror of Satan.

If in chapters 8–11 trumpets of warning are sounded in the ears of the world, this surely means that the world needs the warning because Jesus is about to crush the opposition.

In chapters 12–14 Satan is thrown out of heaven, down to the earth. It makes us wonder: now that he is thrown to the earth will he be victorious on the earth? Knowing our Lord Jesus Christ as we do, we might guess that the answer is, 'No, Satan will be defeated again.'

In chapters 15–16 the bowls of wrath fall upon the world just as they once fell upon Pharaoh. But Pharaoh was defeated. The horse and its rider God threw into the sea! The Song of Moses was a song of triumph. This surely means that once again, even in this gospel-age, Satan will be vanquished just as Pharaoh was.

Everything in Revelation 1–16 leads us to expect that our Lord Jesus Christ is destined to be triumphant, even in this gospel-age.

Now as we reach Revelation 17:1 there is a new note in the book. So far we have seen a mighty conflict taking place. At times we might have felt that the result seems to be somewhat uncertain! But if we ever had that feeling, Revelation 17–22 will surely correct it! The Lord Jesus Christ has had five enemies according to chapters 1–16: (i) the dragon (Satan), (ii) the beast from the sea (pagan government), (iii) the beast from the land (false religion), also called the false prophet, (iv) Babylon (worldly indulgence) and (v) men and women bearing the mark of the beast (the world in its hatred of God).

Now in chapters 17–22 we shall again be going over and over what is to happen in the total story of the world. But this time we shall be shown the defeat of these five enemies of God. Each of the sections of Revelation^{□1} has taken one particular aspect of the events of the gospel-age and has held it before us in symbolic manner. I have emphasized that each section covers the entire gospel-age. The book is not in chronological sequence. Rather it goes over and over the same ground again and again from different angles.

I said earlier that the first section^{□1} had heavy emphasis on John's own day. The next sections^{□2} each begin with the events of John's day but they also say more about the end-time judgement day. But now as we come to the

□1 4:1-8:1

□2 8:2-11:18

□3 11:19-15:4

□4 15:5-16:21

□1 17:1-19:10;
19:11-21:8; 21:9-22:21

□1 17:1-19:10;

□2 8:2-11:18;

□3 11:19-15:4;

□4 15:5-16:21

□1 17:1-19:10;

□2 8:2-11:18;

□3 11:19-15:4;

□4 15:5-16:21

□1 17:1-19:10;

□2 8:2-11:18;

□3 11:19-15:4;

□4 15:5-16:21

□1 17:1-19:10;

□2 8:2-11:18;

□3 11:19-15:4;

□4 15:5-16:21

□1 17:1-19:10;

□2 8:2-11:18;

□3 11:19-15:4;

□4 15:5-16:21

□1 17:1-19:10;

□2 8:2-11:18;

□3 11:19-15:4;

□4 15:5-16:21

□1 1:1-3:22; 4:1-8:1; 8:2-11:18; 11:19-15:4; 15:5-16:21

□1 1:1-3:22

□2 4:1-8:1; 8:2-11:18; 11:19-15:4; 15:5-16:21

• The next sections say more about the final events

last of these sections in Revelation^{□3} we shall find that although they still have much to say about the entire gospel-age the focus is more than ever on the final events. At the conclusion of the last section^{□4} the end of Babylon was mentioned^{□5} and the end of the beast^{□6}. Now these matters are taken up more fully.

Revelation 17:1 is the commencement of a new section. There have been six 'changes of scene' in the book of Revelation so far, each introducing us to a new section in the book. We have considered:

- Christ in the midst of his churches^{□1}
- Christ opening the scroll of God's purposes^{□2}
- Christ sending angels with trumpets of warning^{□3}
- Christ giving visions of a spiritual battle^{□4}
- Christ pouring out bowls of anger^{□5}.

Scene 6 – John carried to a desert

• Introduced by one of the bowl angels – linking this to the previous section

• The judgement of the great harlot – a symbol of the world in its love of fleshy indulgence

Society has a tendency to turn to fleshy indulgence

• But fleshy indulgence will be defeated

Now there is a 'change of scene' once again. ¹Now one of the seven angels with the seven bowls came and spoke with me, saying, 'Come, I will show you the judgement of the great harlot . . . ' In prophetic trance John is carried away to a desert to be shown a new part of his great vision. It is these new scenes that break the book of Revelation up into distinct sections, and that let us know there is a new section beginning here.

Revelation 17:1–2 introduces the visions of chapters 17:3 to 19:10. 'Now one of the seven angels with the seven bowls came . . . ' This links 17:3–19:10 with 15:5–16:21 and shows that this section is to deal with the same kind of things that were happening in the previous section.

'Come,' says the angel, 'I will show you the judgement of the great harlot . . . ' John is to have an interpreting angel to accompany him as he is taken to see new aspects of his vision. He is being invited to see the judgement of the prostitute. The prostitute or 'the great harlot'^{□1} is a symbol of the world in its love of fleshy indulgence. In the Old Testament cities and nations are compared to a prostitute when they fall into sins of the flesh. Tyre and Nineveh were described in this way^{□2} and so were Jerusalem and Israel^{□3}.

Society has a tendency to turn to fleshy indulgence. As we watch the various nations of the world we can see (if the eyes of our heart can see at all!) the constant tendency in the world to want ever-increasing stimulation of what the Bible calls 'the flesh'. There is an ever-increasing appetite for stimulating sexual imaginations, steadily increasing love of violence in advertisements and photographs, in novels and movies. But back behind it all is love of money. One part of the world makes money out of its worldly companions by exploiting their love of impurity and their love of violence. Even while worldly people are struggling to bring in treaties abolishing this kind of weapon or that kind of weapon, they walk around in a world that is constantly promoting the very fleshy indulgence they are trying to prohibit in another part of the world.

But fleshy indulgence will be defeated. John saw it in visionary form centuries ago. The angel says: 'I will show you the judgement of the great harlot seated by many waters.'

□3 17:1-19:10;
19:11-21:8; 21:9-22:21
□4 15:5-16:21
□5 16:12-13
□6 16:14-21

□1 1:9-3:22
□2 4:1-8:1
□3 8:2-11:18
□4 11:19-15:4
□5 15:5-16:21

□1 17:5, 15, 16;
19:2
□2 Isaiah 23:16-17; Nahum 3:4
□3 Isaiah 1:21; Jeremiah 3:6-10; Ezekiel 16:15-22; 23:1-49; Hosea 4:12-13; 5:3



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