The Apocalypse - Doorway to the Soul

Exploring the inner meaning of John’s visions in the Book of Revelation
The Bible as a Doorway to the Soul
What appears as a history of a people – the Israelitish/Jewish nation – in reality enshrines the dynamics of our own personal, spiritual journey. In this way the Divine reveals - to those who seek to know – the inflowing of divine power and love into a person’s inner life.

Much of the inspiration for what follows has been provided by the insights of Emanuel Swedenborg (1688-1772) the visionary, spiritual philosopher and psychologist, who developed this approach in great detail.

The Apocalypse of John
This last book of the Bible, commonly known as the Book of Revelation, appears to be relatively incomprehensible. It consists of a sequence of dramatic and bizarre visions seen by the apostle John. They symbolise the sometimes agonising experiences a person has to endure on their journey towards inner peace and fulfilment. These challenging times are regularly interspersed with foretastes of this angelic state.

Sequence of 24 Key images from the Apocalypse
Specially commissioned from the artist, G Roland Smith, these illustrations provide a visual sequence and sense of continuity to John’s visions. Their relevance to our spiritual experience is explored with each illustration which is accompanied by:

• Biblical quotation
• Narrative summary – of the passage illustrated
• Spiritual significance - with key concept highlighted
• Personal application

Extracted from Handbook Two of The Apocalypse of John Card Set prepared by the Apocalypse Study Group and published by Spiritual Wisdom (www.spiritualwisdom.org.uk) © 2014 Spiritual Wisdom
1 Christ Manifesting

“I turned round to see the voice that was speaking to me. And when I turned I saw seven golden lampstands, and among the lampstands was someone “like a son of man”, dressed in a robe reaching down to his feet and with a golden sash round his chest.” Rev 1:12-13

Narrative Summary (Rev 1:9-20)

This first vision that John receives whilst on the Isle of Patmos is of the glorious risen Christ, seen in the centre of seven golden candlesticks which represent seven churches in Asia, to each of which John is commanded to write a message.

The Christ is seen with white hair and a face ‘like the sun shining in all its brilliance’, out of which ‘his eyes were like blazing fire’. His voice sounds like rushing water, and out of his mouth protrudes a sharp double-edged sword. In his right hand he holds seven stars which he explains are the seven angels associated with each of the seven churches. The Christ says to John, “Do not be afraid.”

Spiritual Significance: Overwhelmed by Love

The all-seeing gaze of divine Wisdom may at first arouse a sense of fear. Fear is one of the great psychological blocks that shut us off from receiving the light of truth. What we love with our deeper truer self is often feared and felt by our natural outer self as a threat. Yet this glorious vision of Christ is surely one of great love directed toward us. The power and intimacy of this awesome presence, at first overwhelming in intensity, ultimately offers great reassurance and hope.

Personal Application

Does any aspect of the vision strike fear into you? If so, what is this fear about?

How might the love mentioned above help overcome this fear?

When you visualise this powerful Christ vision before you, is there some aspect of it that draws you and resonates inwardly? Reflect on how this particular aspect of Divine Love is calling to you at this stage of your spiritual journey.
Seven Churches

“Write on a scroll what you see and send it to the seven churches.” Rev 1:11

Narrative Summary [Rev 2 & 3]

The risen Christ directs John what to write to each of the seven churches in Asia. He is quick to praise what he sees as good and positive in his people with words of encouragement, and then to shine a red warning light on their current failings – but with the promise of a heavenly reward to those who face up to them and overcome them.

Spiritual Significance:
Acknowledging Strength and Weakness

Each of us must have made some spiritual progress to enable us to listen to and receive any words from the Christ. Yet none of us is immune from inner blindness to the limitations and illusions which inhabit us. Often we fall into making the fragment of truth that we can see into being the whole truth. What we are as yet unaware of has to be revealed to us. Whilst acknowledging our strengths we need to be able to recognise the weaknesses the words of Christ reveal. Overcoming them brings great rewards.

Personal Application

Reflecting on this could be a reminder to you that however you feel about yourself at present there is always the presence within you of good qualities you are receiving from God. He knows that with help you can overcome your failings. He longs for you to welcome and receive the inner changes that are needed to bring you to a heavenly state and home.

This is also a reminder that there will inevitably remain negative aspects in your inner depths that you may not be aware of as yet. So, prepare yourself for coming apocalyptic experience and transformation.

Try to maintain a healthy balanced attitude to yourself. You are neither worthless and insignificant, nor are you now or ever ‘God’s gift to mankind’ who needs no apocalyptic testing and transformation.
What are you drawn to in the illustration right now? Let this bring to mind any strength you might use or weakness you might work on.
3 Christ Knocking

“Here I am!  I stand at the door and knock.  If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will go in and eat with him, and he with me.”
Rev 3:20

Narrative Summary (Rev 3:20)

After John has been given all seven messages to write to the seven churches in Asia Minor the risen Christ presents himself as knocking at ‘the door’, requesting to be allowed in to join a hospitable meal.

Spiritual Significance: Opening the Heart

In this image it would seem that John is seeing the people of the churches as tending to shut Christ out of their lives.  Perhaps they are fearful of letting in such an all-inclusive and all-embracing Love into their hearts.

Since we must all have done at least some things that we now regret, and also have experienced generally unacceptable desires and impulses, it is only natural that there are likely to be conscious or unconscious fears within us.  These cause us to keep the door to our unconscious life well and truly locked against what feels to be the intrusion of genuine Love.

And yet if we were to overcome such fear and open the door of our heart, what a wonderful transformation we would experience.  Openness brings a new nearness to the Divine.

Personal Application

This may indicate that you need to focus on letting the power and reality of Christ’s love into your inner life.  Now is the time to reflect on this.

Listen to the voice within!  Can you hear the inner call of Love appealing to you to open your heart, allowing beneficial change and transformation into your being and life?  Try to visualise how it might feel to open your heart and share your naturally imperfect life with pure non-judgmental Love, and be wonderfully affected by it.
Throne in Heaven

“At once I was in the Spirit, and there before me was a throne in heaven with someone sitting on it.” Rev 4:2

Narrative Summary (Rev 4)

John sees an open door in heaven, and receives a commanding invitation to ‘Come up here’ in order to be shown ‘what must take place’ or be revealed. He sees before him a throne with ‘One’ sitting on it encircled by an emerald-tinted rainbow.

Surrounding the throne are four ‘living creatures’ who are continually giving glory, honour and thanks to the One sitting on the throne. Around them are twenty-four elders sitting on thrones, who respond to the creatures’ praising, by humbly laying their crowns before the One on the throne.

Spiritual Significance: Affirming the Power of Divine Love

The throne of God is a symbol of the divine power of Love itself, with the four living creatures around the throne signifying key protective aspects of that power. Spiritual power within us arises from being led by divine Love which brings us the wisdom of knowing the way to true and abiding happiness.

The twenty-four elders represent all the varied aspects of wisdom that come from receiving this power to live one’s life from pure love. Their falling down before the One on the throne signifies how such wisdom acknowledges its total dependence on divine Love as its only Source.

This judgment scene depicts how the power of divine Love radiates into the dark and unknown areas of our unconscious. It facilitates self-judgment from Love, making us aware of our inner motives and attitudes.

Personal Application

You are being invited to let God, as the power of divine Love, into your life (‘opening your inner door’). By opening this door many hidden things of great importance may be revealed to you. These are such as to increase your power of spiritual perception and discernment.

This also represents genuine humility and gratitude towards God. His power of Love is essential for you to be able to make true judgments concerning what is now taking place within your inner life.
Lamb Opening 7 Seals

“I saw...a scroll with writing on both sides and sealed with seven seals.” Rev 5:1

Narrative Summary (Rev 5 - 6:1)

The One on the throne holds in his right hand a scroll sealed with seven seals. John weeps because he believes there is no one who can open the scroll and discover its contents. Then he sees ‘a Lamb, looking as if it had been slain, standing in the centre of the throne’.

The Lamb takes the scroll and the living creatures and elders fall down in worship. Then one by one the Lamb breaks open the seals, and in each case John sees a new challenging vision.

Spiritual Significance: Revealing Inner Motivations

The scroll is our inner book of life - containing the usually unconscious source of our motivations and attitudes. Here is where, unbeknown to us in our spiritually asleep states, the love and light that flow in from our divine Source are turned to the service of ourselves. This love becomes self-interest, and light becomes the illusory light of self-centred thinking and judging.

The breaking open of the book of life to our viewing, facilitates acknowledgment of hidden self-interest and distorted thinking, enabling a major transformation of our state to take place.

Personal Application

At first this inner revelation may seem to be horrific and condemning, but remember that this is taking place within the compassionate sphere of the divine Lamb. He lovingly desires you to become more inwardly aware. There is no personal condemnation intended here, simply an awareness and acknowledgment of the human fallibility (or tendency to ‘fall’) that you share with all humanity.

This may well be an indication that some light is beginning to shine into your hidden depths to reveal things that might come as a shock to you at first. Remember that what is being revealed are inner dynamics common to all finite, fallible human beings. The intention is not personal condemnation, but enlightenment.
6 Four Horsemen

“I looked, and there before me was a white horse! Its rider held a bow.” Rev 6:2

Narrative Summary (Rev 6:1-8)

When the Lamb breaks open the first four seals of the scroll there appear, one after the other, four horsemen each riding a different coloured horse.

The first is white and its rider holds a bow and is given a crown. The second rider on a fiery red horse is given a sword. The third rider on a black horse holds a pair of scales. The fourth horse is pale and its rider is named Death, with Hades following close behind. These two can cause death by sword, famine, plague, and wild beasts.

Spiritual Significance: Spiritual Decline

The scroll is a symbol of our book of life, and opening it represents a revealing of inner motivations and deep-seated attitudes and prejudices. Horses represent how we love to examine what is true about our life.

The colour of each horse emerging from the scroll is an indication of the quality of the mind’s understanding of its own life, and of life in general, in the light of truth. The white horse represents purity and truth, but is followed by a serious decline from that purity – first to ‘red’, then to ‘black’ and finally to ‘pale’.

It is being revealed to us that the activity of the self-centred ego causes gradual decline from purity of understanding. This ever-present tendency – frequently unconscious – to have an eye out for our own benefit will progressively sully and deaden the truth so as to favour ourselves.

Personal Application

This may be suggesting you take a deeper view of your understanding and use of truth. You may discover many mixed motives. Perhaps you sometimes have an inclination to use what you believe in - to make yourself look good or better than others? Be glad of such a discovery, because this will enable you to take the next step in your spiritual development - to receive more and more fully the pure light of truth and warmth of love.
7 Souls under the Altar

“I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain because of the word of God and the testimony they had maintained.” Rev 6:9

Narrative Summary (Rev 6:9-11; 20:4)

The opening of the fifth seal of the Lamb’s scroll reveals those who had been killed for testifying to the Word of God. They loudly complain about how long they must go on suffering.

Then they are each given a white robe, and told to wait until they have been joined by others to complete their number.

Eventually they are to be given new life. (Rev 20:4)

Spiritual Significance: Divine Protection

Apocalyptic revelations not only highlight unconscious negative elements but also marginalise good or positive elements. These are represented by the hidden-away ‘souls’ who had not worshipped the idolatrous ‘beast’. They represent all genuinely good and caring intentions within us which have been ‘ridiculed’, stifled by orthodoxy, and despised or rejected by the more worldly self-interested reasonings of ourselves and others.

It appears that they have been killed off in our minds: but in reality they are still there in a relatively subconscious level (under the altar). There they are protected from lasting harm, constrained or ‘quarantined’, waiting for a time when an inner change in us will allow them to resurface safely to help guide our life. This part of us longs for the lost spiritual connection that we previously experienced in our lives.

Personal Application

This may be calling you to get in touch with your longing to be able to realize your best ideals. Your desire is to become and be the loving, caring person that you are, deep down beneath all your natural worldly worrying, fearing and planning for yourself. This is an opportunity to let your longing to be your best self to become more focused. While doing so you will be held (‘clothed’) in a state of inner purity – despite the continuing presence of your outer worldliness.
Great Earthquake

“There was a great earthquake. The sun turned black... the whole moon turned blood red, and the stars in the sky fell to earth.” Rev 6:12-13

Narrative Summary (Rev 6:12-17)

The sixth seal is opened. In the heavens the sun turns black, the moon turns blood red, and the stars fall to earth. Then the whole sky is wrapped up like a scroll. Meanwhile, on the earth there is a great earthquake that moves all the mountains and islands out of place. Many seek shelter in caves and rocks, calling on the mountains and rocks to fall on them and hide them from the One on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb.

Spiritual Significance: Spiritual Upheaval

Here we have the culmination of what is revealed by the opening of the previous five seals, a scene of catastrophic upheaval in both the heavens and the earth. This pictures a radical change in one’s former view of what is heavenly and what is earthly. The old ‘world’ and its order have to collapse to make way for the trauma of birth into a wonderful new ‘world’ with its new heaven.

Mirrored here is how at times on our spiritual journey we find we are suddenly experiencing a breakdown in how we have understood and viewed our life spiritually. The ‘light’ goes out as some of our key priorities become shaken up and turned upside down. We experience a sense of inner darkness and disorientation. Fearfully, we try to cling to what we have known and possessed.

Personal Application

This may be preparing you with an understanding of how, if regeneration or rebirth is to take place, there will be spiritual birth pangs that are essential to your spiritual transformation. Or, it may be an indication that you are ready, and the preparatory signs of your rebirth are imminent. You may be about to enter ‘the dark before the dawn’. Either way, it should be a strong reminder to you that there is no real gain without pain. – a good time, perhaps, to look back on your life to see just how true this has been.
9 Sounding 7 Trumpets

“I saw the seven angels who stand before God, and to them were given seven trumpets... [They] prepared to sound them.”
Rev 8:2, 6

Narrative Summary (Rev 8:2-12)

John sees an angel standing before the golden altar holding a golden censor that contains the prayers of the saints, and from which smoke ascends up to God. Then he sees seven other angels who are standing before God, each given a trumpet to sound. One by one they blow them, upon which a series of horrific and destructive events afflict the earth.

Amongst these effects were a third of the sun, moon and stars turning dark, a third of the trees and grass being burned up, and a third of the fish in the sea dying.

Spiritual Significance: Spiritual Wake-up

A trumpet blast functions as a strident wake-up call to action, or at least, to preparation for imminently required action. It is one thing to be shown home truths about negativity in our inner selves (an ‘opening of the seals’ of our book of life). It is quite another to be ‘blasted’ into wakeful realization of its spiritual consequences – the destruction of our capacity to receive real deep happiness and joy in life.

So the message is not simply “See and take note”, but “Now realize the great implications of what you are being shown.” A great inner upheaval is imminent in the next stage of our spiritual development.

Personal Application

As your spiritual growth continues your awareness of possible inner spiritual dangers is heightened. Use this image to reflect on what might be lost if you don’t heed this warning.

Are you prepared to let go of any negative feelings or attitudes that are now being brought to your attention, ones that may currently have a destructive hold on your spiritual life?
10  

Locusts from the Abyss

“Out of the smoke locusts came down upon the earth and were given power like that of scorpions... They were told... to harm... only those people who did not have the seal of God on their foreheads.”  Rev 9:3-4

Narrative Summary  [Rev 9:1-12]

An angel sounding the fifth trumpet heralds the opening of the Abyss. Dense smoke filled with a plague of locusts emerges. They look like horses going into battle, with golden crowns on their heads, human faces, women’s hair and lions’ teeth. All this is finished off with scorpion-like tails that can deliver a tormenting sting.

Spiritual Significance:  Addictive Pleasures

Locusts can gather together into massive swarms and destroy crops. They picture the destruction of all that is spiritually alive within us.

The locust army is a vivid representation of the multitude of sensory impressions we are continually receiving. These are capable of invading our minds and devouring any thoughts which are spiritually alive. When we base our life on a multitude of sensory pleasures that offer instant gratification, we cut ourselves off from what is spiritually alive, by living on a superficial and external level.

When perverted desires are encouraged in this way and rule our thoughts (golden crowns), they can appear very reasonable (human faces) and attractive (women’s hair), but can readily lead to harmful addictions - with painful consequences for our spiritual life (scorpion’s sting).

Personal Application

This may be a wake-up call to look into the powerful effect that your world of sensory experience may have unconsciously had on your reasoning and judgment, on your attitude to life generally, and on your relationships in particular. No one can remain totally free from the dominating aspect of the sensory side of life.

You may receive some particular enlightenment by meditating on any or all of the images of addictive sensory pleasures: golden crowns, human faces, female hair, lions’ teeth and scorpions’ stings. We all have a tendency to be seduced by them.
11 John Eating Little Scroll

“Then I saw another mighty angel coming down from heaven... holding a little scroll... He said to me, 'Take it and eat it. It will turn your stomach sour, but in your mouth it will be as sweet as honey.’” Rev 10:1-2, 9

Narrative Summary (Rev 10:1-2, 8-10)

John sees a mighty angel with a rainbow above his head, holding in his hand a little scroll. His legs look like fiery pillars, his left foot on the sea and his right on the land. Then a voice from heaven commands John to take the scroll.

The angel then tells John to eat it, saying that it will turn his stomach bitter, though it will taste as sweet as honey in his mouth. And this indeed proves to be the case.

Spiritual Significance: Bitter-Sweet Ideals

A scroll descending from heaven is an image of the Word of God in a written form. It is just a little scroll because it encapsulates the whole Word of God in the two great commandments: to love the Lord and one’s neighbour. What beautiful ideals they express! Our immediate response is positive. But, what about their being put into practice on a daily basis?

To truly digest and ‘stomach’ such truths can actually prove very uncomfortable. When we are called on to live out our beliefs, it is bitter to our natural inclinations. Be open to receive this wonderful insight and allow it to ‘prophesy’ the essential truths of love to your more external worldly side.

Personal Application

This provides an opportunity for you to recall the centrality and importance of the two great commandments: to love God and the neighbour rather than yourself alone. Reflect now on how you respond to the idea of such pure altruistic love – how sweet is it to your taste?

Also be aware of how, if you begin to let this love rule your life, your ego is unlikely to enjoy ‘stomaching’ it, and will bitterly react against it. Be prepared and ready for this reaction so that you might be better able to resist your ego, and retain the essential ‘sweetness’ of the love of God. This makes heaven within human souls and their communities.
12 Two Witnesses

“I will give power to my two witnesses, and they will prophesy. ...the beast that comes up from the Abyss will ...overpower and kill them. But after ...three and a half days a breath of life from God entered them, and they stood on their feet.” Rev 11:3, 7, 11

Narrative Summary (Rev 11:3-12)

Two witnesses clothed in sackcloth prophesy. Anyone attempting to harm them is devoured by fire issuing from their mouths.

Then the beast from the abyss attacks and kills them, and their bodies are left in the street without burial. But after three and a half days a breath of life from God enters them so that they stand up on their feet. Then their enemies see them ascend to heaven in a cloud.

Spiritual Significance: Undeniable Centrality of Love

God’s two witnesses are better known as the two great commandments: that eternal life is to love God and the neighbour. These truths witness to the Love that is God and the need for its presence and activity in the human heart. Such love has the power to overcome the selfish tendencies that repeatedly flare up within us (devour with fire).

However, the ‘beast’ within all of us seeks an opportunity to attempt to eradicate these witnesses from our life, and for a time (3½ days), can appear to be successful. But unless we have wilfully chosen to become ‘dead men’, the experience of resurrection to new spiritual life takes place. For us this is nothing less than a divine miracle.

Such a dramatic spiritual experience, though not always remembered, is preserved unconsciously within us (drawn up out of sight into heaven in a cloud).

Personal Application

Reflect on your love for God and your neighbour. These are witnesses to the nature of divine Love. Become aware of the reality of divine Love that is the essence of the One Life. Divine Love has the power to connect you with all the variety and diversity of human beings in loving and useful communion and service.

In every moment it is possible to be open to this Love in your heart, mind and daily living. This focus has the potential to effect a divine miracle in your life.
13 Sun-Woman Giving Birth

“The dragon stood in front of the woman who was about to give birth, so that he might devour her child the moment it was born.” Rev 12:4

Narrative Summary (Rev 12:1-6)

There appears in heaven a pregnant woman surrounded by the sun, and with the moon beneath her feet. She cries out in pain as she is about to give birth to a boy.

There also appears in heaven a great red dragon that proudly sports seven heads each with a crown on it, whilst his tail sweeps a third of the stars out of heaven. The dragon stands before the woman, ready to devour her child as soon as he is born.

Spiritual Significance: Birthing the New

A heavenly woman encompassed by the sun is a beautiful image of a human life full of love and light. It is the ideal we seek to emulate. Her going through the pains of childbirth represents the struggles and pains associated with giving birth to new forms of truth. These are to lead and guide us through an imminent new stage in our spiritual development.

By contrast, the devouring red dragon (seen in heaven) mirrors our self-focussed pride in our spiritual knowledge, wisdom and achievements. The tender shoots of any spiritual advance are at first always defenceless and extremely vulnerable to this inner ‘dragon’ of pride, and without divine protection would be destroyed by it.

Personal Application

The moment of birthing love and new living truth in your life is a time of great vulnerability. You are truly open to the Divine, yet the spiritual danger at this point is that you may take ownership of what has been born of God. You might take pride in it and what you have achieved, forgetting it is flowing from and belongs only to the one Source in the divine Life.

However, fear not, for God protects what is at first weak and innocent but born of real Love.
Michael Defeating Dragon

“And there was war in heaven. Michael and his angels fought against the dragon... and his angels... The great dragon... was hurled to the earth, and his angels with him.” Rev 12:7, 9

Narrative Summary (Rev 12:7-9)

There is war in heaven between the angel leader Michael and the great red dragon that threatens the Sun-woman and her newborn infant. The dragon, now recognized as the devil or Satan, loses the battle and is hurled down to the earth.

Spiritual Significance: Overcoming Spiritual Pride

The great red dragon is a potent symbol of the intellectual pride that threatens every new step forward in our spiritual progress.

Even to think of oneself as a ‘spiritual’ person – somehow elevated compared with others - is fraught with danger, placing us in an imaginary ‘heaven’ of spiritual superiority. Whilst we are in this ‘heaven’ the dragon’s true nature is at first unrecognized.

The angel Michael (whose Hebrew name means ‘Who is like God’) represents angelic discernment and acknowledgement that no human being can ever possess the wisdom, purity and power of God. It is this divine power that overcomes the dragon of spiritual pride, revealing its true nature as the deceiving serpent of outward appearances. Being ‘hurled down to the earth’ means it becomes clear, even to our natural awareness, just what a spiritual danger it has been.

Personal Application

This may be an indication that now is the time to detect, observe and acknowledge the presence of the dragon of spiritual pride within you. Endeavour to link with your angelic ‘Michael’ who knows for certain that only God can be good and wise in Himself. Any appearance to the contrary is a deceptive illusion of the human ego.

So let it be your proud ‘dragon’ that suffers a fall – and not your true Self.
15   Harvesting the Grapes

“Still another angel... came... and called... to him who had the sharp sickle, 'Take your sharp sickle and gather the clusters of grapes from the earth’s vine, because its grapes are ripe.’”

Rev 14:18

Narrative Summary (Rev 14:14–20)

John sees seated on a cloud one ‘like a son of man’ with a crown on his head and a sharp sickle in his hand. An angel tells him to reap the harvest, which he does.

Another angel is called to gather the clusters of grapes from the earth’s vine because they are ripe. The angel does so and throws them into ‘the great winepress of God’s wrath’ where they are trampled and an enormous quantity of blood flows out of the press.

Spiritual Significance: Confronting Consequences

We have here a symbolic vision of the final ‘reaping what we have sown’ in the time of judgment. This is full disclosure of the underlying nature we have either allowed or chosen to develop within us. Here it is presented in the form of a harvesting of the land’s crops, and a gathering in of the fruits of the vineyard – the produce of both the heart and the mind.

This is a vision of the eventual ‘fruits’ of the self-centred side of every human being, which will eventually need to be thrown out and rejected from affecting the quality of one’s life.

Personal Application

This may stimulate you to face up to all the selfish impulses and false thinking that consciously and unconsciously arise in everyone. When these become obvious (harvested), you can begin to deal with their effect (pressing the grapes) on your spiritual life.

Put your hand into the hand of your loving, understanding Father as you honestly and courageously look deeper into the hidden fruits of your ego’s ‘sowing’, so you can safely ‘walk through the valley of the shadow of death’.
16  Song of the Lamb

“They held harps given them by God and sang the song of Moses the servant of God and the song of the Lamb.” Rev 15:2-3

Narrative Summary  (Rev 15)

John has a vision of those who had been victorious over the beast and his image, standing beside a sea of glass mixed with fire. They are given harps and sing the song of Moses and the Lamb, a paean of praise to the Lord God Almighty.

Then out of the temple emerge seven angels carrying seven golden bowls filled with the seven plagues of God’s wrath.

Spiritual Significance:  Heartfelt Thanksgiving

Moses is a representative figure of the presence of divine Law within our minds, whilst the Lamb represents the power and innocence of divine Love within our hearts. The song is one of rejoicing in the great power of these two effecting great ‘deeds’ of release and transformation in our inner lives. In particular, we sing of the experience of being freed from the beast of self-pride.

Standing beside a sea of glass mixed with fire is symbolic of a pure, perceptive (glass) and intense (fire) grasp of how pride affects us adversely.

This image represents a beautiful, heavenly state within us, to uphold us through the coming revelations of hidden negative states, which at times may feel to our ego like a pouring out of God’s wrath.

Personal Application

Rejoice now in the wonderful feeling of release from all that has limited your spiritual life. Feel the intense joy and connection with all that lives and breathes and has its source in the Divine.

Let your heart sing and your feet dance. Bask in the light and love of heavenly life. Know in your heart that this experience is REAL, even though at times you may feel you lose connection with this reality.
17  Seven Bowls of Wrath

“Then I heard a loud voice from the temple saying to the seven angels, ‘Go, pour out the seven bowls of God’s wrath on the earth.’”

Rev 16:1

Narrative Summary (Rev 16)

John sees seven angels emerging from the temple, each carrying a bowl containing one of the seven plagues of God’s wrath.

Then a loud voice from the temple commands them to pour out the seven bowls onto the earth, which results in a series of terrifying and painful effects on the earth and humanity that cause many to blame and curse God.

Spiritual Significance: Experiencing Spiritual Disease

Paradoxically, the angelic pouring out of a bowl of ‘wrath’ symbolizes the experience of receiving a powerful inflow of divine Love and Light. In reaction, a sick and diseased inner dynamic wells up into awareness - for example, the tendency to blame others and even God for our failings. Acknowledging our responsibility for such a condition is deeply painful to our ego. It feels it is being unfairly punished, when in reality we are lovingly being offered healing to liberate us from a destructive delusion. As we acknowledge our sickness, we open ourselves to receive God’s healing.

Personal Application

This dramatic image may indicate that it is now appropriate for you to get in touch with strong negative feelings (bowls of wrath) you may have towards some other person - or even God!

Can you recognise any dis-eased aspect of yourself in the image of great discomfort (the patient on the operating table) - for example, when you blame others for your difficulties and get caught up in the blame game? Consider the ways this kind of negativity tends to destroy your inner peace.

When might feelings of frustration be disguising an unrecognised dis-ease of the spirit? For example, might the divine Love be providing an opportunity for removal of the illusion of being victimised, and for the process of healing to begin?
18 Scarlet Woman

“I saw a woman sitting on a scarlet beast that was covered with blasphemous names... The woman was dressed in purple and scarlet, and... held a golden cup in her hand, filled with abominable things and the filth of her adulteries.” Rev 17:3-4

Narrative Summary (Rev 17)

One of the bowl-carrying angels shows John a woman dressed in scarlet sitting on a scarlet beast. She is glittering with gold and jewellery, and holds a golden cup filled with abominable things. Her title is ‘Mother of Prostitutes and Earth’s Abominations’.

The kings of the earth had committed adultery with her, and shared in her luxury, whilst everyone had become intoxicated with her licentiousness.

Spiritual Significance: Self-righteous Manipulation

The scarlet woman couples with the kings of the earth upon whom she rides – not for love, but to use them for personal power and gain. As such she is a powerful and gaudy symbol of spiritual prostitution. This is to couple a desire to manipulate others with high principles of truth (kings of the earth), but in a most seductive and seemingly justifiable way - at least to oneself!

She holds the ‘abominable golden cup’ of hypocrisy. This represents a person who uses high standards of moral behaviour and piety solely to gain status, importance and an imposing position from which to manipulate and dominate others.

Such flawed human behaviour shows little or no awareness of what we are really doing. It may look good, but at its heart it is ‘abominable’ hypocrisy and is spiritually lifeless.

Personal Application

This may encourage you to identify the ‘scarlet woman’ that lurks within you, as she does in all human beings, and to bring her into clear focus in your awareness. When or where do you tend to maintain artificial goodness or piety? Try to identify any underlying motivation for using your ‘spirituality’ to enhance your influence. Look for those times when you have had a strong need to control situations, by trying subtly (or unconsciously) to manipulate people for your own benefit.
Fall of Babylon

“Fallen! Fallen is Babylon the Great! She has become a home for demons and a haunt for every evil spirit.” Rev 18:2

Narrative Summary (Rev 18:1–2, 9-24)

An angel calls to God’s people to come out of Babylon so that they might avoid the plagues of death, mourning and famine that are about to overtake that great city.

Then another angel throws a boulder like a great millstone into the sea. The scarlet woman’s Babylon collapses; she loses all her riches and greatness, and the city becomes a haunt for demons and unclean detestable birds. No more can she cast her magic spell over the nations. No longer is there the sound of musical instruments. Her kings, merchants and sailors weep and mourn over her.

Spiritual Significance: Illusory Power

This signifies the need to let go of our control over our spiritual life and so allow the Source of real spiritual power to become the centre of our existence.

Babylon represents spiritual progress that has become tainted with pride, coupled with a desire to impress or manipulate others. Her ‘merchants’ and ‘kings’ represent the endeavour to dominate through spiritual knowledge and reputation. Authoritarian priests or egoistic gurus are striking examples. But the breaking through of divine power from within causes ego power to collapse.

Babylon’s downfall is prophesied as certain - pride goes before a fall. The call comes to recognize Babylon’s subtle tainting influence and to ‘come out of her’, rather than remaining trapped when the inevitable ‘fall’ finally comes.

Personal Application

Try to recognize and acknowledge the subtle endeavours of your ego to attribute to yourself any goodness and wisdom in your life. Whilst your ‘Babylon’ remains hidden and unacknowledged, it will taint all your spiritual understanding and good works, which may be very impressive. You are being called to ‘come out of her’ – to recognise and acknowledge the Source of true power within you and let go of your proud, manipulative, illusory superiority – and see your ‘Babylon’ collapse!

Now released, humbly and joyfully thank God.
20 Rider on White Horse

“I saw heaven standing open and there before me was a white horse, whose rider is called Faithful and True. With justice he judges and makes war... and his name is the Word of God.” Rev 19:11, 13

Narrative Summary (Rev 19:11-18)

Heaven stands open to reveal a white horse whose rider is named ‘the Word of God’. He is dressed in a robe dipped in blood on which is written, ‘King of Kings and Lord of Lords’. He is followed by heavenly armies on white horses dressed in fine white clean linen. An angel calls the flying birds to come to God’s great supper.

Spiritual Significance: Divine Intuitive Guidance

A rider on a horse is a biblical symbol of the mind under the rational control of the intellect - as opposed to being buffeted by the emotions or dominating physical sensations. The white colour symbolises purity and truth.

This rider, as ‘King of Kings and Lord of Lords’, brings divine direction to the mind (faithfully and truly) through the Word of God. He represents the summarizing Principle above all principles, called the ‘Law of Love’ (love to God and one’s neighbour), which governs the true interpretation of all sacred scripture.

We are invited to focus our thoughts (birds) on our coming union with the Divine (supper).

Personal Application

Whatever is genuinely real and true in your life can become known to you when you go deeply and sincerely into the depths of your heart and being. This is the divine guiding Truth that will bring spiritual clarity and power into your life. Reflect on how you might open your heart more fully to perceive and acknowledge the Law of Love as your chosen Lord and King, bringing you into union with the Divine.

Maybe in your higher thoughts and inner experience you can hear the call to ‘dine’ with God. Then you may experience more and more his victorious powerful Love in overcoming your inner spiritual conflicts. Allow this Love to infill and motivate you in all you do.
21 Soul Judgment

“I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Another book was opened, which is the book of life. The dead were judged according to what they had done as recorded in the books.”

Rev 20:12


An angel binds and throws the dragon into the Abyss. The dead stand before the throne of judgment in heaven with One seated on it from whose presence ‘earth and sky’ flee. The books are opened which record all they have done, and according to which they are judged. The book of life is also opened. Death and Hades and anyone not in the book of life are thrown into the lake of fire.

Spiritual Significance: Liberation from Self-centredness

After the binding and removal of the dragon of self-centred spiritual pride and arrogant hypocrisy, which secretly wants to be regarded as the most intelligent and wisest of all, the final judgment scene can take place in which all the dead are judged.

The ‘dead’ represent two diametrically opposite spiritual states – being dead to any spiritual feeling and thinking that may flow in, and being dead towards any self-centred thoughts and impulses that may be rising up in you. The former state is the spiritual death of utter self-centredness, whilst the latter is one of readiness to be born into the eternal life of deep joy and fulfilment in loving others.

Judgment reveals what is ‘written’ in one’s own book - the ‘book’ or memory of the inner heart and mind. It is a personal self-judgment in the light of the ‘book of life’. You know for sure now where you have chosen to stand.

Personal Application

When the ‘chips are down’, what do you love most? Seek to become more aware of both the positives and the negatives that are there – the good and the bad, the spiritually alive and the inwardly dead – and how they subtly affect the real quality of your outer life and relationships. This offers an increasing state of freedom to choose between the two. What do you really want to be or become?

So, why not choose ‘life’ rather than ‘death’? Choose now, so that you may become transformed into a beautiful channel for Love and Light.
22 Holy City as a Bride

“I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband.”

Rev 21:2

Narrative Summary (Rev 19:6-9; 21:1-5)

The heavenly multitude calls out, “Hallelujah! ... For the wedding of the Lamb has come, and his bride has made herself ready. Fine linen, bright and clean was given her to wear.”

Then, led by an angel, John receives a vision of the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, like a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. A voice from heaven declares, “Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them... for the old order of things has passed away.”

Spiritual Significance: Intimate and Creative Union with the Divine

The imagery here is the exact opposite of the scarlet woman and her kingly paramours: it now pictures the divine Lamb and his heavenly consort. In symbolic form we are presented with a picture of the end goal of all spiritual growth, depicted as the true and beautiful marriage between God and his human creation. The infinite and the finite, in intimate union and embrace, together create what is truly good and wise in human living. The two are bound together by mutual love – God’s love for his whole human creation, and each individual’s responding love for his or her Creator, making the perfect marriage.

Personal Application

This points towards the prospect of your growing intimacy with God. The Divine is not only your Creator Father giving and sustaining your life, but also becoming your divinely Human Husband - the Christ as the Lamb of God within you.

Think of giving yourself to him in marriage, receiving his seed and bearing his ‘children’ of Christ-like wise words and loving deeds. Putting your ego to one side, open yourself to the experience of joyful and willing submission to his will directing your life. Ask yourself, “Is this the ultimate goal of my spiritual development that I am most ardently seeking?”
23 Guiding Angel

“Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, as clear as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb... On each side... stood the tree of life, bearing twelve crops of fruit.” Rev 22:1-2

Narrative Summary (Rev 21:9; 22:1–2)

The guiding angel offers to show John ‘the bride, the wife of the Lamb’. ‘She’ appears in the structured form of a shining Holy City named Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God. Its temple is the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb, and nothing impure will ever enter it.

Then the angel shows John the river of the water of life flowing out of the city. On each side stands the tree of life bearing leaves of healing and twelve crops of fruit.

Spiritual Significance: Healing and Wholeness

The angelic potential within us all points to heaven-sent insights flowing from above. These are represented by the river of life flowing from the throne of the Lamb at the heart of the Holy City. This divine inflow of heaven-sent wisdom re-patterns old ideas and beliefs, and brings life-transforming healing and wholeness.

From the Holy City there is offered new hope and renewed vitality of purpose to those who are struggling spiritually. Its ‘temple’ is the Christ above and within one’s being, endeavouring to restructure the human mind according to the purity of the divine plan. When positive motivations and attitudes become rooted in the river’s inflowing inspiration, the mind becomes a veritable tree of life. Its ‘leaves’ symbolise healing thoughts, and its ‘twelve fruits’ revitalised living. We find a taste of heaven through acts of loving-kindness.

Personal Application

Note how your ego likes to trust in its own plans and wisdom. Are you ready and willing for it to be displaced by what God thinks and wills is for the best, and to be guided and led by Him in your speaking and acting - ideally moment by moment?

This is the ideal or ultimate goal of spiritual development. Meditate now on how much you really want this to be the eventual outcome of your life and relationship with God - to ‘drink of the water of life’ and ‘eat of the tree of life’ with their wonderful cleansing and healing effects on all your inner hurts and wounds.
‘Worship God!’

“I, John, am the one who heard and saw these things... I fell down to worship at the feet of the angel who had been showing them to me. But he said to me, ‘Do not do it! I am a fellow-servant with you... and of all who keep the words of this book. worship God!’”

Rev 22:8-9

Narrative Summary (Rev 22:8–9)

In response to his visions culminating in the descending Holy City with its healing river and tree of life, John falls down in adoration at the feet of his guiding angel. But the angel quickly corrects him, calling himself a servant like John and the prophets. John should worship God alone.

Spiritual Significance: Spiritual Humility

An angel represents the inner angelic level present in us all, through which God endeavours to instruct and guide our human thinking and feeling. The truly angelic in us looks up to God as Author and Inspirer. It also asks our lower self to acknowledge God in all things, as the only Source of all goodness and wisdom.

Both these levels of our being are equally to be ‘fellow-servants’ in the service of the Divine. But we need to be aware that our ego will keep tempting us to revere our ‘better nature’ or angelic qualities, rather than acknowledging God as the only source of all goodness and wisdom.

Personal Application

Focus on whatever is angelic in you. Isn’t your spiritual growth really at its best when you are becoming more and more a channel through which God’s heart and mind can enter and be effective for good in the world? Become more aware of how your higher self, in comparison with your ego, feels about and responds to this deep truth.

Reaffirm how all that is good and true in you comes only from one source – the Divine above and within you. Hold this remembrance in your heart as you allow your angelic self to grow and flower ever more beautifully. Become a humble servant, joyful messenger and channel for the indwelling Love and Light of God.