

The Revelation of Jesus Christ—The Apocalypse of St. John

*This version of the Apocalypse is adapted for ‘performance’ in its entirety, from start to finish, in a church or stage setting, like the readings of the Passion at Eastertide. It is divided into parts to be read by different readers and parts to be chanted or sung by the members of a choir. **It should always be remembered that, for the performers and the audience, there is a divine blessing for doing this (Rev 1,3).** The first aim, therefore, is clarity, so that the words of this Scripture can be clearly heard by all. It may be the first time that they have heard the text in its entirety.*

The second aim is to help the audience understand this book better by ‘performing’ the liturgy that is described there. This liturgy takes place in heaven, around the throne of God, in a setting that evokes the temple that once stood in Jerusalem and it has many features that resemble the liturgy performed in that temple on the Day of Atonement. It runs throughout the Apocalypse, from beginning to end, unifying and organizing the text as a whole. It is therefore hoped that the dignified enactment of this liturgy, with chanting, music and sound effects, as it is written in the text, will highlight the purposeful unity of the entire text and help the audience to understand it as a whole, as it is being read to them.

The script below is a proposal for dividing the text into parts for the readers and choir. It will be seen that these divisions are quite natural, because the text itself is composed of contributions from many speakers. The script presented below has 4 main readers including the narrator (Reader 2: the author John), the divinity (Reader 1: God, Christ, the Spirit), various angels (Reader 3) and other heaven-dwellers (Reader 4: 4 living creatures or elders), but it can be decreased to 2 or 3 readers or increased to any number. In general, the angels perform the role of priests in the heavenly sanctuary and the martyrs perform that of the Levites.

Before each section, there is a brief description of the liturgical setting, in order to convey its character and movement. The straight reading of the text, without music, takes about 100-110 minutes. The ‘performance’ may need an interlude, in which case the most natural break in the text is between 11,19 and 12,1.

I

Prologue

Reader 2 (John): ¹The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave to him to show his servants what must soon take place, and *which* he made known by sending his angel to his servant John, ²who bears witness to the Word of God and the Witness of Jesus Christ, of all that he saw.

Reader 1 (angel of the Risen Christ): ³Blessed is the one who reads and *blessed* are those who hear the words of the prophecy and take to heart what is written in it, for the time is near.

Reader 2 (John): ⁴John to the seven churches in Asia: Grace and peace to you from the One who is and who was and who is to come, and from the Seven Spirits who are before his throne, ⁵and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the first-born of the dead and the ruler of the kings of the earth.

Choir +Audience (All Christians: *male and female voices proclaiming*):

To him who loves us and freed us from our sins with his blood,
⁶and made us a kingdom, priests to his God and Father,
to him be the glory and the might for ever and ever. Amen.

Reader 2 (John): ⁷Behold, he comes with the clouds and every eye will see him, even those who pierced him, and all the peoples of the earth will mourn over him.

Choir +Audience (All Christians *proclaiming*): Yes, amen.

Reader 1 (God Almighty): ⁸I am the Alpha and the Omega, says the Lord God, the One who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty.

Reader 2 (John): ⁹I John, your brother and companion in the hardship and kingdom and endurance in Jesus, was on the island called Patmos because of the Word of God and the Witness of Jesus. ¹⁰I came to be in the Spirit on the Lord's day and heard behind me a loud voice, like a trumpet, ¹¹saying:

Reader 1 (angel of the Risen Christ, from now on 'Risen Christ'): Write in a book what you see and send it to the seven churches, to Ephesus and Smyrna, to Pergamum and Thyatira, to Sardis, Philadelphia and Laodicea.

First Part

*The liturgy begins, "in the spirit", in the 'Holy Place' of a Cosmic Sanctuary (a 'place' just below the Holy of Holies), where there are seven lampstands. The seven lampstands represent the seven churches, to whom messages of reproach and exhortation are then dictated by the angel of the risen Christ (chs. 2-3). This part of the liturgy is analogous to the trimming and refuelling of the seven-branched candelabra by the high priest at the very start of the daily 'Tamid' service, on the Day of Atonement, in the Jerusalem temple. It could be enacted by placing seven large lampstands around Reader 1, here representing the angel of the Lord in the lengthy passage that follows. **Between each message in chs. 2-3, there could be some music or sound effects to break the monotony.** Reader 2 (John) can be seen writing the messages as he is told to do in 1,11.*

Reader 2 (John): ¹²And I turned to see the voice that was speaking to me, and on turning I saw seven golden lampstands, ¹³and in the midst of the lampstands one like a son of man, dressed in a long tunic and bound around the chest with a golden band; ¹⁴his head and hair were white as white wool, as snow, and his eyes like a flame of fire, ¹⁵and his feet like bronze that has been refined in a furnace, and his voice like the sound of many waters; ¹⁶and in his right hand he had seven stars and coming out of his mouth was a sharp two-edged sword, and his face was like the sun shining at full strength.

¹⁷And when I saw him I fell at his feet as though dead, and he placed his right hand on me saying:

Reader 1 (Risen Christ): Do not be afraid, I am the First and the Last, ¹⁸and the Living One—I was put to death and behold, I am alive for ever and ever, and I have the keys of Death and Hades. ¹⁹Therefore write what you saw, and what is now, and what is to take place after these things. ²⁰As for the mystery of the seven stars which you saw on my right and the seven golden lampstands: the seven stars are angels of the seven churches, and the seven lampstands are seven churches.

Pause: short musical motif, recalling “the voice like a trumpet”. Reader 2 (John) takes up a large book and starts writing the messages dictated by Reader 1.

II

Reader 1 (Risen Christ): ¹To the angel of the church in Ephesus write: This says the one who holds the seven stars in his right hand, who walks among the seven golden lampstands.

²I know your deeds, your labour and endurance, and that you cannot endure wicked men, and have put to the test those calling themselves apostles and are not, and have found them false. ³Yet endurance you have, and you have endured for the sake of my name and have not weakened. ⁴But I have *this* against you, that you have lost the love you had at first. ⁵Therefore remember how far you have fallen and repent, and do the works you did at first; and if not, I am coming to you and will remove your lampstand from its place, unless you repent. ⁶But this you have, that you hate the practices of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate.

⁷He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. The one who overcomes—I will let him eat from the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God.

Pause: short musical motif, recalling “the voice like a trumpet”.

Reader 1 (Risen Christ): ⁸And to the angel of the church in Smyrna write: This says the First and the Last, the one who was put to death and returned to life.

⁹I know your affliction and poverty—but you are rich—and the blasphemy of those saying they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan. ¹⁰Do not fear what you are about

to suffer. Behold, the devil is going to throw some of you into prison so that you may be tested, and you will have hardship for ten days. Be faithful up to death and I will give you the crown of life.

¹¹He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. The one who overcomes will certainly not be hurt by the second death.

Pause: short musical motif, recalling “the voice like a trumpet”.

Reader 1 (Risen Christ): ¹²And to the angel of the church in Pergamum write: This says the one who has the sharp two-edged sword.

¹³I know where you live—where the throne of Satan is—yet you hold to my name and did not deny your faith in me even in the days of Antipas, my faithful witness, who was put to death amongst you, where Satan dwells. ¹⁴But I have a few things against you, because you have there some that hold the teaching of Balaam, who taught Balak to throw a stumbling-block before the sons of Israel, to eat idol-sacrifices and to fornicate. ¹⁵So you too, in the same way, have some that hold the teaching of the Nicolaitans. ¹⁶Therefore repent, and if not I am coming to you soon and will fight them with the sword of my mouth.

¹⁷He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To the one who overcomes I will give from the hidden manna, and I will give him a little white stone, and on the stone a new name is written which no one knows except the one who receives it.

Pause: short musical motif, recalling “the voice like a trumpet”.

Reader 1 (Risen Christ): ¹⁸And to the angel of the church in Thyatira write: This says the Son of God, whose eyes are like a flame of fire and his feet like bronze.

¹⁹I know your deeds and your love, your faithfulness, service and endurance, also that your last deeds are better than the first. ²⁰But I have *this* against you, that you tolerate Jezebel, the woman who calls herself a prophetess and teaches and deceives my servants to fornicate and to eat idol-sacrifices. ²¹And I gave her time to repent and she does not want to repent from her fornication. ²²Behold, I am putting her into a sickbed and those committing adultery with her into great distress, unless they repent from her practices; ²³also I will kill her children with pestilence, and all the churches will know that I am the one who searches minds and hearts, and will give to each one of you according to your deeds. ²⁴But I say to the rest of you in Thyatira, all who do not keep this teaching, who do not know the deep things of Satan as they say: I am not putting any other burden on you; ²⁵only, hold to what you have until I come.

²⁶And the one who overcomes and attends to my work until the end—I will give him authority over the nations ²⁷⁻²⁸just as I also received from my Father, and he will shepherd them with a rod of iron, to break *them* into pieces like pots of clay; and I will give him the Dawn Star.

²⁹He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.

Pause: short musical motif recalling “the voice like a trumpet”.

III

Reader 1 (Risen Christ): ¹And to the angel of the church in Sardis write: This says the one who has the Seven Spirits of God and the seven stars.

I know your deeds, that you have a name for being alive and yet you are dead. ²Be awake and restore those that remain and were about to die, for I have not found your deeds perfect in the sight of my God. ³Therefore remember how you received and heard; be observant and repent. For if you are not awake, I will come like a thief and you will never know at what hour I will come upon you. ⁴But you have a few names in Sardis who have not defiled their clothes, and they shall walk with me in white, because they are worthy.

⁵The one who overcomes will dress himself like this in white clothes, and never will I erase his name from the Scroll of Life, and I will declare his name before my Father and before his angels. ⁶He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.

Pause: short musical motif, recalling “the voice like a trumpet”.

Reader 1 (Risen Christ): ⁷And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write: This says the Holy One, the True One, the one who holds the key of David, who opens and no one will close, closes and no one opens.

⁸I know your deeds; since you have little strength—even you have kept my order and not denied my name—look, I have set before you an open door which no one can close. ⁹Behold, I will hand over some of the synagogue of Satan—those saying they are Jews and are not for they lie—behold, I will make them come and worship at your feet and they shall know that I love you. ¹⁰Since you have kept my order to endure, also I will keep you from the hour of trial that is to come upon the whole world, to test the inhabitants of the earth. ¹¹I am coming soon, hold to what you have so that no one may take your crown.

¹²The one who overcomes—I will make him a pillar in the Sanctuary of my God, and never will he go out again, and I will write on him the name of my God, and the name of the City of my God, of the New Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from my God, and my own new name. ¹³He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.

Pause: short musical motif, recalling “the voice like a trumpet”.

Reader 1 (Risen Christ): ¹⁴And to the angel of the church in Laodicea write: This says the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the origin of the creation of God.

¹⁵I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot. I would rather you were cold or hot. ¹⁶So because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I am about to vomit you out of my

mouth. ¹⁷For you say: "I am rich and have plenty and there is nothing I need", and you do not know that you are the wretched one, pitiable and poor and blind and naked. ¹⁸I advise you to buy from me gold refined by fire so that you may be rich, and white clothes so that you may dress yourself and not expose the shame of your nakedness, and ointment to anoint your eyes so that you may see. ¹⁹All those whom I love, I rebuke and chasten. Therefore be zealous and repent. ²⁰Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come to him and eat with him and he with me.

²¹The one who overcomes—I will let him sit with me on my throne, as I also overcame and sat with my Father on his throne. ²²He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.

Second Part

The liturgy continues with the elevation of the author "in the spirit", through an open door, to a higher place than before, from where he sees and describes the throne of God and its surroundings. This place clearly corresponds to the Holy of Holies (the 'Sanctus Sanctorum') of the ancient Jerusalem Temple. For the performance, some attempt, however modest, should be made to recreate this scene, whose main components are the throne surrounded by the four living creatures (4 male members of choir), surrounded in turn by the 24 elders on thrones (24 members of the choir, male and female), and in front of them, on a glassy sea, the seven flames (of the seven lampstands) and the golden altar of incense. The glassy sea extends to the auditorium, so the audience can be identified with the martyrs who will later be seen standing there.

It will also be necessary to enact the solemn transfer of the Scroll of Life, sealed with seven seals, from the God's throne to the sacrificed Lamb represented, if possible, by a tall bearded man wearing a crown of thorns and a distinctive white garment with red stains to denote the shedding of his own blood. His appearance before the throne in Rev 5,6, recalls the entry of the high priest into the Holy of Holies on the Day of Atonement in the Jerusalem temple. A fitting musical accompaniment is required at appropriate moments in this THEOPHANY (Beatific Vision), in addition to the sound effects that accompany the flashes of lightening and thunders that issue from the throne at 4,5.

IV

Reader 2 (John): ¹After this I looked and behold, an open door in heaven, and the first voice which I had heard speaking to me like a trumpet, was saying:

Reader 1 (Risen Christ): Come up here and I will show you what must take place after these things.

Pause for the short musical motif recalling “the voice like a trumpet” – this time it causes the author to enter a deep ecstasy.

Reader 2 (John): ²At once I came to be in the Spirit and behold, there was a throne set in heaven, and One seated on the throne, ³and the One who is seated has an appearance like jasper stone and carnelian, and around the throne is a halo looking like emerald. ⁴Also around the throne are twenty-four thrones, and sitting on the thrones twenty-four elders clothed in white clothes, with golden crowns on their heads. ⁵And out of the throne come flashes of lightning and noises and thunders *(SOUND EFFECTS)*, and before the throne seven flames of fire are burning which are the Seven Spirits of God, ⁶and before the throne *it is* like a glassy sea similar to crystal. And in the midst of the throne and around the throne are four living creatures full of eyes in front and behind: ⁷and the first living creature is like a lion, and the second living creature like an ox, and the third living creature has a face like that of a human being, and the fourth living creature is like a flying eagle.

⁸And the four living creatures—each of them with six wings—are full of eyes all round and within, and take no rest, day and night, saying:

Choir (4 living creatures: *4 male voices from the choir, stationed close to the throne, singing or chanting a tune which can be repeated ad infinitum, “day and night”, whenever there is a need for a musical accompaniment in the heavenly liturgical scenes. The tune must be catchy, harmonious and memorable, maybe with slight variations):*

Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty,
the One who was and who is and who is to come.

Reader 2 (John): ⁹And whenever the living creatures give glory and honour and thanks to the One seated on the throne, to the One living for ever and ever, ¹⁰the twenty-four elders fall down before the One seated on the throne, and worship the One living for ever and ever, and they place their crowns before the throne saying:

Choir (24 elders: *After bowing before the throne, the choir of 24 male and female voices singing or chanting):*

¹¹Worthy are you, our Lord and God,
to receive the glory and the honour and the power,
because you created all things,
and by your will they came into being, and were created.

Reader 2 (John): ¹And I saw on the right of the One seated on the throne a scroll with writing on the inside and on the back, sealed with seven seals. ²And I saw a mighty angel calling with a loud voice:

Reader 3 (mighty angel: very loud): Who is worthy to open the scroll and to break its seals?

Reader 2 (John): ³And no one in heaven or on earth or under the earth was able to open the scroll or to look at it. ⁴And much I wept because no one was found worthy to open the scroll or to look at it. ⁵And one of the elders says to me:

Reader 4 (elder): Do not weep. Behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has overcome so to open the scroll and its seven seals.

Pause: the man in the white garment stained with red appears by the throne to enact the taking of the large Scroll of Life from the right of the Throne. A musical flourish may be appropriate here, in this vision of the slain and risen Christ in heaven, expressing, in some way, how the Lion of Judah can be, and is in fact, the slain Lamb.

Reader 2 (John): ⁶And I saw in the midst of the throne and the four living creatures, in the midst of the elders, a Lamb standing like one that had been slain; he had seven horns and seven eyes, which are the Seven Spirits of God sent out into all the earth. ⁷And he came and took from the right of the One seated on the throne. ⁸And when he took the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb—each one having a harp and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints. ⁹And they sing a new song saying:

Choir (4 living creatures and 24 elders: *After falling before the throne, the 4+24 male and female members of the choir sing a ‘new song’ to the accompaniment of the harp, if possible*):

Worthy are you to take the scroll and to open its seals,
because you were slain
and with your blood you bought people for God
from every tribe and tongue and race and nation,
¹⁰and made them a kingdom and priests for our God
and they shall reign on the earth.

Pause: sound effects that represent the soft harmonious beating of the wings of the hosts of angels circling around the throne.

Reader 2 (John): ¹¹And I saw and I heard, the sound of many angels around the throne and the living creatures and the elders; and the number of them was myriads of myriads and thousands of thousands, ¹²and they were saying with a loud voice:

Choir (innumerable angels: *loud male and female voices singing or chanting with background sounds representing soft, harmonious beating of their wings*):

Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive the power and riches,
wisdom and strength, honour and glory and praise.

Reader 2 (John): ¹³And every creature in heaven and on earth, and under the earth and on the sea, and everything in them, I heard saying:

Choir +Audience (all creatures in heaven on earth: *all singing or chanting loudly, to the same melody as the chorus above*):

To the One seated on the throne, and to the Lamb,
be the praise and the honour, the glory and the might,
for ever and ever.

Reader 2 (John): ¹⁴And the four living creatures said:

Choir (4 living creatures: *the 4 male voices closest to the throne singing or chanting*):
Amen.

Pause: the 24 members of the choir bow before the throne

Reader 2 (John): And the elders fell down and worshipped.

Pause: the man in the white garment with red stains and holding the large sealed scroll now breaks the seals one by one at the appropriate part of the narrative. The breaking of each seal is accompanied by sound effects.

VI

Reader 2 (John): ¹And I saw when the Lamb opened one of the seven seals (**SOUND EFFECTS**), and I heard one of the four living creatures saying, as with a voice of thunder:

Reader 4 (the 1st of the 4 living creatures): Come!

Reader 2 (John): ²And I looked and behold, a white horse, and the one sitting on it had a bow and a crown was given to him, and he came out conquering and so to overcome.

³And when he opened the second seal (***SOUND EFFECTS***), I heard the second living creature saying:

Reader 4 (the 2nd of the 4 living creatures): Come!

Reader 2 (John): ⁴And out came another horse, fiery-red, and the one sitting on it was given a great sword and was permitted to take peace from the earth so they shall slay one another.

⁵And when he opened the third seal (***SOUND EFFECTS***), I heard the third living creature saying:

Reader 4 (the 3rd of the 4 living creatures): Come!

Reader 2 (John): And I looked and behold, a black horse, and the one sitting on it had a yoke in his hand. ⁶And I heard like a voice in the midst of the four living creatures saying:

Reader 4 (1 of the 4 living creatures): A litre of wheat for a day's wage, and three litres of barley for a day's wage, and do not be unjust with the oil and the wine.

Reader 2 (John): ⁷And when he opened the fourth seal (***SOUND EFFECTS***), I heard the voice of the fourth living creature saying:

Reader 4 (the 4th of 4 living creatures): Come!

Reader 2 (John): ⁸And I looked and behold, a pale green horse and the one sitting on it; his name is Death, and Hades followed him, and authority was given to them over a quarter of the earth to kill with the sword, with famine and with pestilence, and by the wild beasts of the earth.

⁹And when he opened the fifth seal (***SOUND EFFECTS***), I saw below the altar the souls of those who had been slain because of the Word of God and because of the Witness which they held. ¹⁰And they cried out with a loud voice saying:

Choir (small number of martyrs: 10 male and female voices come to the altar and proclaim in a 'pleading' tone):

How much longer, Holy and True Master, until you judge and avenge our blood on the inhabitants of the earth?

Reader 2 (John): ¹¹And a white robe was given to each one of them, and they were told to rest for a short time more, until also their fellow-servants and their brothers had been consecrated, those about to be killed just as themselves.

¹²And I saw when he opened the sixth seal (***SOUND EFFECTS***), and a great earthquake occurred and the sun became black as sackcloth made of hair, and the whole moon became like blood, ¹³and the stars of heaven fell to the earth as a fig-tree drops its unripe figs when shaken by a great wind, ¹⁴and the heaven departed as a scroll being rolled up, and every mountain and island was moved from its place. ¹⁵And the rulers of the earth and the great men and the military officers and the rich men and the strong men and every slave and freeman hid themselves in the caves and among the rocks of the mountains, ¹⁶and they say to the mountains and to the rocks:

Choir +A (unredeemed inhabitants of the earth: *proclaim in a tone of defiance and desperation*): Fall on us and hide us from the face of the One seated on the throne and from the anger of the Lamb, ¹⁷for the great day of their anger has come, and who is able to survive?

***Pause:** the following chapter (ch. 7) is a parenthesis that answers the people's question "who can survive?" and reveals the results of the martyrdom awaited by those under the altar in 6,11. If there is a musical introduction it can be mystical, light and hopeful.*

VII

Reader 2 (John): ¹After this I saw four angels standing at the four corners of the earth, holding the four winds of the earth so that no wind should blow over the earth, or over the sea, or against any tree. ²And I saw another angel coming up from the rising of the sun, holding the seal of the living God, and he cried out with a loud voice to the four angels who were permitted to harm the earth and the sea, ³saying:

Reader 3 (angel with the seal): Do not harm the earth or the sea, or the trees, until we seal the servants of our God on their foreheads.

Reader 2 (John): ⁴And I heard the number of those who were sealed: a hundred and forty-four thousand were sealed from all the tribes of the sons of Israel;

⁵from the tribe of Judah twelve thousand were sealed,
from the tribe of Reuben twelve thousand,
from the tribe of Gad twelve thousand,
⁶from the tribe of Asher twelve thousand,
from the tribe of Naphtali twelve thousand,
from the tribe of Manasseh twelve thousand,
⁷from the tribe of Simeon twelve thousand,
from the tribe of Levi twelve thousand,

from the tribe of Issachar twelve thousand,
⁸from the tribe of Zebulun twelve thousand,
from the tribe of Joseph twelve thousand,
from the tribe of Benjamin twelve thousand were sealed.

⁹After this I looked and behold, a vast multitude which no one was able to number, from all nations and tribes and races and tongues, clothed in white robes and with palms in their hands, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, ¹⁰and they proclaim with a great voice saying:

Choir +A (innumerable host of martyrs: 4 + 24 male and female voices in choir chanting beautifully or singing, joined by audience):

Salvation is from our God, the One seated on the throne, and from the Lamb!

Reader 2 (John): ¹¹And all the angels stood around the throne and the elders and the four living creatures, and fell down before the throne on their faces and worshipped God ¹²saying:

Choir (4 living creatures, elders and all the angels: 4+24 male and female voices chanting or singing):

Amen, the praise and the glory, the wisdom and the thanks,
the honour, the power and the strength, be to our God,
for ever and ever, amen.

Reader 2 (John): ¹³And one of the elders responded, saying to me:

Reader 4 (elder):

These clothed in white robes, who are they and where did they come from?

Reader 2 (John): ¹⁴And I said to him: My Lord, you know. And he said to me:

Reader 4 (elder): These are the ones coming from the great tribulation, and they have washed their robes and bleached them in the blood of the Lamb. ¹⁵Therefore they are before the throne of God and worship him day and night in his Sanctuary, and the One seated on the throne will spread his tent over them. ¹⁶They shall hunger no longer, nor shall they thirst any more, neither shall the sun strike them, nor any burning heat, ¹⁷because the Lamb at the centre of the throne will shepherd them and lead them on to fountains of living waters, and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.

Pause with musical refrain to close the parenthesis. We return to the liturgy for opening of the last seal, which is followed by a prolonged SILENCE, during which the incense is offered (see below).

VIII

Reader 2 (John): ¹And when he opened the seventh seal (**SOUND EFFECT**), there was a silence in heaven for about half-an-hour. ²And I saw the seven angels who stand before God, and seven trumpets were given to them.

³And another angel came and stood on the altar; he had a golden censer and much incense was given to him to offer, on the golden altar before the throne, with the prayers of all the saints. ⁴And the smoke of the incense went up with the prayers of the saints from the hand of the angel before God.

Pause while the offering of incense is enacted in silence. In the ancient temple, the offering of incense was a time for prayer. Some attempt could be made to create an atmosphere of prayer and recollection. The reader (Reader 2) can lower his voice to signify this.

After the silence for prayer and incense offering, the liturgical performance resumes with the casting of fire to the earth – a dramatic gesture that could be emphasized by strong music. This gesture corresponds to the throwing of the members of the sacrificial offerings on to the fire of the outer altar in the Jerusalem temple – a movement indicating the final part and culmination of the liturgy – the ‘ascent’ of the offerings to God in the fire of the altar. As in the Jerusalem temple, this action is accompanied by the blowing of trumpets (Rev 8-11), the pouring of wine libations (Rev 15-16) and the singing of praises and alleluias by the choir of Levites. In the Apocalypse, this choir is represented by the souls of the martyrs in heaven, assembled on the glassy sea mixed with fire (15,2-4). Most of the rest of the text of the Apocalypse (chs. 8-22) is concerned with this final part of the liturgy.

Reader 2 (John): ⁵And the angel took the censer and filled it from the fire of the altar and threw it to the earth, and there were thunders and noises and flashes of lightning and an earthquake (**SOUND EFFECTS**—*the noisy clamour of thunders and the rumbling of earthquakes, as in 4,5, changes into harmony and light denoting the New Pentecost [fire from the altar in heaven], and at the same time the church or auditorium is filled with glorious light, if possible*).

Pause: as each trumpet sound is announced, an ‘angel’ is seen blowing on the trumpet or horn - but if no one can play the trumpet, a similar sound can be produced by the organ.

Reader 2 (John): ⁶And the seven angels with the seven trumpets prepared themselves to blow. ⁷The first one blew (**TRUMPET**), and there was hail and fire mixed with blood, and it was

thrown to the earth; and a third of the earth was burnt up and a third of the trees were burnt up and all the green grass was burnt up.

⁸And the second angel blew (**TRUMPET**), and *something* like a great mountain burning with fire was thrown into the sea; and a third of the sea became blood, ⁹and a third of the creatures in the sea that have souls died, and a third of the ships were destroyed.

¹⁰And the third angel blew (**TRUMPET**) and a great star fell from heaven burning as a torch, and it fell on to a third of the rivers and on to the springs of water. ¹¹And the name of the star is called Wormwood, and a third of the waters became wormwood, and many people died from the waters because they were made bitter.

¹²And the fourth angel blew (**TRUMPET**), and a third of the sun was struck and a third of the moon and a third of the stars, so that the third part of them was darkened and the day did not give a third of its brightness, and likewise the night.

¹³And I saw and I heard an [eagle] angel flying in mid-heaven, saying with a loud voice:

Reader 3 (angel in mid-heaven): Woe! Woe! Woe to the inhabitants of the earth from the remaining trumpet-blasts of the three angels about to blow!

IX

Reader 2 (John): ¹And the fifth angel blew (**TRUMPET**), and I saw a star which had fallen from heaven to the earth, and the key of the shaft of the abyss was given to him. ²And he opened the shaft of the abyss and smoke went up from the shaft, like the smoke of a great furnace, and the sun and the air were darkened by the smoke of the shaft. ³And out of the smoke came locusts to the earth, and power was given to them as the scorpions of the earth have power. ⁴And they were told not to harm the grass of the earth or anything green, or any tree, only the people who do not have the seal of God on their foreheads. ⁵And it was given to them not so that they should kill them, but so that they will be tormented for five months; and their torment is like the torment of a scorpion whenever it stings a man. ⁶And in those days people will seek death and by no means will they find it, and they will long to die and death flees from them.

⁷And the things like locusts were similar to horses prepared for war, and on their heads *were objects* like crowns similar to gold, and their faces were like faces of men, ⁸and they had hair like women's hair, and their teeth were like a lion's; ⁹and they had armour like armour of iron, and the sound of their wings was like the sound of many chariots of horses running into battle. ¹⁰And they have tails and stings like scorpions, and in their tails is their power to harm people for five months. ¹¹They have a king over them, the angel of the abyss, whose name in Hebrew is Abaddon and in Greek the name he has is Apollyon. [In English: Destroyer].

Reader 3 (angel in mid-heaven): ¹²The first Woe passed; behold, two Woes are still to come after this.

Reader 2 (John): ¹³And the sixth angel blew (**TRUMPET**), and I heard a voice from the four horns of the golden altar before God ¹⁴saying to the sixth angel, the one with the trumpet:

Reader 3 (angel of fire): Release the four angels tied up at the great River Euphrates.

Reader 2 (John): ¹⁵And the four angels were released, those prepared for the hour and day and month and year in order to kill a third of mankind. ¹⁶And the number of troops of mounted men was two myriads of myriads; I heard the number of them. ¹⁷And like this I saw the horses in the vision and those sitting on them—having armour the colour of fire, hyacinth and sulphur, and the heads of the horses were like lions' heads, and out of their mouths come fire and smoke and sulphur. ¹⁸By these three plagues a third of mankind was killed, by the fire and the smoke and the sulphur coming out of their mouths. ¹⁹For the power of the horses is in their mouth and in their tails, for their tails, which have heads, are like snakes and with them they cause harm.

²⁰And the rest of mankind, those who were not killed by these plagues, did not even repent of the works of their hands, so as not to worship demons and idols of gold and silver and bronze and stone and wood, which can neither see nor hear nor walk, ²¹and they did not repent of their murders or their sorceries or their fornication or their thefts.

***Pause:** What follows is a parenthesis in the trumpet series, which is resumed with the final trumpet in 11,14. There could be a musical introduction to the epiphany of the mighty angel, the angel of the Lord, in the following passage.*

X

Reader 2 (John): ¹And I saw another mighty angel, coming down from heaven, clothed with a cloud and with the rainbow over his head, and his face was like the sun and his legs [feet] like pillars of fire, ²and in his hand he had a little scroll that had been opened. And he put his right foot on the sea and the left on the land, ³and cried out with a loud voice, like a lion roaring. And when he cried out, the voices of the seven thunders spoke (**SOUND EFFECTS**). ⁴And when the seven thunders spoke, I was about to write and I heard a voice from heaven saying:

Reader 1 (voice from heaven probably the Risen Christ): Seal what the seven thunders spoke and do not write it.

Reader 2 (John): ⁵And the angel whom I saw standing on the sea and on the land raised his right hand to heaven ⁶and swore by the One living for ever and ever, who created heaven and the things in it, and the earth and the things in it, and the sea and the things in it, that there shall be no more time, ⁷but in the days of the sound of the seventh angel, by the time he is going to blow, also will have been fulfilled the Mystery of God, as he announced to his servants the prophets. ⁸And the voice which I heard from heaven was again speaking to me and saying:

Reader 1 (voice from heaven: the Risen Christ): Go, take the open scroll which is in the hand of the angel standing on the sea and on the land.

Reader 2 (John): ⁹And I went towards the angel telling him to give me the little scroll. And he says to me:

Reader 3 (mighty angel): Take and devour it; and it will make your stomach bitter, but in your mouth it will be as sweet as honey.

Reader 2 (John) (*who could mime or enact this action by walking over to Reader 1, swallowing something like a small scroll, then returning to read*): ¹⁰And I took the little scroll from the hand of the angel and devoured it, and in my mouth it was as sweet as honey, and when I had eaten it my stomach was made bitter. ¹¹And they say to me:

Reader 1 +3 ('they': the mighty angel and the Risen Christ): You must prophesy again about many races and nations and tongues and rulers.

XI

Reader 2 (John): ¹And a cane similar to a rod was given to me *while* saying:

Reader 1 (Risen Christ): Get up and measure the Sanctuary of God and the altar and those who are worshipping in it. ²And reject the court which is outside the Sanctuary and do not measure it, because it was given to the nations, and they will trample the Holy City for forty-two months.

³And I will give to my two witnesses and they will prophesy for one thousand two hundred and sixty days dressed in sackcloth.

Reader 2 (John): ⁴These are the two olive trees and the two lampstands standing before the Lord of the earth. ⁵And if anyone wishes to harm them, fire comes out of their mouth and consumes their enemies; and if anyone should wish to harm them, he is bound to be killed in this way. ⁶These have the authority to shut the sky, so that no rain may fall during the days of their prophecy, and they have authority over the waters to turn them into blood and to strike the earth with every kind of plague as often as they wish.

⁷And whenever they finish their witnessing, the beast that is coming up out of the abyss will make war against them and overcome them and kill them. ⁸And their corpses *lie* on the street of the great city which is spiritually called Sodom and Egypt, where indeed their Lord was crucified. ⁹And *people* from *many* races and tribes and tongues and nations look at their corpses for three days and a half, and they do not allow their corpses to be placed in a tomb. ¹⁰And the

inhabitants of the earth rejoice over them and are glad, and they send gifts to one another, because these two prophets tormented the inhabitants of the earth.

¹¹And after the three days and a half, the Spirit of life from God entered into them and they stood on their feet, and great fear fell on those watching them. ¹²And they heard a great voice from heaven saying to them:

Reader 1 (Risen Christ): Come up here.

Reader 2 (John): And they went up to heaven in the cloud, and their enemies watched them.

¹³And in that hour a great earthquake occurred, and a tenth of the city fell and seven thousand names of men were killed in the earthquake, and the rest became terrified and gave glory to the God of heaven.

Reader 3 (angel in mid-heaven): ¹⁴The second Woe passed; behold, the third Woe is coming soon.

Reader 2 (John): ¹⁵And the seventh angel blew *(this is the LAST TRUMPET – it can be particularly loud, elaborate and long)*, and there were loud voices in heaven saying:

Choir (the 4 living creatures: *the 4 male voices close to the throne, proclaiming or chanting, loudly*):

The kingdom of the world has become our Lord's and his Christ's,
and he shall reign for ever and ever.

Reader 2 (John): ¹⁶And the twenty-four elders, sitting on their thrones before God, fell down on their faces and worshipped God ¹⁷saying:

Choir (the 24 elders: *after bowing before the throne, the 24 male and female voices from the choir proclaiming or chanting*):

We thank you Lord God Almighty, the One who is and who was,
because you have taken up your great power and have come to reign.

¹⁸And the nations were angry and your anger has come,
also the time for the dead to be judged,
and to give the reward to your servants the prophets and to the saints
and to them that fear your name,
to the small and to the great,
and to destroy those who are destroying the earth.

Reader 2 (John): ¹⁹And the Sanctuary of God in heaven was opened, and the Ark of his Covenant was seen in his Sanctuary, and there were flashes of lightning and noises and thunders, an earthquake and a great hail (***SOUND EFFECTS appropriate for a THEOPHANY, as at 4,5***).

Pause. At this point there is an interruption in the liturgy, as the text deals with events that take place on earth during this final brief period of history. The description of the heavenly liturgy resumes in 15,1, with the opening of the Sanctuary mentioned again at 15,4. This would be a good point to have a short break in the performance, since the text does actually go back to events described in chapter 8-11.

The section that follows contains the main part of the prophecy that John was asked ‘to prophesy again’ (10,11). It describes events leading up to God’s judgments and Christ’s second coming at the end of history. There are seven visions in all, and three “signs in heaven”. To get the message of this prophecy across, it may help to project images of the signs and visions on to a screen erected for this purpose. The same method could be used for the final visions of the descent of the Holy City (Rev 21-22).

XII

Reader 2 (John): ¹And a great sign was seen in heaven, a woman clothed with the sun and the moon beneath her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars, ²and she is pregnant and cries out with the pains of labour and the distress of giving birth. ³And another sign was seen in heaven and behold, a great fiery-red dragon with seven heads and ten horns and with seven diadems on his heads, ⁴and his tail drags a third of the stars of heaven and threw them to the earth. And the dragon stood before the woman about to give birth so that he might devour her child whenever she gives birth. ⁵And she gave birth to a son, a male, who is to shepherd all the nations with a rod of iron. And her child was caught up to God and to his throne. ⁶And the woman fled into the desert, where she has a place prepared by God, so that there they might nourish her for one thousand two hundred and sixty days.

⁷And a war took place in heaven—Michael and his angels fighting with the dragon. And the dragon and his angels fought ⁸and did not prevail, and no longer was any place to be found for them in heaven. ⁹And the great dragon was thrown, the ancient serpent called the devil and Satan; the one deceiving the whole world was thrown to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him. ¹⁰And I heard a loud voice in heaven saying:

Reader 3 (mighty angel: in tone of proclamation or simple chant):

Now is come the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God
and the authority of his Christ,
because the accuser of our brothers was thrown,

the one accusing them before our God day and night.

¹¹And they overcame him because of the blood of the Lamb
and because of the word of their witness,
and they loved not their life up to death.

¹²Therefore be glad heavens and those who are dwelling there.
Woe to the earth and the sea,
because the devil has come down to you with great passion
knowing that his time is short.

Reader 2 (John): ¹³And when the dragon saw that he was thrown to the earth, he pursued the woman who gave birth to the male. ¹⁴And the two wings of the great eagle were given to the woman to fly to the desert, to her place, where she is nourished for a time and times and half-a-time away from the face of the serpent. ¹⁵And out of his mouth the serpent threw water like a river after the woman, to cause her to be taken by the current. ¹⁶And the earth helped the woman, and the earth opened its mouth and swallowed the river which the dragon threw out of his mouth. ¹⁷And the dragon was furious with the woman, and went away to make war against the rest of her seed, those who keep the Commandments of God and have the Witness of Jesus. ¹⁸And he stood on the sand of the sea.

XIII

Reader 2 (John): ¹And I saw a beast coming up out of the sea, with ten horns and seven heads and with ten diadems on his horns and blasphemous titles on his heads. ²And the beast that I saw was like a leopard and his feet were like a bear's, and his mouth was like a lion's mouth. And the dragon gave to him his power and his throne and great authority; ³and one of his heads appeared to have been slain to death, and his fatal wound was healed. And all the earth followed the beast with wonder, ⁴and they worshipped the dragon because he had given the authority to the beast, and they worshipped the beast saying:

Choir +Audience (unredeemed inhabitants of the earth: *in tone of proclamation*):

Who is like the beast, and who can make war against him?

Reader 2 (John): ⁵And he was given a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies, and authority was given to him to exercise for forty-two months. ⁶And he opened his mouth in blasphemies against God, to blaspheme his name and his dwelling—those who are dwelling in heaven. ⁷And he was allowed to make war against the saints and to overcome them, and he was given authority over every tribe and race and tongue and nation. ⁸And all the inhabitants of the earth will worship him, everyone whose name is not written in the Scroll of Life from the foundation of the world, of the Lamb that was slain.

Reader 3 (anonymous angel): ⁹If anyone has an ear let him hear. ¹⁰If anyone is for captivity, to captivity he goes; if anyone is to be killed by a sword, by a sword he is to be killed. Here is the endurance and the faith of the saints.

Reader 2 (John): ¹¹And I saw another beast coming up out of the land, and he had two horns like a lamb and spoke as a dragon. ¹²And he exercises all the authority of the first beast in front of him, and makes the earth and its inhabitants worship the first beast, the one whose fatal wound was healed. ¹³And he performs great signs, such that he even makes fire come down from heaven on to the earth in the sight of men; ¹⁴and he deceives the inhabitants of the earth by the signs which he was allowed to perform in front of the beast, telling the inhabitants of the earth to make an image to the beast that has the wound of the sword and lived.

¹⁵And he was allowed to give breath to the image of the beast, so that the image of the beast might even speak, and cause to be killed everyone who would not worship the image of the beast. ¹⁶And he causes all, the small and the great, and the rich and the poor, and the free-men and the servants, to be given a mark on their right hand or on their forehead, ¹⁷so that no one can buy or sell except the one who has the mark—the name of the beast or the number of his name.

Reader 3 (anonymous angel): ¹⁸Here is the wisdom. Let the one with intelligence calculate the number of the beast, for it is a number of a man, and his number is six hundred and sixty-six.

XIV

Reader 2 (John): ¹And I looked and behold, the Lamb standing on Mount Zion, and with him a hundred and forty-four thousand having his name and the name of his Father written on their foreheads.

²And I heard a sound from heaven like the sound of many waters, and like the sound of loud thunder, and the sound which I heard was like harpists playing their harps. ³And they sing a new song before the throne and before the four living creatures and the elders, and no one was able to learn the song except the hundred and forty-four thousand, those that were bought from the earth. ⁴These are the ones who have not defiled themselves with women, for they are virgins; these follow the Lamb wherever he may go. These were bought from among men, first-fruits to God and to the Lamb, ⁵and no lie was found in their mouth—they are immaculate.

⁶And I saw another angel flying in mid-heaven with an eternal gospel to announce to the inhabitants of the earth, and to every nation and tribe and tongue and race, ⁷saying with a loud voice:

Reader 3 (1st angel in mid-heaven): Fear God and give him glory, because the hour of his judgment has come, and worship the One who made heaven and earth and sea and springs of water.

Reader 2 (John): ⁸And another angel, a second, followed saying:

Reader 3 (2nd angel in mid-heaven): Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great, who caused all the nations to drink from the wine of the passion of her fornicating.

Reader 2 (John): ⁹And another angel, a third, followed them saying with a loud voice:

Reader 3 (3rd angel in mid-heaven): If anyone worships the beast and his image, and receives a mark on his forehead or on his hand, ¹⁰also he shall drink the wine of the passion of God mixed undiluted in the cup of his anger, and he will be tormented by fire and sulphur in front of holy angels and in front of the Lamb. ¹¹And the smoke of their torment goes up for ever and ever, and they have no rest day and night, those who worship the beast and his image and whoever receives the mark of his name.

Reader 2 (John): ¹²Here is the endurance of the saints, those who keep the Commandments of God and the faith of Jesus. ¹³And I heard a voice from heaven saying:

Reader 1 (the Spirit): Write; blessed are the dead, they that die in the Lord from now on. Yes, says the Spirit, so that they may rest from their labours, but their deeds go with them.

Reader 2 (John): ¹⁴And I looked and behold, a white cloud and sitting on the cloud one like a son of man, with a golden crown on his head and a sharp sickle in his hand. ¹⁵And another angel came out of the Sanctuary crying out with a loud voice to the one sitting on the cloud:

Reader 3 (angel from the sanctuary): Swing your sickle and reap, because the hour has come to reap, for the harvest of the earth is dry.

Reader 2 (John): ¹⁶And the one sitting on the cloud threw his sickle over the earth, and the earth was reaped.

¹⁷And another angel came out of the Sanctuary in heaven, also having a sharp sickle. ¹⁸And another angel came out from the altar, the one who is in charge of the fire, and spoke with a loud voice to the one with the sharp sickle, saying:

Reader 3 (angel of fire): Swing your sharp sickle and cut the clusters of the vine of the earth, because its grapes have ripened.

Reader 2 (John): ¹⁹And the angel cast his sickle to the earth and cut down the fruit of the vine of the earth, and threw *it* into the great winepress of the passion of God. ²⁰And the winepress

was trodden outside the city, and blood came out of the winepress up to the bridles of the horses, for one thousand six hundred stadia.

The liturgy now resumes with the singing of a song of redemption followed by God's final judgments on earth represented by the pouring of the plagues from seven golden libation bowls. These correspond to the pouring of the wine libations on to the base of the altar at the end of the temple liturgy. The end is now very close.

XV

Reader 2 (John): ¹And I saw another sign in heaven, great and wonderful: seven angels with seven plagues—the last, because with them the passion of God was finished.

²And I saw *what was* like a glassy sea mixed with fire and those who overcame the beast and his image and the number of his name, standing on the glassy sea holding harps of God.

³And they sing the song of Moses, the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb saying:

Choir +Audience (the innumerable host of martyrs: *all male and female voices in the choir sing this song, with the audience, if possible. In the text, the harp is the instrument that supplies the musical accompaniment, as for the new song in 5,9-10):*

Great and wonderful are your deeds, Lord God Almighty;

just and true are your ways, King of the nations;

⁴Who will not fear and glorify your name, Lord?

It is because you alone are holy,

that all the nations will come and worship before you,

for your acts of justice were made manifest.

Reader 2 (John): ⁵And after this I looked, and the Sanctuary of the Tent of Witness in heaven was opened, ⁶and out of the Sanctuary came the seven angels with the seven plagues, dressed in clean bright linen and bound around the chest with golden bands. ⁷And one of the four living creatures had given to the seven angels seven golden bowls full of the passion of God, the One living for ever and ever. ⁸And the Sanctuary was filled with the smoke of the glory of God and of his power, and no one was able to enter the Sanctuary until the seven plagues of the seven angels were finished.

Pause. *The filling of the heavenly sanctuary with smoke, described above, is a sign of its completion and consecration. There could be a musical flourish here to indicate this. In what follows, someone enacts the pouring of the libation bowls at the appropriate time, at the base of the altar. The seven bowls are poured out, and read out, in quick succession.*

XVI

Reader 2 (John): ¹And I heard a loud voice from the Sanctuary saying to the seven angels:

Reader 4 (1 of the 4 living creatures: loudly): Go and pour out the seven bowls of the passion of God on the earth.

Reader 2 (John): ²And the first went away and poured out his bowl on the earth (**SOUND EFFECTS**); and a foul and malignant ulcer developed on the people that have the mark of the beast and those who worship his image.

³And the second poured out his bowl on the sea (**SOUND EFFECTS**); and the sea became like the blood of a dead man, and every living soul in the sea died.

⁴And the third poured out his bowl on the rivers and the springs of water and they became blood (**SOUND EFFECTS**). ⁵And I heard the angel of the waters saying:

Reader 3 (angel of the waters):

*So just are you, O Holy One, the One who is and who was,
in the way you have judged these things,
⁶because they shed blood of saints and of prophets,
and blood you have given them to drink;
they deserve it.*

Reader 2 (John): ⁷And I heard the altar saying:

Reader 3 (the angel of fire):

*Yes, Lord God Almighty,
true and just are your judgments.*

Reader 2 (John): ⁸And the fourth poured out his bowl on the sun (**SOUND EFFECTS**), and it was allowed to scorch people with fire. ⁹And the people were scorched with a great heat and they blasphemed the name of God, the One who has power over these plagues, and they did not repent and give him glory.

¹⁰And the fifth poured out his bowl on the throne of the beast (**SOUND EFFECTS**); and his kingdom was darkened, and they bit their tongues from the pain, ¹¹and they blasphemed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores, and they did not repent of their deeds.

¹²And the sixth poured out his bowl on the great River Euphrates (**SOUND EFFECTS**); and its water dried up to prepare the way for the rulers from the East. ¹³And from the mouth of the dragon and from the mouth of the beast and from the mouth of the false prophet, I saw three unclean spirits like frogs; ¹⁴for they are spirits of demons performing signs, which go out to the rulers of the whole world to assemble them to the war of the great day of Almighty God.

Reader 1 (the Risen Christ): ¹⁵Behold, I am coming like a thief; blessed is he that is awake and keeping his clothes, so that he does not walk naked and they see his shame.

Reader 2 (John): ¹⁶And they assembled them in the place called, in Hebrew, Harmagedon.

¹⁷And the seventh poured out his bowl on the air (**SOUND EFFECTS**); and a loud voice came out of the Sanctuary, from the throne, saying:

Reader 4 (1 of the 4 living creatures): It is done.

Reader 2 (John): ¹⁸And there were flashes of lightning and noises and thunders and a great earthquake occurred, such as never had happened since man was on the earth, such an earthquake—so great (**SOUND EFFECTS for Theophany as in 4,5**). ¹⁹And the great city came to be in three parts and the cities of the nations fell. And Babylon the great was remembered before God, to give her the cup with the wine of the passion of his anger. ²⁰And every island fled and mountains were not found. ²¹And a great hail, as a talent in weight, comes down from heaven on the people and the people blasphemed God from the plague of hail, because this plague is exceedingly great.

Pause. There is another parenthesis here (17,1–18,24) to describe the judgment of Babylon. There could be a musical prelude here with Babylon, the wealthy prostitute, as its theme. The description of the heavenly liturgy is resumed at 19,1.

XVII

Reader 2 (John): ¹And one of the seven angels that had the seven bowls came and spoke to me saying:

Reader 3 (1 of the 7 bowl angels): Come, I will show you the condemnation of the great prostitute sitting on many waters, ²with whom the rulers of the earth fornicated, and from the wine of her fornication the inhabitants of the earth became drunk.

Reader 2 (John): ³And he carried me away in the Spirit into a desert. And I saw a woman sitting on a scarlet beast that had seven heads and ten horns and was full of blasphemous titles. ⁴And the woman was clothed in purple and scarlet and adorned with gold and precious stones and pearls; in her hand she was holding a golden cup full of abominations and the filth of her fornication, ⁵and on her forehead was written a name, a mystery: Babylon the great, the mother of the prostitutes and abominations of the earth.

⁶And I saw the woman drunk with the blood of the saints and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus. And seeing her I was struck with great wonder. ⁷And the angel said to me:

Reader 3 (1 of the 7 bowl angels): Why do you wonder? I will tell you the mystery of the woman, and of the beast with seven heads and ten horns that is supporting her. ⁸The beast that you saw was, and is not, and is about to come up out of the abyss and goes to destruction; and the inhabitants of the earth will wonder—everyone whose name is not written in the Scroll of Life from the foundation of the world—when they see the beast, because he was, and is not, and will have come.

⁹Here is the intelligence with wisdom. The seven heads are seven hills on which the woman sits, and are seven rulers: ¹⁰five have fallen, one is, the other has not yet come, and whenever he comes he must remain for *just* a short time. ¹¹And the beast which was and is not, even he is an eighth, is also of the seven, and goes to destruction. ¹²And the ten horns which you saw are ten rulers who have not yet come to power, but receive authority to rule for one hour with the beast. ¹³These are of one mind, and they give their power and authority to the beast. ¹⁴These will make war against the Lamb and the Lamb will overcome them, because he is Lord of lords and King of kings, and those with him are called and chosen and faithful.

Reader 2 (John): ¹⁵And he says to me:

Reader 3 (1 of the 7 bowl angels): The waters which you saw, where the prostitute sits, are races and crowds and nations and tongues. ¹⁶And the ten horns that you saw and the beast, these will hate the prostitute and will leave her desolate and naked, and will eat her flesh, and will consume her with fire; ¹⁷for God has set their hearts to serve his purpose and to be of one mind, and to give their kingdom to the beast until the words of God shall be fulfilled. ¹⁸And the woman whom you saw is the great city, she that has a kingdom over the rulers of the earth.

XVIII

Reader 2 (John): ¹After this I saw another angel, coming down from heaven with great authority, and the earth was enlightened by his glory. ²And he cried out with a strong voice saying:

Reader 3 (another angel, as in 14,8: *proclaiming loudly*):

Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great; she has become a home for demons and a refuge for every unclean spirit, and a hiding-place for every unclean and detested bird, ³because all the nations drank from the wine of the passion of her fornicating, and the rulers of the earth fornicated with her, and the merchants of the earth became rich on the strength of her lust for luxury.

Reader 2 (John): ⁴And I heard another voice from heaven saying:

Reader 1 (Risen Christ): Come out of her my people, so that you do not take part in her sins and so that you do not receive from her plagues, ⁵because her sins have piled up to heaven, and God has remembered her wicked deeds. ⁶Pay her as indeed she paid out, and give her double in proportion to her deeds; mix her double in the cup in which she mixed; ⁷as much as she glorified herself and lived in luxury, by that much give her torment and sorrow. Since she says to herself: "Queen I sit and am not a widow, and sorrow I certainly do not see", ⁸so in one day will come her plagues—pestilence and sorrow and famine—and with fire she will be consumed, for strong is the Lord God, the One condemning her.

Reader 3 (1 of the 7 bowl angels): ⁹And the rulers of the earth, those who fornicated with her and lived in luxury, will weep and mourn for her when they see the smoke of her burning, ¹⁰standing from a distance through fear of her torment, saying:

Choir +Audience (rulers of the earth: *lamenting*): Woe, woe, the great city, Babylon the strong city, for in one hour your punishment came.

Reader 3 (1 of the 7 bowl angels): ¹¹And the merchants of the earth weep and sorrow for her, because no one buys their cargo any more: ¹²cargo of gold and silver and precious stones and pearls and fine linen and purple and silk and scarlet, and every *kind of* scented wood and every object of ivory and of very costly wood, of brass, of iron and of marble, ¹³and cinnamon and spice, perfumes, ointment and frankincense, wine and oil, fine flour and corn, cattle and sheep, horses and carts, bodies and souls of men.

Reader 1 (Risen Christ): ¹⁴And the ripe fruit of the lust of your soul went away from you; yes, all the rich and shiny things vanished from you—and never again shall they find them.

Reader 3 (1 of the 7 bowl angels): ¹⁵The merchants of these things, those who became rich from her, will stand from a distance through fear of her torment, weeping and sorrowing, ¹⁶saying:

Choir +Audience (merchants of the earth: *lamenting*): Woe, woe, the great city, she that was clothed with fine linen and purple and scarlet, and adorned with gold and precious stones and pearls, ¹⁷for in one hour such great wealth was made desolate.

Reader 3 (1 of the 7 bowl angels): And every ship's master and all the passengers and sailors, and all who work on the sea, stood from a distance ¹⁸and seeing the smoke of her burning they cried out, saying:

Choir +Audience (seamen: *lamenting*): Who is like the great city?

Reader 3 (1 of the 7 bowl angels): ¹⁹And they threw dust on their heads and weeping and sorrowing they cried out, saying:

Choir +Audience (seamen: *lamenting*): Woe, woe, the great city, from whose wealth all those with ships on the sea became rich, for in one hour she was made desolate.

Reader 3 (1 of the 7 bowl angels):

²⁰Be glad over her, heaven,
and the saints and apostles and prophets,
for God has given judgment for you against her.

Reader 2 (John): ²¹And one strong angel picked up a stone like a great millstone, and threw it into the sea saying:

Reader 3 (mighty angel): Like this, with fury, Babylon the great city shall be thrown, and never again be found. ²²And the sound of harpists and musicians and flutists and trumpeters will never be heard in you again. And all the craftsman of every craft will never be found in you again. And the sound of a mill will never be heard in you again. ²³And the light of a lamp will never shine in you again. And the voice of bridegroom and bride will never be heard in you again; for your merchants were the great ones of the earth, because all the nations were deceived by your charms; ²⁴and in her was found blood of prophets and of saints and of all those who have been slain on the earth.

Pause for a few seconds.

The liturgy resumes with the Alleluias of the martyrs in heaven, recalling the Levitical choir at the end of the liturgy in the Jerusalem temple. These praises conclude with an invitation to the imminent wedding of the Lamb. Music here could express the beginning of great joy and celebration.

XIX

Reader 2 (John): ¹After this I heard *what was* like the great sound of a vast multitude in heaven saying:

Choir + Audience (innumerable host of martyrs, *proclaiming, chanting or singing jubilantly*):

Hallelujah, the salvation and the glory and the power of our God!
²How true and just are his judgments,
because he has condemned the great prostitute,

who corrupted the earth with her fornication,
and he has avenged the blood of his servants on her.

Reader 2 (John): ³And secondly they said:

Choir +Audience (innumerable host of martyrs, *proclaiming, chanting or singing jubilantly*):
Hallelujah! And her smoke goes up for ever and ever.

Reader 2 (John): ⁴And the twenty-four elders and the four living creatures fell down and worshipped God, the One seated on the throne, saying:

Choir (4 living creatures and 24 elders: *After falling before the throne, the 4+24 male and female members of the choir sing*)
Amen, hallelujah!

Reader 2 (John): ⁵And a voice came out from the throne, saying:

Reader 4 (1 of the 4 living creatures):

Praise our God all his servants
and you that fear him, the small and the great.

Reader 2 (John): ⁶And I heard *what was* like the sound of a vast multitude, and like the sound of many waters and like the sound of loud thunders, saying:

Choir +Audience (4 living creatures, elders, all the angels and martyrs: *all male and female voices chanting or singing, like the sound of many waters and loud thunders*):

Hallelujah, because the Lord our God, the Almighty, has come to reign!
⁷Let us rejoice and be glad and give him glory,
for the marriage of the Lamb has come and his wife has prepared herself,
⁸and fine linen, bright and clean, was given to her to wear,
because the fine linen is the righteous work of the saints.

Reader 2 (John): ⁹And he says to me:

Reader 1 (1 of the 7 bowl angels): Write; blessed are they that are invited to the wedding banquet of the Lamb.

Reader 2 (John): And he says to me:

Reader 1 (1 of the 7 bowl angels): These words of God are true.

Reader 2 (John): ¹⁰And I fell down at his feet to worship him. And he says to me:

Reader 3 (1 of the 7 bowl angels): No! I am a fellow-servant of yours and of your brothers who have the Witness of Jesus; worship God. For the Witness of Jesus is the Spirit of prophecy.

Pause: before the joy can become complete, the final war must be fought and won. Music here could indicate the preparations for war.

Reader 2 (John): ¹¹And I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse; and the One sitting on it is called Faithful and True and with justice he judges and makes war. ¹²His eyes are like a flame of fire, and on his head are many diadems and he has a name written which no one knows except himself; ¹³he is clothed with a cloak dipped in blood, and his name has been called the Word of God.

¹⁴And on white horses the armies of heaven followed him, clothed in fine linen, white and clean. ¹⁵And out of his mouth comes a sharp sword, so that with it he may strike the nations, and he will shepherd them with a rod of iron; and he treads the winepress for the wine of the passion of the anger of Almighty God, ¹⁶and on the cloak and on his banner [thigh] a title is written: King of kings and Lord of lords.

¹⁷And I saw one angel standing in the sun and he cried out with a loud voice, saying to all the birds flying in mid-heaven:

Reader 3 (an angel in mid-heaven, loudly): Come, assemble for the great banquet of God, ¹⁸to eat the flesh of rulers and the flesh of military officers and the flesh of strong men, and the flesh of horses and of their riders, and the flesh of all people, both free-men and servants, both small and great.

Reader 2 (John): ¹⁹And I saw the beast and the rulers of the earth and their armies assembled to make war against the One sitting on the horse and against his army. ²⁰And the beast was captured and with him the false prophet who performed the signs in front of him, by which he deceived those who had received the mark of the beast and those who worshipped his image; the two were thrown alive into the lake of fire burning with sulphur. ²¹And the rest were killed by the sword that comes out of the mouth of the One sitting on the horse, and all the birds were filled with their flesh.

Pause: this may be the occasion for a short musical reflection on the defeat of the Beast and his accomplice.

XX

Reader 2 (John): ¹And I saw an angel coming down from heaven, holding the key of the abyss and a great chain in his hand. ²And he seized the dragon, the ancient serpent who is the devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years ³and threw him into the abyss, and shut and sealed *it* over him, so that he might not deceive the nations any more until the thousand years are finished. After this he must be let loose for a short time. ⁴And I saw thrones and they sat on them, and power to judge was given to them, and *I saw* the souls of those who had been beheaded because of the Witness of Jesus and because of the Word of God; also *I saw* those who did not worship the beast or his image and did not receive the mark on their forehead and on their hand. They lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years. ⁵The rest of the dead did not live until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection.

Reader 3 (1 of the 7 bowl angels): ⁶Blessed and holy is he that takes part in the first resurrection; over these the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ, and will reign with him for a thousand years.

Pause: *the second and final phase of the final war is about to start. A musical prelude may be appropriate.*

Reader 2 (John): ⁷And whenever the thousand years are finished, Satan will be let loose from his prison ⁸and will go out to deceive the nations in the four corners of the earth, the Gog and Magog, whose number is as the sand of the sea, to assemble them to the war. ⁹And they went up over the breadth of the land and surrounded the Camp of the Saints and the Beloved City, and fire came down from heaven and consumed them. ¹⁰And the devil, the one deceiving them, was thrown into the lake of fire and sulphur, where also are the beast and the false prophet, and they will be tormented day and night for ever and ever.

Pause: *The final war has now ended and the transformation of creation begins with the final judgment. The definitive defeat of the devil and his accomplices leads to the appearance of God for the final judgment (THEOPHANY) and the resurrection of the dead where everyone will be judged according to their deeds, except for those who have been removed from the Lamb's Scroll of Life, whose fate is eternal condemnation in the lake of fire.*

Reader 2 (John): ¹¹And I saw a great white throne and the One seated on it from whose face the earth and heaven fled, and no place was found for them (**SOUND EFFECTS for Theophany as in 4,5**). ¹²And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne, and scrolls were opened. And another scroll was opened—the Scroll of Life. And the dead were judged according to their deeds, from what had been written in the scrolls.

¹³And the sea gave up the dead in it, and Death and Hades gave up the dead in them, and they were judged, everyone according to his deeds. ¹⁴And Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. ¹⁵And if anyone was not found written in the Scroll of Life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.

Pause: This is the end of the old world and the consummation of the new. A good opportunity for musical expression, wherever it is appropriate!

XXI

Reader 2 (John): ¹And I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea is no more. ²And I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.

³And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying:

Reader 4 (1 of the 4 living creatures):

Behold, the dwelling of God is with mankind;
and he will dwell with them,
and they will be his peoples,
and God himself will be with them,
⁴and he will wipe away every tear from their eyes,
and *there* will be no more death;
neither sorrow, nor crying, nor pain will *there* be any more,
because the former things have passed away.

Reader 2 (John): ⁵And the One seated on the throne said:

Reader 1 (God Almighty): Behold, I am making all things new.

Reader 2 (John): And he says:

Reader 1 (God Almighty): Write, because these words are faithful and true.

Reader 2 (John): ⁶And he said to me:

Reader 1 (God Almighty): It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. To the one who thirsts I will give freely from the fountain of the water of life. ⁷The one who overcomes will inherit these things, and to him I will be God and to me he shall be a son.

⁸But for the cowardly and faithless and depraved and murderers and fornicators and

sorcerers and idolaters and all the liars, their share is in the lake burning with fire and sulphur, which is the second death.

Reader 2 (John): ⁹And one of the seven angels that had the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues came and spoke to me, saying:

Reader 3 (1 of the 7 bowl angels): Come, I will show you the Bride, the wife of the Lamb.

Reader 2 (John): ¹⁰And he carried me away in the Spirit on to a great and high mountain, and showed me the Holy City, Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, ¹¹having the glory of God—her radiance like a most precious stone, crystal-clear like jasper stone. ¹²She has a great and high wall with twelve gates, and over the gates twelve angels and names engraved which are of the twelve tribes of the sons of Israel. ¹³On the east *there* are three gates and on the north three gates, and on the south three gates and on the west three gates. ¹⁴And the wall of the City has twelve foundations and on them twelve names—of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.

¹⁵And the one speaking to me had a measure, a golden reed, to measure the City and her gates and her wall. ¹⁶And the City lies square, and her length the same as her breadth. And he measured the City with the reed at twelve thousand stadia, her length and breadth and height are equal. ¹⁷And he measured her wall at a hundred and forty-four cubits by man's measure, which is an angel's.

¹⁸And her wall is encrusted with jasper; and the City is pure gold like clean glass. ¹⁹The foundations of the wall of the City are adorned with every precious stone: the first foundation jasper, the second sapphire, the third chalcedony, the fourth emerald, ²⁰the fifth sardonyx, the sixth carnelian, the seventh chrysolite, the eighth beryl, the ninth topaz, the tenth chrysoprasus, the eleventh jacinth, the twelfth amethyst; ²¹and the twelve gates are twelve pearls; each one of the gates was of one pearl apiece. And the street of the City is pure gold like clear glass.

²²And I did not see a sanctuary in her, because the Lord God Almighty is her Sanctuary, also the Lamb. ²³And the City has no need for the sun or the moon to shine upon her, for the glory of God gives her light, and her lamp is the Lamb. ²⁴And by her light the nations will walk, and the rulers of the earth bring their glory into her; ²⁵and her gates shall never be closed by day, and *there* will be no night there; ²⁶and they will bring the glory and the honour of the nations into her. ²⁷And by no means shall anything impure enter her, nor anyone doing what is shameful and false, only those written in the Scroll of Life of the Lamb.

XXII

Reader 2 (John): ¹And he showed me a river of the water of life, bright as crystal, coming out of the throne of God and of the Lamb. ²Between her street and the river, on both sides, are trees of life producing twelve fruits—throughout each month they give their fruit—and the leaves of the trees are for the healing of the nations.

³And no more will *there* be any curse. And the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in her, and his servants will worship him ⁴and they will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads. ⁵And *there* will be no more night, and they will have no need of the light of a lamp or the light of the sun, because the Lord God will give them light, and they will reign for ever and ever.

Pause: Now begins the Epilogue, which recalls many things said in the Prologue

Epilogue

Reader 2 (John): ⁶And he said to me:

Reader 3 (1 of the 7 bowl angels): These words are faithful and true, and the Lord, God of the spirits of the prophets, sent his angel to show his servants what must soon take place.

Reader 1 (the Risen Christ): ⁷And behold, I am coming soon.

Reader 3 (1 of the 7 bowl angels): Blessed is he that takes to heart the words of the prophecy of this book.

Reader 2 (John): ⁸And I, John, am the one that is hearing and seeing these things. And when I had heard and seen, I fell down to worship at the feet of the angel showing me these things. ⁹And he says to me:

Reader 3 (1 of the 7 bowl angels): No! I am a fellow-servant of yours and of your brothers the prophets and those who take to heart the words of this book; worship God.

Reader 2 (John): ¹⁰And he says to me:

Reader 3 (1 of the 7 bowl angels): Do not seal the words of the prophecy of this book, for the time is near. ¹¹Let the wicked person carry on being wicked and let the filthy person carry on being filthy. And let the righteous person carry on doing what is right and let the holy person carry on being holy.

Reader 1 (the Risen Christ): ¹²Behold, I am coming soon and my reward is with me, to pay each one according to his work. ¹³I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End.

Reader 3 (1 of the 7 bowl angels): ¹⁴Blessed are they that wash their robes so that they may have the right to the tree of life and may enter by the gates into the City. ¹⁵Outside are the dogs

and the sorcerers and the fornicators and the murderers and the idolaters and everyone who loves and practices lying.

Reader 1 (the Risen Christ): ¹⁶I, Jesus, sent my angel to witness these things to you in the churches. I am the Root and the Offspring of David, the bright Dawn Star.

Reader 2 (John): ¹⁷And the Spirit and the Bride say:

Choir (the Spirit and the Bride, 2 voices from the choir, a male and a female, invitingly sing or chant):

Come. May the one who hears also say ‘Come’.
And let the one who thirsts come,
and the one who wants—let him take the water of life freely.

Reader 2 (John): ¹⁸I witness to everyone hearing the words of the prophecy of this book: If anyone adds to them, God will add to him the plagues described in this book, ¹⁹and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God will take away his share in the tree of life and in the Holy City described in this book. ²⁰Says he that witnesses these things:

Reader 1 (Risen Christ): Yes, I am coming soon.

Choir +Audience (the hearers, pleadingly sing or chant): Amen, come Lord Jesus.

Reader 2 (John): ²¹The grace of the Lord Jesus be with you all.